Rev. M. Brucen
with the respects
of the Author

ESSAYS

ON

THE NATURE AND USES OF THE VARIOUS

EVIDENCES

OF

REVEALED RELIGION.

BY GULIAN C. VERPLANCK, ESQ

"Quis tandem me reprehendat, si quantum alii tempestivis conviviis, quantum aleæ, quantum pilæ; tantum mihi egomet ad hæc studia recolenda sumpsero." *Cic.*

NEW-YORK:

CHARLES WILEY, No. 3 WALL-STREET.

J. W. PALMER & CO. PRINTERS.

1824.

TO

WASHINGTON ALLSTON;

AS A SLIGHT MARK OF RESPECT,

FOR HIS

TALENTS, WORKS, AND CHARACTER,

THESE ESSAYS

ARE INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

It is not the design of this volume to present a regular and formal exposition of the Evidences of Christianity.

This has already been done so often and so ably in our language, and in so many forms, from the learned collections of Dr. Lardner, and the original and profound arguments of Clarke and Butler, to the popular and perspicuous statements of Addison, Paley, Beattie, and Chalmers, that an attempt to go over the same ground in detail, seems almost presumptuous and not very useful. But, in examining these and similar works, I have frequently been struck with what, amidst much excellence, appeared to me to be serious imperfections. Some of those who have discussed the historical and critical testimony in the most admirable and ingenious manner, wholly neglect or avoid the internal evidence arising from the character of the doctrines taught, and from their probable or their observed effects; whilst

others, with Dr. Chalmers, decidedly deny the power of the human intellect, to weigh the force of any such argument. To my mind, this evidence is, of all other, the most efficacious, and the most universal in its application.

The influence of our sentiments and affections over our intellectual decisions is confessedly very strong, on all subjects of moral inquiry; of necessity it must have great sway in the consideration of the most momentous and deeply interesting of all inquiries, that concerning the truth of our Religion. Though this influence is never denied by any sound reasoner, and is constantly seen to furnish the most effectual instrument of religious eloquence in the inculcation of Christian truth, yet, those who write professedly on the subject, are generally inclined to regard it as being wholly distinct and apart from the exercise of the rational faculties, and therefore incapable of affording any test of the truth or falsehood of opinions.

But, besides the close and intimate connexion which exists between the purely rational, and the moral and sentimental parts of our nature, and the constant and forcible action and re-action which they exert upon each other; the adaptation of any system of moral precept or instruction to our better sentiments and feelings, and to the

actual condition of man, may be also considered intellectually, and thus furnish no feeble proof of its divine origin.

Those authors who have most faithfully and judiciously collected and stated the critical and historical learning which corroborates the relations, and verifies the authenticity of the books of scripture, or most ably expounded the speculative and metaphysical vindications of its doctrine, are often too apt to consider them as mere questions for the exertion of learned acuteness. I have thought that these arguments might be made more useful by showing their connexion with the common principles upon which most men reason and judge, in the ordinary affairs of life.

The several grounds on which their religion is rationally received by the great body of intelligent Christians also appeared to reflect back much light upon the nature, character and uses of those evidences themselves, which in various manners have thus made their way to the understandings or the hearts of so many thinking beings.

Such are the leading views, of which it is the object of this volume to present a brief and perspicuous, though I am fully conscious it must be a most imperfect, statement.

It has been endeavoured throughout, to avoid the mixing any consideration of those debated questions, which divide Christians, with these general and preliminary arguments, except so far as unnecessary concession or silence seemed directly to involve the positive abandonment of essential truth.

The reader will very soon perceive that no attempt has been made in these pages to comply with that canon of taste or criticism, founded alike on good sense and in high authority, which advises that every book should be as complete as possible within itself. On the contrary, I have presumed the reader to have some general acquaintance with the subject, and considering most of the particular facts as already in evidence before him, have mainly confined myself to the principles which they involve, and the inferences justly to be drawn from them.

If, however, these Essays should fall into the hands of any one who has not this previous knowledge, and whose attention has never been turned to this inquiry, should they have the effect of exciting him to farther and honest examination, they will not have been written in vain.

CONTENTS.

ESSAY I.

The several Heads of the Evidences of revealed Religion; their various Characters; and the Argument resulting from their concurrent Testimony.

In studying the evidences of the truth of revealed religion, whether they are examined solely for our own satisfaction, or to enable us to give light to others, it is very useful to bear constantly in mind, that every particular argument and branch of this evidence, however clear and convincing it may be in itself, still belongs to a vast system of truths, the several parts of which are wonderfully fitted, in different ways, to the various understandings, characters, and situations of those to whom this universal dispensation is offered. Thus is held out to every inquirer—as well to the scholar who can make the whole of human learning tributary to his investigations, as to the unlettered seeker after truth, who draws all his knowledge from his own heart and the sense of his own wants—some argument, which, if rightly received, may be sufficient to satisfy his reason, to awaken his conscience, or to

engage his affections; while the whole of this proof taken together forms a vast and grand chain of moral demonstration, running through every age of the world, embracing at once all that we know of our race, its history, and destinies; and all that we know concerning ourselves, our own nature, our duties, our weakness, and our dangers.

Almost all of man's science and the whole of his history, including alike the annals of princes and nations, and the more secret records of each one's memory of his past life, thus becomes, to a meditative and reflecting mind, in some way or other, connected with the history and doctrines of Christianity, and may be made to bear attestation to their truth.

Hence the evidence of revelation is, throughout, not only in its general heads, but in every branch of it, (to use the happy and expressive phrase of Dr. Paley,) strictly 'cumulative;'* each part serving not merely to confirm the other evidence of the same nature, but also, by the aggregation of innumerable probabilities, to strengthen the whole an hundred fold, until every chance of error or fraud is gradually, and at length completely, excluded; "and thus," says Jeremy Tay-

* This useful and expressive word is, I believe, original with Paley; at least, in the general and popular sense in which he applies it. It is borrowed from the civil law, where it has an analogous technical signification.

lor, "the heaping together heads of probabilities "is or may be the cause of an infinite persuasion." "Probable arguments," continues that eloquent divine, with his accustomed lavish exuberance of beautiful illustration and brilliant imagery; "probable arguments are like little stars, every "one of which may be useless to our conduct and "enlightening, but when they are tyed together "by order and vicinity, by the finger of God and "the hand of an angel, they make a constellation, "and are not only powerful in their influence, "but like a bright angel to guide and enlighten "our way. And although the light is not so "great as the light of the sun or moon, yet mari- "ners sail by their conduct, and though with tre- "pidation and some danger, yet very regularly "they enter into the haven. This heap of proba- "ble inducements is not of power as a mathe- "matical demonstration, which is in discourse as "a sun is in the heaven, but it makes a milky and "a white path, visible enough to walk securely."*

It is this "tying together by order and vicinity," this luminous and distinct arrangement of the various materials of a most copious and diversified subject of inquiry, which gives its peculiar value to Paley's deservedly popular treatise on the Evidences of Christianity, and especially to the ad-

* Taylor's *Ductor Dubitantium.*

mirable outline and compression of the historical testimony to the leading facts of the history of redemption, and the early propagation of its doctrine, and to the authenticity of the books of the New Testament contained in the first part of his work. The reader is there enabled to take in, at one view, the substance of the multifarious and complicated testimony of a long chain of Christian Fathers, acknowledging and constantly quoting our present scriptures; of Jewish and heathen writers; of versions, commentaries, harmonies, rites, ceremonies, and controversies; of attacks and concessions of ancient adversaries; of agreements of early sects who differed on all other points; of probabilities arising from the state of opinion in the Roman world; from the condition of society in that age, and from the universal and unchangeable motives of human action in all times: forming together an immense mass of external evidence to which all that could be collected in support of the best attested and most undoubted facts of ancient history, or in proof of the genuineness of the most unquestioned and admired remains of ancient genius, can bear no sort of comparison.

The materials of this argument are to be found more at large in other authors, and especially in the works of Dr. Lardner, who has collected and arranged the numerous authorities bearing upon

this subject with an accuracy of research, and a patient diligence, which have been well characterized in the epithet applied to him, I think by Gibbon, of the "laborious Lardner," and who is moreover entitled to the higher praise of never colouring or exaggerating the force of any testimony which he adduces, and whose fidelity in citation has never been impeached. But here his merit ends, and the materials which he so industriously and faithfully collected have derived a tenfold value and usefulness in the hands of Paley, from their arrangement and application, from that condensation of the whole immense mass of learning and authority, which reduces it as it were into a portable form, and fits it for the grasp of an ordinary mind; and, above all, from the practical, business-like good sense with which the argument is managed, the inferences clearly and candidly drawn, and the whole brought to concur in one irresistible conclusion.

Leslie's "Short Method with the Deists,"* in which the historical, the ritual, and other external evidences of revelation are summed up in four short rules, pointing out as many criteria of the certainty of any historical fact, the co-existence of all of which renders its truth demonstrable, is another work which bears the stamp of

* See note A at the conclusion.

the same peculiar talent, is marked by the same clearness of understanding, and the same power of lucid arrangement and vigorous generalization. "Leslie," said Dr. Johnson, (making an exception in his case from his sweeping censure of the English non-jurors as wholly deficient in logical talent,) "was a reasoner indeed, and a reasoner not to be reasoned against." He wasted much of his talent in controversies of a very narrow and wholly transient interest, and without any exemption from that extravagance and intolerance, which, in the strife of civil and religious faction, so often degrade the loftiest, and blind the acutest minds; but this little tract is an admirable and lasting specimen of the manner in which he could seize the prominent points of an extensive and complicated inquiry, and place them before his readers in one distinct and vivid light. In fact, almost all of reasoning or inference, that is to be found in the numerous authors who have written upon the historical evidences of Christianity, though they may have taken widely different courses to arrive at their conclusions, may be disposed of under the four heads of Leslie's method.

There is scarce an authority, or an argument, which has ever been adduced in corroboration of those leading *facts* asserted in our Scriptures, which, if established, involve the reception of

their doctrines, and the authority of the books asserting them, which does not tend to confirm one or other of his great points:—1st. That these facts were *sensible,* i. e. such as men's eyes, ears, and outward senses could judge of. 2d. That they were *notorious*—taking place publicly, in the presence of many and competent witnesses. 3d. That there are now existing *memorials* of the facts, such as public and significant actions, customs, rites, established societies of men, observations of days, public readings of the books in which they are related, all expressly commemorating these events. 4th. That such memorials commenced at the time assumed as that of the occurrence of the facts, or the publication of the books; there being not only direct proof of that period of commencement, but also no other period being at all probable from argument or conjecture, and still less from positive history.

It is evident, that no stronger proof can be given of any fact not within the immediate memory of the present, or at least of the last preceding generation, than may be afforded by the concurrence of all these circumstances; and in running over in my own mind the most noted events and institutions of antiquity, I can find none, with the single and very striking exception of the history of the Roman law, and the authenticity of its code, digest, and institutes, which,

tried by these rules, is supported by any thing like the same strength of testimony as the history of the miracles and death of Jesus Christ, of the miraculous propagation of his religion, and the universal reception by his followers of the books which we now hold as sacred.

A scholar, possessing the learning, ingenuity, and paradoxical spirit of Bentley, Warburton, or Hardouin, might doubtless raise many objections against the authenticity of Cæsar's Commentaries, or Xenophon's Retreat of the Ten Thousand, and might allege many arguments to refute the narrative of Cæsar's wars in Gaul, or Cyrus' attempt to gain the throne of Persia; or against any other books, and almost any other facts of ancient history. Such objections or arguments could never produce any, even the slightest degree of conviction, and yet it must be often very difficult to refute them conclusively.

But neither Grecian and Roman antiquity, nor that of the lower empire, has transmitted to us any writings except the commonly received books of the New Testament, and those of the civil law, which are evidenced by numerous other works, comprising a vast body of wholly peculiar learning, too voluminous, complicated and characteristic, to have possibly been framed for the purpose of imposition, which are altogether founded upon their authority, and whether agree-

ing or disagreeing in their opinions respecting them, always confirming their authority; by an exceedingly various and extensive indirect, or allusive corroboration from cotemporaneous history and literature; by an order of men devoted to their study; by a deep and intimate connection with the opinions, interests, habits, and language of whole nations; by constantly recurring forms, customs, ceremonies, and usages, and by speeches, writings, and controversies regarding them, amongst different nations, sects, and classes of society, and throughout whole countries.

If some such learned and bold a freethinker in legal antiquities as the Jesuit Hardouin was in classical literature, had started doubts against the history and authenticity of the civil code, or had asserted that it was an arbitrary innovation of Justinian, or some later Greek Emperor, and therefore in no degree entitled to that authority and antiquity which it claims as comprehending and being founded upon the venerable laws of the Roman republic, and the decisions of wise and learned men under the Roman empire for centuries; the evidence which a civilian or antiquarian would appeal to against such objections; if, indeed, any scholar or learned lawyer could esteem such objections worth the answer—would be throughout analogous to that testimony which such writers as Lardner have collected in support

of the facts and books of the Christian revelation; although it is, I think, certain that it would be far less strong and extensive.*

The effect of such outlines as these, necessarily is to give very great additional strength and clearness to the whole argument, by bringing its numerous points into a connected view, and showing their mutual relation, and the support they lend each other; at the same time that they afford assistance to the memory, and furnish the means of a ready application of our knowledge by a compendious and philosophical arrangement.

The prophetic testimony to the coming and character of our Saviour, the nature of his religion, his rejection and sufferings, and the influence and history of his dispensation, is in this respect of a precisely similar nature, and does not consist merely (as Paley in his, as usual, sensible but yet most imperfect statement of this argument, has, in common with many other respectable writers, been content to state) in two or three, or even in twenty remarkable and distinct predictions; but it comprehends a great and long sus-

* Such a comparison might be made without the labour of much research. The materials are to be found ready collected in Heinecius' History of the Roman Law, and the other legal writings of that great civilian and antiquarian, who has been deservedly pronounced to be the very best writer of elementary books upon any subject.

tained system of divine interposition and inspiration from the beginning of the world, stretching through all ages, and still rolling onward to its completion.

It is contained, 1st. In the direct, repeated, and minute predictions of a long line of writers and teachers, the oracles and classics of the Jewish people, the genuineness of whose works is proved by a singularly powerful complication of internal and external evidence; and whose more express predictions are so numerous and circumstantial as to exclude all possibility of a fortuitous accomplishment.

Rousseau, in the eloquent and paradoxical confession of faith which he puts in the mouth of his Savoyard Vicar in Emilius, has said that no fulfilment of prophecy could be of any weight with him to prove a divine interposition, unless it could be demonstrated that the agreement between the prophecy and the event could not possibly have been fortuitous. This proof is more than any fair objector has a right to claim, since it is moral probability and not strict demonstration which we must act upon in the most momentous concerns of life, and as reasonable men we should rest on the same evidences in matters of faith. In both the truly wise man will be governed by common sense, applied to the investigation of rational probability.

In this case, however, we may accept the challenge of the sceptic. Where the points of fulfilment of prediction are numerous, it may be literally "demonstrated" that the probability of such accomplishment having accrued fortuitously is the most remote possible.

This argument is put in a practical and striking point of view by Dr. Gregory, of the Military Academy at Woolwich, well known for many respectable and useful works, especially on mathematics and scientific mechanics.

"Suppose," says he, "that instead of the spirit of prophecy breathing more or less in every book of scripture, predicting events relative to a great variety of general topics, and delivering besides almost innumerable characteristics of the Messiah, all meeting in the person of Jesus; there had been only *ten* men in ancient times who pretended to be prophets, each of whom exhibited only *five* independent criteria as to place, government, concomitant events, doctrine taught, effects of doctrine, character, sufferings, or death: the meeting of all which in one person should prove the reality of their calling as prophets, and of his mission in the character they have assigned him. Suppose, moreover, that all events were left to *chance* merely, and we were to compute, from the principles employed by mathematicians in the investigations of such subjects, the proba-

bility of these fifty independent circumstances happening *at all*. Assume that there is, according to the technical phrase, *an equal chance* for the happening or the failure of any one of these specified particulars; then the probability against the occurrence of all the particulars in *any* way is that of the 50th power of 2 to unity; that is, the probability is greater than *eleven hundred and twenty-five millions of millions to one* that all these circumstances do not turn up even at distinct periods. This computation, however, is independent of the consideration of *time*. Let it be recollected farther, that if any one of the specified circumstances happen, it may be the day after the delivery of the prophecy, or at any period from that time to the end of the world; this will so indefinitely augment the probability against the cotemporaneous occurrence of merely these *fifty* circumstances, that it surpasses the power of numbers to express correctly the immense improbability of its taking place."*

It is hardly necessary to draw the inference, which Dr. Gregory goes on to establish, that all probability, and even possibility, of accidental fulfilment, as well as of fraud, must be excluded. The sole reasonable solution of the question is, that these predictions and their fulfilments can

* "Letters on the Christian Religion," by Olinthus Gregory, L. L. D.

only be ascribed to the intention of a being, whose knowledge could foresee future events, unconnected with each other, depending on various contingencies, and the will and acts of free agents; or whose power is so omnipotent as to bend to the accomplishment of his own purpose the passions of multitudes, the ambition of princes, the studies of the wise, the craft of the wicked, the wars, the revolutions, and the varied destinies of nations.

But to this body of evidence we can add farther;—

2dly. That resulting from the relation which the history of the civilized world bears to the prophetic annunciations of its Teacher, Redeemer, and Sovereign—and the connection which the fortunes and revolutions of states and empires have had with the moral government of him whose "way is in the whirlwind and the storm," and who "driveth asunder the nations."

Predictions of events now long past, the records and monuments of which alone remain, forming the mighty landmarks of history, are every where most closely interwoven with the prophetic declaration, of His will, the history of His revelation, and the destinies of those whom he had chosen as his people.

Thus, Egypt and Babylon, Tyre and Jerusalem, are compelled to rise up from their ruins to

give testimony to that truth, which, in the day of their prosperity, they had rejected.

3dly. In a mysterious and complicated form of religious ceremonial, and other ordinances established among the Jewish people, remarkably and expressively figurative of a future and moral meaning; and in a code of civil legislation strikingly adapted to preserve testimony, and to perpetuate the oracles of prophecy, as well as to guard from corruption or oblivion the ceremonial and legal rites and figures themselves. For the civil polity of the Jewish people was completely interwoven with the history and ritual of their religion; the evidences and memorials of their church and of the titles to private property were preserved together; their sacred books were the law of the land, and the literature of the nation. Yet their ritual, splendid, complicated, and ceremonious, was filled with ordinances which they were enjoined, by all their revered teachers, and by the law itself, to observe with scrupulous rigour, and to make the subject of their constant meditation; whilst they were taught by the same authority that these had no value or efficacy in themselves. But the singular applicability of many of these emblematic ordinances to the doctrines and the moral precepts of Christianity, is such as could not have arisen from accident; and no parallel coincidence can

be found to it, existing in the rites of superstition, or in the imagination of enthusiastic writers, living at remote periods from each other.

4thly. In a secondary, or allusive, or gradually accomplishing sense of prophecy, analogous to, and harmonizing with, this emblematic institution, whereby every promise of a temporary nature was made the sign and pledge of a more durable and universal benefit.

This evidence has appeared very powerful to many wise and great men, among them to Bacon and Pascal. But since there has been some controversy on this head, if we rather choose to avoid connecting the argument with any particular theory of interpretation, we may take it in a broader and looser sense, and say, that it consists in a multiplicity of passages not primarily referring to the events of the Christian dispensation, but evidently appearing, from their number and aptitude, to have been purposely so framed as when those events had occurred, to bear a natural and obvious application to them, and thus to enlarge the utility of the book containing them from a transitory and local to a universal purpose.*

These several classes of prophetic evidence are, it is doubtless to be admitted, of differing

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* See note B.

degrees of value; and the direct and positive prediction is of far the greatest use for refuting objectors, and inviting and fixing the attention of the doubting and careless. But that once done, and the groundwork of our faith firmly laid, the additional proofs afforded by figurative rites, and by indirect or allusive predictions, are, from the clear indications which they afford of one magnificent and harmonious plan of revelation, of greater importance than any increased number of plainer prophecies: somewhat upon the same principle as in matters of ordinary human jurisprudence, (in a criminal trial, for instance,) indirect testimony, circumstantial evidence, casual coincidences, agreement of attested facts to known character and opinion, may, in addition to a certain amount of positive proof, form a body of testimony infinitely more conclusive than would be afforded by any number of witnesses whatever, all deposing to the same naked facts. Hence the evidence rises in grandeur and interest, is more complicated, less within the power of human art or fraud to have invented, and wholly beyond the probability of having arisen from any accidental conjuncture of events. For, if after finding predictions of a direct and positive character, we observe that there are yet many others so constructed as not to be of their own interpre-

tation,* but which, while they were so formed as to be obscure before the event, as soon as that occurred, became clear—is not this precisely such a body of predictive testimony as we would most desire, and which would most effectually exclude the supposition of artful contrivance, as well as of infatuation and enthusiasm, wilfully accommodating events to suit accredited predictions?

If the sceptic demands clear and direct prophecy, such as would have been understood before its accomplishment, and would lead to an expectation of the event—that is at hand.

There are many such passages; and we know, from the unsuspected and unimpeachable testimony of Tacitus and Josephus, that they did excite an expectation of the approach of some such events about the time of fulfilment. If (like Gibbon, in his anonymous Letter to Hurd upon the Prophecies of Daniel) he complains that these predictions are so clear as to afford ground for suspecting imposture and forgery, other predictions of another, and again of yet another nature, may

* The learned reader will perceive that I have adopted Horsley's version of the Apostle's words, ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως; but the correctness or incorrectness of that translation has little connection with the general argument. It may be worth noting that this interpretation, which is commonly supposed to be original with Horsley, is to be found in the Opuscula Philologica, &c. of Werensels, a professor at Berne, in the earlier part of the last century, a writer little known, but of great good sense.

be presented to his examination, some of them of the kind just described, obscure before, and clear after the fulfilment, and some again more shadowy and undefined, somewhat resembling those hints and allusions which the mind of a speaker or writer, filled with some great and engrossing contemplation, will unexpectedly throw out, when engaged on any other subject of feebler or more transient interest.

Though, indeed, the chief use of those indirect and circumstantial prophetic attestations, is not to enable the believer to argue with disputatious opponents; and it seems to be a serious logical error, into which some of the soundest reasoners have occasionally fallen, to consider them as designed only for combating the objections of the sceptic, or for furnishing plausible grounds of argument with the wilfully ignorant, or perversely careless. On the contrary, the argument thus furnished, can hardly be understood but by those who search diligently for truth, and are willing to embrace it when found; nor can its full force be felt, till the revelation it supports be received as true, or at least as highly probable. It then throws a strong and clear light upon the unity of its doctrines, the plan of its development, and the harmony of its system. It may, therefore, be vain to offer it to those who will not look upon any testimony which is not forced

upon their attention; and on this subject, as on many other points of moral evidence, he who is most rationally, as well as most deeply convinced, will most readily admit and understand the seeming contradiction, that belief of the doctrine is necessary to the full understanding of it—*Credidi, ideoque intellexi.*

Much light has been thrown upon the philosophy of this prophetic evidence by Hurd, in his Lectures, and by Horsley, in three or four noble sermons; and it has been treated of, though not in a formal and didactic manner, yet with great ability, by two illustrious laymen, Pascal in his *Pensées*, and by Lord President Forbes, in an unfinished essay, in his posthumous works. These two great men were trained to habits of close reasoning, and of weighing evidence in very different schools—the one in the retirement of solitary study and mathematical research—the other in the active pursuits of the law and political life; but both of them appear to be equally impressed with the magnitude and grandeur of this long and various, yet uniform testimony. It must, however, be confessed, that modern theology has, by no means, supplied the deficiency of which Lord Bacon complained two centuries ago, by furnishing a work "in which every prophecy of scripture should be sorted with the event fulfilling the same throughout all ages of

the world, both for the better confirmation of the faith, and the better illumination of the Church, touching those parts of prophecies which are yet unfulfilled."

This is a work of which we may still say with him, "I find a deficiency; but it is to be done with wisdom, sobriety, and reverence, or not at all."*

The extensive range of argument and inquiry which remains after the historical and prophetic testimony have been separately considered, has been commonly summed up under the single head of Internal Evidence.

Under this general name, two very distinct species of evidence are frequently confounded, and that, too, by some of the most accurate thinkers and reasoners.

The one is that which may be more properly termed *critical evidence,* or if the phrase may be allowed, *historical internal evidence.* It consists of those marks of authenticity and those presumptions of truth and honesty, in any historical or narrative composition, which arise from style, language, or dialect; from the particularity, naturalness and probability of the narrative; from the correspondence and agreement of parts to each other, and of language, allusions, or opinions, to the professed character of the writer or speaker.

* *Advancement of Learning*, Book II.

The other, and much higher species of internal evidence, and more strictly entitled to that appellation, but which, for distinction, we may term the *moral internal evidence*, is that powerful impression of truth arising from the nature of the doctrines themselves, and the character and influence of the dispensation. Considered speculatively, it is founded on the conformity of the doctrines to enlightened reason and to truth, either previously known, or intuitively acknowledged as soon as presented—upon their utility, their beauty, fitness, and moral excellence; and in a more practical point of view, as relates to our individual reception of them, it arises from their influence on the affections and character, their adaptation to our nature and wants, and their effect upon the heart and life.

The former species of evidence resembles that by which we would judge of the authenticity and credit of such a work as those Orations of Cicero, which Markland, Wolfius, and other critics, have, from their style and manner, asserted to be spurious, and the work of some ancient rhetorician;* or, to take a modern instance, it is argued upon

* The orations, Post Reditum, Pro Domo Sua, Ad Quirites, and De Haruspicum Responsis, though found in most manuscripts, are, according to the better opinion of critics, not genuine, though unquestionably of great and probably of classical antiquity. Wolfius, and other German critics, have also doubted of the authenticity of the Oration "Pro Marcello."

much the same principles upon which English antiquarians have, within the last half century, discussed and rejected the spurious plays and poems forged by Ireland, and ascribed to Shakspeare, or the still more ingenious fabrications of Chatterton. Or, to draw an example from the political history of England in a former age, it was on these principles, connected with such slight external testimony as could be found, that English critics and historians have decided upon the authenticity of the Icon Basilike, originally published as the production of King Charles I. but now generally believed to have been written by Bishop Gauden. The controversies which have been carried on among the historians and critics of the continent of Europe, concerning the authenticity of the Memoirs of Prince Eugene, ascribed to himself, and of the *Testament Politique* of Cardinal Richelieu, will furnish other examples.*

The other species of evidence resembles, in nature, (though it is certainly much higher in degree,) the estimate which the philosophical inquirer forms of the truth or falsehood of an ethi-

* In both these cases there is, I believe, external evidence against the genuineness of these works; but, on the other hand, it has been urged that if Richelieu and Prince Eugene did not in fact write these works, their real authors must have been men of at least equal talent and knowledge of the subject with the alleged authors—which is scarcely probable. It is from this internal evidence that Say, in his "Economie Politique," considers them as genuine.

cal or a metaphysical system, as of Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, for instance, or of the doctrines of Cudworth's Immutable Morality; where we draw the materials of our judgment, not from extrinsic knowledge, but from the first principles of reason, and the study of our own minds.

This critical internal evidence necessarily consists of many and minute particulars, every one of which, singly, is of comparatively little power; but which, when they are made to converge to one focus, form a full and satisfactory light. The inquiry has been pursued by different minds, on very various principles, and, in fact, embraces two wholly independent branches of argument. Of these, one is purely critical, comprehending a large extent of scholarship and of antiquarian research, directed and chiefly limited to the question of the *authenticity** of the commonly received books of scripture, as shown by their conformity with the style, opinions, manners, and history of their professed time and country. The other, guided only by good sense and a general acquaintance with human nature, argues

* Some respectable writers, on subjects of critical inquiry, have distinguished between the words *genuineness* and *authenticity*, referring one to the character of the work, the other to the veracity of its statements.—Their own use of the word, however, is contradictory; and there is no authority in good English usage for the distinction: these words being constantly used as synonymous. The true distinction is between the *authenticity* of a writing and its *credibility*.

boldly and directly from the coherence of the narrative, and the manner of narration, to the probable truth of the facts related, and thence backward to the genuineness of the books. Most of the first part of Dr. Lardner's great work on the Credibility of the Gospel History, relates mainly and primarily to the former question; while no better model of the manner in which investigations of the other kind should be carried on, can be given, than that most original, ingenious, and well reasoned work of Paley, the Horæ Paulinæ, in which he proves the veracity of St. Paul, and of the historian of his early labours, from their unaffected circumstantiality in narrating, and in transiently and naturally alluding to facts, and the indirect, and evidently undesigned coincidences which are scattered over their writings.

All such investigations, on whatever principles they are conducted, end in presenting to us a complication of probabilities, which can be accounted for, by the candid and diligent inquirer, upon one supposition only, that of the genuineness and truth of the narrative.

Nevertheless, it must be allowed, that the assent thus produced, though it may be full and undoubting, is yet comparatively cold and feeble, and were there no other ground than this for our reception of revealed truth, it would probably be received much as we receive historical accounts

of past ages and distant countries; as being valuable and curious information—as being truth certainly, but not as truth coming directly home to our personal interests, sympathies, and duties.

This evidence, too, is limited in its application, being addressed to comparatively but a few: to the scholar versed in languages and antiquities—to the general reader, somewhat accustomed to compare styles, and judge of probability and consistency—or to the reasoner and man of observation, trained by the discipline of professional studies, of active habits of business, or at least of the varied commerce of life, in some degree to examine evidence, to analyze character, to sift out and weigh all those indications of veracity and honesty, which influence the judgment of men towards each other in society. The other species, which is that moral evidence arising from the manner of teaching, and the character of the doctrines taught, is of a grander and nobler nature, as well as of a far broader utility.

It addresses itself, not to the scholar, the critic, the practised and sharp-sighted inquirer into human conduct and motives; but to man, as a moral being, as an accountable creature, as possessing certain common and universal principles of reason, feeling and conscience.

I will not here enlarge upon this subject, because its importance demands a separate and

more minute examination of its character. My chief object in this Essay, is to call the attention of the reader, to the fact of the remarkable variety of the several classes of the evidences of revelation, and of the numerous and diversified particulars of which each class is composed, and to show how strikingly they are adapted to invite the examination, and to instruct the reason, of men of all ranks of intellect and acquirement: provided, only, that they be examined with diligence, attention, candour, and a fair use of that sort and degree of knowledge within the reach of every individual. For this is a condition upon which the discovery of all moral truth seems more or less suspended; a condition founded on the moral nature of man, and uniformly asserted in the revelation itself.

Now, from all this variety, thus harmonizing in one united attestation to the same facts, results a very peculiar, and, to my mind, a very impressive argument.

Let us suppose every distinct head of proof to be much weaker than it really is—or, taking the case of any individual, let us suppose, that from want of knowledge, from preconceived opinions, prejudices of education, or any other cause which may tend to cloud the judgment—any or all of these several arguments, though appearing, as they must, in no inconsiderable degree probable,

should yet seem to him to lie open to very serious objections, and to labour under difficulties which he is wholly unable to remove.

Nevertheless, unless he allows the religion to be true, so far at any rate as relates to its fundamental facts, how can he possibly account for the existence of so many different probabilities, whatever he may think of their force singly, yet all uniting upon one great argument, and bearing witness in corroboration of each other. If he does not admit the substantial truth of the religion, must he not literally embrace the rhetorical paradox of Rousseau, and confess that the inventors of such a narrative were more miraculous than the hero?

Is there any doubtful historical relation so corroborated? Any other religious creed so supported? Any ethical or philosophical system of human invention so evidenced? Arguing, then, from the common laws of belief, can he conceive possible that all these, so many and such different kinds of probabilities, (even if some of them should be but faint and inconclusive,) have yet been heaped together from so many quarters, without any real foundation in truth—that such an unparalleled conjunction of the ordinary marks of veracity, should have thus unaccountably been brought together, to give credit and currency to a mass of fraudulent or enthusiastic delusions?

We well know, that in the ordinary affairs of life, as (amongst many other instances which will naturally occur to any reader) in matters of judicial investigation, there is frequently a 'literally' irresistible weight of conviction accumulated from the combination of a great number of witnesses, no single one of whom, from want of general intelligence, or of acquaintance with the peculiar circumstances of the case, or even of fair character, could be considered as entitled to the highest credit. If such a combination be without any suspicion of fraud and compact, the evidence becomes perfectly conclusive. How much more should this be conceded, when the corroborations come from such very distant quarters, so unconnected with each other, and even so hostile; so impossible to have been fraudulently arranged by artifice; and above all, when each of these peculiar heads of confirmation comprises an innumerable multitude of particulars; some of them of great directness, and simplicity, and power, while others are very slight and indirect—and, if taken singly, scarcely amount to a probability, except that they show conclusively, and more conclusively than stronger testimony, the natural and inartificial character of the whole evidence?

It is true that there are minds, and some of them in no ordinary degree vigorous and acute, upon whom this chain of reasoning may have but little

effect. There are some thinking men, who, in whatever inquiry they may be engaged, seize boldly on a single, strong, or prominent point of the question, and are not willing to leave it for any other. It is rarely, however, that this can be done without some hazard of error, or at least without danger of overlooking some valuable truth; and it is more commonly the characteristic of a presumptuous, than of a powerful intellect. The history of all human science, and more especially of moral and metaphysical opinion, will show very amply how large a portion of the most dangerous falsehood, and unsound speculation, which have prevailed in the world, has arisen from partial and desultory glances, and from the want of that "universality of contemplation," which Lord Bacon long ago noted as the main source of error in opinion, as well in physical, as in moral inquiries.

Nor is this, as may seem at the first glance, an argument requiring deep and extensive learning to estimate rightly, and therefore of course not at all fitted for popular use. On the contrary, it is founded on a process of reasoning of daily use in the occurrences of common life: such, for instance, as every juryman employs in deciding upon a complicated and contested cause. The materials of it must be partly taken upon competent authority by many, and are partly

within the reach of all; and the inference is plain and immediate, and may be combined and deduced at once by common sense. To comprehend its bearing, it is by no means necessary to be able to weigh accurately the value of every individual point of the historical and antiquarian proof, or the force of all the reasoning which it includes. It only requires that degree of knowledge which is possessed by most persons of ordinary information, or at least may be possessed by them; for much of the ignorance on these subjects, among all classes in our state of society, arises from wilful inattention. It only requires us to know, that there is a large historical evidence to Christianity, which, though some men of no contemptible learning and ability have laboured to overthrow it, has commanded the assent of virtuous and disinterested men—men of business as well as of learning. That there is a prophetic testimony, which, though it is in part obscure, in part liable to controversy, in part requiring attentive study to comprehend, and in part apparently yet unaccomplished, may, in its general outline and prominent parts, be sufficiently understood from the ordinary instruction from the pulpit, or gathered from the most popular and elementary treatises—that there is an appearance of natural and unstudied truth in the style and manner of the Gospels and Epistles, of which

those features, depending upon an acquaintance with the language and manners of antiquity have been repeatedly examined by the learned, whilst the stronger marks of honesty and sincerity in manner may be estimated by any man of good sense and common observation. Finally, it demands of us to turn our attention to the evidence arising from the character of the Christian religion, its morality, its devotion, its agreement with the truths of our own hearts—of all evidences the most within our reach, and yet the most difficult to attend to.

The more all or any of these truths are examined and studied, so much the more numerous and cogent will they appear; but a very general and superficial view of them, if it be but an unprejudiced one, will show the existence of many such points of evidence, which, if not irresistible, all possess at least some degree of probability.

If this be so, no prudent and no honest man should turn contemptuously from this evidence; because, to his understanding, or his imperfect knowledge, no single part of it seems conclusive, without first attending to the concurrent power of the whole.

It is for this purpose, that when we have thoroughly digested, and familiarized to our minds the historical and prophetic arguments in proof of Christianity, and have in the same manner satis-

fied ourselves in the study of the innumerable points which compose and fortify its other heads of moral demonstration, it is highly useful to retire back, as it were, from this minute inspection, to such a general and comprehensive survey as allows us to take in at once the distinct outlines of all, and observe how they severally harmonize, both in their various component parts, and with each other. Then, to use the language of Pope, though with a more elevated, as well as a more practical meaning, than ever entered into the poet's philosophy, we shall perceive that, in revelation, as in the other works of God,

> Nothing is foreign—parts relate to whole;
> One all-extending, all-preserving soul
> Connects all being—nothing stands alone;
> The chain holds on, and where it ends, unknown.

Prophecy announces the advent of the religion of Jesus; History records its progress; Literature and Criticism combine to attest to the muniments of its doctrines: but its surest witnesses are to be found in man's own breast—in the grandeur of his thoughts—in the lowness of his desires—in the aspirations which lift him towards the heavens—in the vices which weigh him to the earth—in his sublime, his inexplicable conceptions of Infinity and Eternity—in his humiliating experience of folly, misery, and guilt.

ESSAY II.

Of the Power of Human Reason to judge of the Internal Evidence of Truth in the Doctrines and Precepts of Religion.

As far as we can distinctly trace the manner in which Christianity has commended itself to the obedience and affections of its disciples in these later ages, whether we look to the history of its triumphs over pagan superstition, or observe the grounds upon which the great body of sincere but unlearned Christians amongst ourselves rest their belief, it will be found that, so far as religion is an object of the reason, (and where it is genuine it must be so to some extent in all men) its internal evidence, or, that character of truth and excellence impressed upon its greater and more prominent doctrines and precepts, forms, to most persons, the chief source of rational conviction, and their firmest ground of reliance. Yet it is very remarkable that several writers, and some of them among the ablest and most zealous defenders of our faith, have, in stating the proofs of our religion, either passed by in silence, or else explicitly and decidedly

rejected, all reference to this head of evidence. Taking this opinion in its full extent, and in the unqualified manner in which it has frequently been stated, it has always appeared to me to be in plain contradiction to common sense, and to all observation and experience. But as the erroneous opinions of wise and honest men upon important subjects of moral and theological speculation, are seldom wholly unmixed with some portion of truth, and are very often the extremes and excess of right rather than positively wrong, it is certainly an interesting and may be a useful inquiry to examine the reasons of this rejection, and to see whether it be not founded in part upon sound principles—whether the arguments by which it is supported do not involve or lead to some valuable truth; and if so, how far, and with what limitations, it may be safe to adopt or modify this conclusion.

The latest, and at present the best known and most popular of these writers, is Dr. Chalmers, who has devoted to the consideration of this question, a whole chapter of his eloquent and ingenious essay on the "Evidence and Authenticity of the Christian Revelation," besides frequently touching upon it or alluding to it in other parts of his work. He appears to be so fully satisfied with the overwhelming force and abundance of the historical argument, and at the same time so deeply im-

pressed with the sense of the impotence and vain wanderings of human reason, whenever it aspires to sit in judgment upon the ways of God to man, and to theorize upon, or to anticipate by conjecture, the laws of its Author's providence and government, that he boldly and decidedly hurries on to the conclusion of disclaiming all support from what is commonly understood by the internal evidences of revelation.

"We can reason," says he, "upon the procedure of man in given circumstances, but we have no experience of God. We can reason upon the procedure of man in given circumstances, because that is an accessible subject, and comes under the cognizance of observation; but we cannot reason on the procedure of the Almighty in given circumstances. That is an inaccessible subject, and comes not within the limits of direct and personal observation. We must take our lesson as it comes to us, provided we are satisfied beforehand that it comes from an authentic source. We must set up no presumption of our own against the authority of the unquestionable evidence that we have, and reject all suggestions which our defective experience can furnish, as the follies of a rash and fanciful speculation." "It is not for man to assume what is right, or proper, or natural, for the Almighty to do. It is not in the mere

spirit of piety that we say so—it is in the spirit of the soundest experimental philosophy."*

These views Dr. Chalmers dilates upon and enforces at large, with his usual fervid and copious logic; arguing from the principles of the Baconian philosophy, which teaches that, as man is ignorant of all things antecedent to observation, it is upon observation alone that true science can ever be founded—from the errors into which the mind blindly plunges the moment it ceases to observe, and begins to excogitate or to theorize—from the past and the present state of all human science, experimentally witnessing and proving this humiliating but salutary truth. Thence he infers that, if caution and humility be esteemed philosophical when employed in our narrow field of investigation, in this low nook of the universe, and "upon this little bank and shoal of time," they should be thought equally so when exercised upon a subject so vast, so awful, and so remote from direct and personal observation as the government of God; and that it is accordingly in direct hostility to all true wisdom for beings of a day to assume to sit in judgment upon the Eternal, and to apply their paltry experience to the counsels of his unfathomable wisdom. He therefore maintains

* Chalmer's Evidence and Authenticity, ch. viii.

the total insufficiency of natural reason to pronounce upon the intrinsic merits of any revelation ; but holds that the authority of Christianity must rest exclusively upon its " external evidences, and upon such marks of honesty in the historical portions of its sacred books as would apply to any human composition." " In discussing this evidence," says he, " we walk by the light of experience. We assign the degree of weight that is due to the testimony of the first Christian upon the observed principles of human action."

He argues, too, from the abuse of the mode of reasoning which he opposes, and shows how naturally it leads sceptical men of talents, science, and literature, to reject revelation because it teaches certain doctrines abhorrent to their preconceived notions, their vanity, or their taste, though confessedly confirmed by outward testimony, which they themselves admit to be wonderfully strong. " But on a subject so much above us and beyond us, we should never think of opposing any preconception to the evidence of history. We should maintain the humility of the inductive spirit. We should offer our mind as a blank surface to every thing that comes to them supported by unexceptionable evidence. It is not from the nature of the facts themselves that we would pronounce upon their credibility, but from the nature of that testimony by which they are supported."

Dr. Chalmers was led to these conclusions by arguing on the system and in the spirit of the Scotch school of metaphysicians, who have applied, probably too exclusively, the principles of Lord Bacon's philosophy of observation and experiment to the study of the mind, and the investigation of moral truth, professing to reject all *à priori* reasoning as useless, if not presumptuous. In this peculiar train of thought he is original; otherwise he is by no means the first, who has advanced these opinions.

They have been zealously maintained at various times, during the two last centuries, by writers of great talent and learning, both clerical and lay; and it is not a little remarkable, too, by men entertaining the most opposite views, well consistent with a common acknowledgment of the authority of the Christian revelation, who have supported them from the most dissimilar motives, and with the most contradictory arguments.

Some scholars and philosophers, suspicious of every thing that they feared might give colour and countenance to enthusiasm, and anxious to place the authority of revelation upon the same foundation of solid reason and distinct outward evidence upon which we build our faith in history, and our judgment in most of the affairs of life, have argued as if the human intellect could judge accurately only of two classes of reasoning,

that of strict mathematical demonstration, and that founded upon the observation of palpable and material objects, and the experience of life; and they have therefore been led to believe that all inferences drawn from the consciousness of our own individual moral nature, and especially from our feelings and wishes, hopes, sorrows and fears, must be often fanatical, and always uncertain, if not wholly fallacious. Hence it is that the learned Le Clerc tells us, that whatever faith is at this day in the world among Christians, depends purely upon the testimony of men.* His illustrious cotemporary and friend, John Locke, in some passages of the Essay on the Human Understanding, seems occasionally to lean to the same opinion, (which is in fact very much in unison with his metaphysical doctrines, as to the origin of ideas, and the general tone and spirit of his philosophy) although elsewhere he argues ably and confidently from the internal evidence afforded by the purity of the morality and the reasonableness of the doctrines of Christianity.

On the other hand, this very same conclusion has been still more warmly maintained by many excellent men, who, full of zeal and reverence for the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, were fir-

* I quote Le Clerc at second-hand, and cannot refer to the passage or work.

ed with a holy indignation at the intrusion of speculative ethics and metaphysical subtleties, so often fallacious and unsubstantial, and always of little practical edification, into the public teaching of Christian divines—sometimes thus directly and openly mingling with and corrupting the most important revealed truths; but much oftener silently usurping their place and peculiar office and honours.

They have therefore asked "the men of morals, nurtured in the shades of Academus," in the indignant language of Cowper:—

> Is Christ the abler teacher, or the schools?
> If Christ, then why resort at every turn
> To Athens or to Rome, for wisdom short
> Of man's occasions, when in Him reside
> Grace, knowledge, comfort—an unfathomed store?
> How oft when Paul has served us with a text,
> Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully preached!

This was the feeling which animated Dr. Patten, Bishop Horne, Jones of Nayland, and other divines of the Hutchinsonian school, in the controversy which arose at Oxford about the middle of the last century, and which was maintained for some time with great warmth by these writers on the one side, and on the other by Dr. Kennicot, the celebrated biblical critic, and other men of ability and note in their day. This controversy has long ago passed into oblivion; but I have referred to it as well to mark the history of opi-

nion, and to show that Dr. Chalmers is not singular in his views, as because Horne and his friends, have, from their great sincerity and learning, and their many amiable qualities, exercised, and on most accounts very deservedly exercised, a great influence over the religious opinions of Great Britain—extending far beyond the circle of those who can be strictly considered as belonging to the same school; and which is to this day clearly discernible.

They maintained, as Dr. Chalmers does, though not precisely for the same reasons, that the Christian religion, so far as it is recommendable to the understanding, stands solely upon the foundation of miracles wrought, and prophecies fulfilled, which, when plainly alleged upon the warrant of sacred history, demand an implicit assent to the doctrines they are adduced to confirm, and therefore supersede all abstract speculation, all reasonings, *à priori*, concerning fitness, probability, grounds and reasons of utility, or the correspondence of the doctrines with the common notions of men on the principles of, what these divines decidedly and unqualifiedly hold to be, a supposed natural religion. This they asserted, "not, says one of their ablest reasoners,* because they judged it right to admit any propo-

* Dr. Patten.

sition as true, upon any authority whatsoever, which is really and manifestly contrary to fitness or common sense, nor because human reason is blind or powerless; but because, in all reasonings concerning the fitness, wisdom, justice, goodness, of any supposed procedure, human reason is necessarily weak from the want of proper data, however strong within its proper sphere; as an eagle's eye would be weak if it should attempt to look into the kingdom of heaven."

High as is the authority for these doctrines, there is still a very far greater and more uniform weight of opinion on the opposite side, from the days of the earliest Christian apologists, down to our own times.

The character and efficacy of this religion have been always relied upon, and continually urged as presenting the most cogent and persuasive argument for its authority and reception, as well by almost all divines, essayists, and writers of popular and hortatory theology, as by those who, like Arnobius and Lactantius among the ancients, or Grotius, Pascal, and Addison among the moderns, have written expressly upon its evidences. But although the deliberate opinions of the wise and good are always entitled to respect, and the agreement of many of them must generally furnish a strong *prima facie* proof, if not of certain truth, yet clearly of probability; still this

is a question which should not be decided by authority alone, since we have the means of judging for ourselves within our power, about us and within us.

This is a subject which, while it involves the highest principles of mental philosophy, is of the most extensive and the most practical importance. Let us examine it, then, not in the spirit of controversy, but with the honest hope of being able to extract from apparently jarring opinions that portion of truth which each of them may contain.

There is, without question, in these remarks of Chalmers and others who think with him, a great deal of most valuable truth, well calculated to sober the mind, by making it sensible of its own weakness, and thus to check that presumptuous philosophy, or spurious theology, which, after admitting the message of revelation in general terms, goes on to pick and cull from its contents, and to say upon its own authority, "*this* fact or doctrine is true and divine, while *that* is to be rejected as improbable."

It is clearly of the very nature of revelation, that it must be of something not previously known, and not discoverable by unaided reason; and man's hypothetical conjectures concerning the being and government of his Maker, are, and must be, wilder and more distant from the truth than those of a child, respecting the methods and

causes of the deepest plans of policy, or the most complicated or stupendous works of human art, invention or science. If every observation of our own nature, and all our trials of our own powers in the way of invention or of speculation, did not at once teach us this humbling lesson, the history of physical and astronomical science would afford an unanswerable and practical demonstration of it, in the long series of systems in chemistry, medicine, astronomy—in short, in every department of natural knowledge, which were founded upon pure hypothesis, and to our limited comprehension appeared at the first glance highly satisfactory, and sufficient to account for all the phenomena, until, enlightened by a wider observation of nature itself, we saw their perfect absurdity.

No where is there a more signal demonstration of this great truth, than in the science of medicine.

That has been from very early ages, a learned profession, filled with ingenious men, anxious to extend the bounds of human science, and augment the power of their own art. The field of inquiry, though of the deepest interest to all, and though submitted to our closest and most minute inspection, is comparatively narrow; yet it is said by those who have most accurately traced the history of the healing art, that of all the discoveries which have crowned the labours of the

anatomist, and the researches of the physiologist, not a single one has been the direct result of hypothetical reasoning.

Analogy, from observed facts, guided by that general presumption of the unity and simplicity of the laws of nature, which it is the uniform tendency of scientific investigation to excite and confirm, has sometimes, it is true, created an indistinct expectation of those laws which were afterwards found really to exist; but it was humble and diligent observation alone that collected and arranged the great and solid acquisitions of science; while in its sure though slow progress, it sternly demolished theory after theory, which philosophical speculation had framed as to the probable structure, the uses, and governing laws of the human frame.

If reason is then thus powerless in her speculations upon the laws of that little part of the material world most immediately subject to her own government, inspection and experiment, how should she dare to frame a conjecture as to what is or ought to be the character of an eternal and infinite plan of moral government? When this plan is in part unfolded to her study, with sufficient attestation of its truth, (no matter of what nature,) she has clearly no right to reject any portion of it, because it may not in any way conform to her own past experience, or be-

cause the wisdom of it cannot be distinctly traced, or every plausible difficulty at once removed. Whatever facts are sufficiently proved it is her duty to receive. And if this be so, does it not follow that it is equally presumptuous and foolish to attempt to form any judgment whatever upon the essential truth and value of a revelation when it is offered to us? Ought we not, and must we not confine ourselves strictly to the examination of the external testimony with which it is accompanied?

This inference does not by any means necessarily follow. The conclusion is too broad. For, it must be remembered, on the other hand, that this same faculty of reason by which we judge of the force and value of testimony, and by which we resolve the multiplied facts collected by our observation and experience into general laws, has yet other and higher objects, and uses, and enables us to discover various important relations—relations not gathered from external observation, but which the mind develops in the exercise of its native powers—besides those of probable and contingent truth. That, among these are many bearing the acknowledged impress of immutability and of universal obligation, of certain and necessary existence, of right and wrong. That although we could not, *à priori*, before the observation of nature or the revelations of religion, anticipate the course

of either, yet, when the knowledge of God's laws, whether material or moral, is once brought to our minds, we have the power of perceiving much, though certainly but a part, of their fitness, their beauty, and their utility. That we know, and are conscious, that "there is a light given to every man that cometh into the world," and a "law written upon the hearts of all," and however feeble and imperfect the knowledge which we gain from these may be, they are still so far a species of natural revelation, and cannot therefore but be in strict consonance with a fuller and brighter manifestation of the divine wisdom, bestowed in another manner.

All of us have natural ideas of justice and moral excellence, and we are capable of intuitive perceptions of many other truths, far beyond the possible range of our observation. The notion of time once awakened in our minds, swells of itself into that of measureless eternity—space expands without bounds into an incomprehensible infinity; all existence proclaims to us the necessary pre-existence of some antecedent and intelligent cause; the ideas of unbounded wisdom and power, spontaneously spring up with the exercise of our faculties; we are compelled to form moral estimates of ourselves and our actions, partial and obscure, it is true, but such as to awaken the conception of guilt, and the instinctive sense of

accountability; our consciences bear witness, and our thoughts "accuse or else excuse one another." In spite of all this, the imaginations of men are left at liberty to frame, and always have framed for themselves, codes of ethics and systems of religious belief, such as would best conform to their vices, or flatter their pride, or sooth their apprehensions. But however and whenever Truth appears in its might and glory, though man's vices may impel him to fly from her light, and to close his ear to her voice, she comes not as an utter stranger. There are principles of reason—there is a living monitor of conscience within, to which she can appeal, and which will confess her presence and acknowledge her authority, although they cannot compel the will to yield to her sway.

These are in themselves vague, unimpressive, and wholly unconnected, either with each other, or with the practical springs of action in our nature, until by some other power they become embodied into a congruous form, and are rendered active, present and efficient. Still, they are naturally in the mind and belonging to it; if not innate, they yet are certainly natural; and they prepare and enable us to comprehend revelation, and to perceive at once the intrinsic evidence of much of its truth.

This, by the way, seems to me the true idea of what moral philosophers have termed

Natural Religion, the very existence of which has been strenuously denied by some divines. It is not, as many philosophers have held, that there is really a self-evident system of religion, imperfect, indeed, but true and pure so far as it goes, to which all men, by the natural use of their faculties, actually do or easily may attain. All experience, all history refutes such an opinion. Whole nations, wise and enlightened in other matters, have lived for ages in darkness, and fallen down before idols, and celebrated them with loathsome or abominable rites; whilst the philosopher who could throw aside the base superstitions of his age or country, when he launched into the vast ocean of metaphysical or even ethical speculation, was tossed about by every wave of doubt. "Doubting, hesitating, casting around anxious glances of perplexity and fear, my mind is tossed about without power to direct its course in the vast and shoreless ocean of uncertainty,"* is the feeling and eloquent confession of Cicero, describing his own speculations upon the state of the soul after death; and it is a true picture of the best efforts of unassisted human philosophy. Still it is just as evident that there are principles or powers in the natural constitution of the intellect which en-

* "Dubitans, circumspectans, hesitans, multa adversa revertens, tanquam in rate in mari immenso nostra vehitur oratio." *Cicero*

able it to apprehend certain sublime truths relating to the being, attributes, and moral laws of God, when they are offered to its consideration, either by revelation, by tradition, or more imperfectly by the workings of its own thoughts, suggested by experience and the course of nature and life: since, without these natural principles of religion, or, to speak more correctly, without this natural power of understanding certain truths, they could never, by any power of definition or logic, or the observation of external nature, be at all brought within the sphere of our comprehension.

But when once introduced into the mind, these truths remain there fixed and unalterable; not, without other aid, excluding erroneous or absurd opinions; but neither are they ever overshadowed by them. For thus, even in the wildest dreams of Asiatic superstition or the grossest polytheism of antiquity, the ideas of an all-powerful first cause, and of future accountability to his judgment and laws, have always kept its place.

Moreover, men seldom look much into their own breasts; and when they do, they soon turn impatiently from an examination which affords them but little pleasure. But that religion which speaks much of man's internal character, and his moral situation and history, and declares many

and deeply interesting circumstances and facts relating to them, which he had never before attended to, so far submits its claims to his judgment, and enables and invites him to confirm or refute them, by the comparison of his nature with the pictures which she gives of it. While, therefore, conscience, memory and observation here furnish the materials for the inquiry, it is the privilege and duty of reason to decide on the consistency and truth of this internal evidence, whilst it is our duty to guard well, lest the passions do not thrust her from the judgment seat.

There is an obvious distinction (which has yet been frequently overlooked, and this has given rise to much of the doubt existing on this subject) between the power of discovering truth, and that of examining and deciding upon it when offered to our judgment.

In matters of human science, to how few is the one given, and how common is the other. Look at that vast mass of mathematical invention and demonstration, which has been carried on by gifted minds in every age, in continual progress, from the days of the learned priesthood of ancient Egypt, to those of the discoveries of La Place and La Grange. Who is there of the mathematicians of this generation, who could be selected as capable of alone discovering all this prolonged and continuous chain of admirable de-

monstration? If left to their own unaided researches, how far would the original and inventive genius of Newton or Pascal have carried them? Yet we know that all this body of science, this magnificent accumulation of the patient labours of so many intellects may be examined, and rigorously scrutinized in every step, and finally completely mastered and familiarized to the understanding in a few years' study, by a student, who, trusting solely to his own mind, could never have advanced beyond the simplest elements of geometry.

This reasoning may be applied, either directly or by fair analogy, to every part of our knowledge of the laws of nature or of mind, and it therefore seems to be neither presumptuous nor unphilosophical, but, on the contrary, in strict accordance with the soundest analogical reasoning to maintain, that though "the world by wisdom could not know God," yet, that so far forth as he reveals himself to men, and calls upon them to receive and obey that revealed will, he has given to them faculties, by no means compelling, but yet enabling them to understand his revelation, to perceive its truth, excellence and beauty, and to become sensible of their own wants of its instruction, as well as to estimate that extrinsic human testimony by which it may be supported or attended.

Nor is man, in the conduct of life and the discernment of any of those principles which demand and are entitled to have an efficient control over his character, left solely to the guidance of his reasoning faculty. There are given to him other moral lights to guide him on the journey of life—other capacities and endowments, often enabling him to outstrip the slow and hesitating conclusions of his understanding—warm sympathies, social affections, feelings of gratitude, veneration and devotion; and when, in some dread pause of the feverish tumult of life, he withdraws his attention from without, and turns it upon himself, conscience awakens shame, sorrow, remorse and fear. All these, gross ignorance or brutal sensuality may keep inactive and asleep; they may be wilfully disregarded in the tumult of the passions, or may be driven from the mind by vicious habits: yet, still, they are a constituent part of man's nature, and were bestowed upon him as some of the means to conduct him to truth and virtue. Can it then well be, that when the highest duties and the most momentous truths are presented to his acceptance, these principles should be wholly inoperative? Can it be, that in the revelation to man, not merely of his Maker's will, but of his own relation to him, and of the mysterious history of that relation, there should be nothing to which the sentiments and

sympathies of our breasts are responsive? Nothing to awaken the affections or to touch the heart?

Ah! surely not—surely if such a religion be really true, it may be felt, as well as understood, by those for whom it was designed.

Now, the existence of such a congruity between the faith so proposed, and our purest and truest sentiments, in addition to its direct influence upon the affections, constitutes an argument forcibly addressed to the understanding. It shows the adaptation of means to the end, the fitness of the religion to man's uses, its tendency to purify his heart, subdue his vices, and promote his happiness and excellence. It proves that it came from him who made man, and who knows what is in him.

Nor does it afford any sound or valid argument on the opposite side, in contradiction to this testimony, that there are also deeply and thoroughly interwoven in man's nature, many other principles of action, many appetites, sentiments, dispositions and passions, in utter and active hostility to the requirements, and even to the theory of all true religion and revealed morality. The power of such principles, most frequently, is much too great to be opposed by other gentler and better affections, or to submit to the sway of reason. But the authority due to these several

springs of action, is by no means to be measured by their relative power. There is an inexorable monitor within our breasts which sternly decides upon these claims, and which, whilst it often yields without a struggle to the worst and basest tendencies of our nature, is never wholly unable to give us information as to their true character. In the discipline of life, our selfish or our animal propensities, are constantly rushing into fierce collision with our moral sentiments, and almost as constantly mastering them; but in this conflict the true characters of both are developed to the mind, and if we do not abuse or stupify our faculties of discerning right and wrong, we are able to approve, intellectually at least, of every thing that commends itself to our better affections, and to see the evil of that in which we may yet continue to take pleasure.

Finally, to resort to the sure test of facts, it is certain that neither the historical nor the critical argument is substantially that upon which the faith of the great body of Christians in all ages has rested.* The ordinary and settled government of Providence has offered these grounds of conviction to only a limited class of society. They require some previous reading, a tolerable,

* This is allowed by Dr. Chalmers, in the preface to his Essay, and it is difficult to reconcile his remarks there with the unqualified argument in the body of the work.

if not a very high degree of skill in history and antiquity, in the inquiring into testimony, and in the judgment of motives and character. All this, in the present state of society, cannot be the lot of very many. How then does the unlettered Christian judge of the truth of his religion? Must he rely blindly and implicitly upon the authority of his teacher? Can he rest with undoubting confidence upon his own transient and irregular, however sincere and fervent, devotional feelings? In short, does his reason remain wholly useless and inactive in this most momentous decision? If we believe in the religion, can we reasonably think this to be the case? Why is he called upon to receive that which he has no means of knowing to be true? He has Moses and the prophets in his hands, but why should he hearken to their teaching, since it is thus impossible that he should "know of their doctrine whether it be of God?"

It is true that a statement of the historical and prophetic proof may be, and often has been, presented to the unlearned, in clear and succinct summaries: such as that beautiful model of lucid and powerful popular argument in the little tract of Leslie, which has been mentioned in a former Essay. But how does the illiterate Christian judge whether the facts upon which these arguments are founded are true? How does he know

whether the books so cited are not forged or falsified! Should a sceptic, of his own attainments, (such as who that has been an attentive observer of society, either here or in Great Britain, has not often seen!) armed with some few of the trite, common-place objections and difficulties which have been hundreds of times repeated, and almost as often refuted, talk to him of priestcraft, and forgery, and fraud, whither is his mind to turn for satisfaction, if he has no other substantial ground of reason to rest upon? It requires, to be sure, no great share of knowledge to understand the whole chain of external testimony; and without any portion of what is called scholarship, persons of both sexes of that rank of general acquirement and cultivation very common in our age and nation, may feel the whole force of Paley's or Chalmers' historical arguments, and comprehend the full weight of the several authorities, and hardly want a prompter to detect the futility of the sneers, doubts, and objections of Voltaire or Paine. But I am not speaking of such persons. I speak of the thousands and hundreds of thousands of people in the past, the present, and probably in many future generations, for whose instruction this revelation was intended, to whose acceptance it is presented, and by whom it is or will be accepted and held honestly, firmly, and wisely; but to whom it is idle to talk of fathers,

and ancient classics, of historical proof, of the evidence of quotations, manuscripts, and translations. To one of this class, all this is in an unknown tongue, and by far the greater part of the historical testimony is as a sealed book.

Yet we know full well that amongst those whom learned arrogance looks down upon as the illiterate, there is always a multitude of sound and active understandings, who reason fairly and justly upon all matters within the range of their examination—who decide wisely upon points in which they cannot argue fluently; and that among these persons are to be found very many who are deeply impressed with what they believe to be a rational conviction of the primary truths of their religion.

The sceptic will indeed tell us, that the uneducated professor of Christianity believes in it, simply because it is the religion of his country, of his neighbourhood, or of his forefathers: precisely for the same reason that he would have been a Mussulman, had he been born upon the banks of the Euphrates, or an idolatrous worshipper of Seeva and Vishnoo, if he lived on those of the Ganges.*

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* Voltaire, who, in the most brilliant and excursive flights of his fancy or wit, never loses sight of his great object, has adroitly insinuated this objection in a passage of splendid declamation in his Zaire, familiar to all who are conversant with French literature—

> ———Les soins qu'on prend de notre enfance
> Forment nos sentimens, nos mœurs, notre créance;
> J'eusse été près du Gange, esclave de faux dieux,
> Chrétienne dans Paris, Mussulmane dans ces lieux.

So far as relates purely to the uninquiring and inoperative assent to, and the nominal or merely external profession of, any system of worship which may be supported or recommended by early education and habit, or by interest, or public opinion, or state policy, this is perfectly true. It may be true, too, to a certain extent, with regard to the particular forms of worship, and those speculative opinions connected with the distinctions of particular sects, respecting which the illiterate may have too little leisure or knowledge for due investigation. But it is not so as repects that belief which is an efficient principle of action, which, so far from being the result of habit and prejudice, is that to which favourite habits are reluctantly sacrificed, for which cherished indulgencies are relinquished; which finds, in the habits of individuals and the opinions of society, many more obstacles to overcome than allies to aid its influence. So far is this from being the effect of education or authority, that it springs up oftenest at those times when authority, interest, and opinion have the least hold upon the mind; it comes in the time of danger or sorrow, on the bed of sickness or death; when the mind is forced in upon itself; when the illusions and the sway of the world fade away; when men are instructed in the most useful wisdom by the experience of their own lives, and the unavoidable sense of their own infirmities.

In the order of Providence, it is certain that the lights of religion, like all other means of intellectual or moral improvement, are distributed variously in different parts of the world. But though the access to the knowledge of Christianity may be owing to some single circumstance of birth, or residence, or education, such belief in it never is, and cannot be, the effect of those causes alone. In the use, or abuse, or neglect of this, as well as in those of the other advantages which the state of civilization and knowledge in the society in which he moves, presents to man, he is not a mechanical agent, necessarily formed by those about him to their likeness; he has faculties which, without certain opportunities of exercise, would have been dormant, but for whose right employment he now becomes accountable.

From all these considerations, it therefore appears to me to be not less the sound conclusion of reason, than it is the doctrine of revelation itself, that the leading and practical truths of religion are made manifest by their own light, and present themselves to be judged by their own evidence.

Like all important truths, not directly cognizable by means of the senses, they must and do require patient attention; and, like other truths having a moral and practical tendency, they may be shut out from our minds by pride, evil passions

and prejudices; and their reception or rejection will of consequence depend much upon moral causes, external to the mere exercise of the reasoning power: since there is no better ascertained law of our nature, than that in moral inquiries, whether relating to action or opinion, the tendencies of a stubborn will necessarily have a strong control over the decisions of the understanding.

Let us then for a moment, assuming the Christian religion to be from heaven, inquire how in fact it does address itself to man.

It unfolds to him his own character and situation; his duties, and the means of discharging them; the moral diseases under which he labours, and the remedies he needs. It unveils to him the overpowering certainty of immortality—a truth consonant with the instinctive and universal expectations of all men in all ages; familiar to every mind—and though overshadowed with fears and doubts, yet every where and at all times wished for, hoped for, and believed. It presents to him a high and beautiful, an unostentatious and pure morality, taught in weighty and impressive aphorisms, or in natural and touching similitudes, or embodied in the most engaging forms of action and character. At the same time that it thus rouses him to the contemplation of the possible excellences of his own

nature, it turns his reflections back upon himself, and on the survey of his own life and thoughts; shows him his unworthiness, and teaches him at once the lesson of penitence and of humility. After convincing him of his guilt, it speaks to him of pardon, but a pardon so granted as to carry within it a lively evidence that his Maker looks not with indifference upon his vices, but that it requires an exertion of active beneficence to render mercy consistent with justice. It offers him pardon on the condition of belief in the voluntary sufferings of a Mediator; a fact which he cannot thoroughly believe in as the meritorious ground of acceptance, without a deep sense of guilt and unworthiness; and which, if he does seriously and earnestly believe, cannot but become in him a perpetual and living spring of gratitude and devotion. It speaks to him of the nature and attributes of God; and this not in the way of dry and didactic system, but as those attributes are actually exhibited in the manifestation of his power and goodness. Whilst it offers to man's consideration subjects to engage and employ the noblest powers of his reason, it addresses him also as a being largely endowed with sentiments and affections; and it calls upon the warm sensibilities and strong emotions of his breast, moving him in turns by each and every natural motive of interest, duty, and feeling, to remorse, to fear, to repentance, to devotion, and to gratitude.

Surely there needs no laboured argument to prove that there are common principles of our nature, rational faculties and moral qualities, for which all this was intended and adapted, so that if the revelation be true, it will be seen and felt to be so, not indeed by every man, and fully and in all its parts, but still quite distinctly by all who give it the reception which it requires.

If it be from God, it bears upon its face that it was made for man, since it treats concerning him, and is fitted for his needs and uses; and it cannot be that man should have no witness in himself which he may question concerning its truth.

If it promulgate doctrines mortifying to his pride, restrictive of his appetites, alien to the habits and pursuits which delight him, all this indeed affords strong reason that he should wish it to be false, but it does not at all prove it to be so. But if there be in its teachings clear and demonstrative contradictions to the first truths which every intellect acknowledges, if it enjoins or countenances immorality and vice, he may and he ought to pronounce it to be false.

It is my wish in these pages to avoid as much as possible the touching upon those questions of doctrine upon which Christians have differed, or even upon those great truths upon which most of them have agreed, and which seem to me the most important and the most clearly taught, but which

are not necessarily involved in the consideration of the moral or historical evidences of Christianity. But that the intention and bearing of this argument may not be misunderstood, it is proper to remark, that although it be a clear and pervading truth of Christianity, that to perceive and estimate its excellence and truth, the understanding must be opened from above; man's attention must be turned away from the earth-born cares which buzz around or glitter before him, and be forced inwardly upon his own breast, and his affections raised to higher objects; yet, however that mental illumination may be given, it is still the reason which judges, and we are accountable for the right use of that gift. These things are, indeed, (as we are told,) spiritually, but still most of them are also intellectually discerned. The night passes away, and the sun of righteousness arises to pour a flood of light around, cheering and guiding the wandering pilgrim; yet it is still the same eye, acting according to the same unchanged laws of vision which now discerns clearly what it before beheld, sometimes dim and obscure, and sometimes shaded and distorted into unreal and hideous shapes. The laws which govern the deductions of the mind are not altered, nor the intellectual powers changed, though the influence and control which his vices, habits, and desires had over them, have all passed away. But to return—

Thus, then, it is that the most unlettered Christian may, independently of all external evidence, found his faith upon proofs, never, it may be, formally brought out in words, and seldom taking in his mind the logical form of argument, or which he is able to unfold with precision to others, but still, upon most strictly rational proofs, drawn from his direct perceptions of the conformity of the doctrines which he believes, to his own individual nature and reason, his duties, his weakness, his vices, and his instinctive and irrepressible hopes and fears; of the agreement of the precepts and examples of revelation to whatever his understanding can conceive to be "true, honest, just, lovely, and of good report"—from the untaught and unuttered testimony which the promptings of his own heart afford to the value of the assistance, the consolation, the pardon which it offers: from the congruity of what it teaches of his Maker's being and government with his own partial and dim, but not less irresistible convictions of infinity, eternity, omnipotence—of immutable justice, goodness, and wisdom: convictions to which it is probable that no effort of his reason could have ever led him, but which, when once presented to the intellect, and considered without self-willed opposition, are immediately felt and acknowledged. Knowing and feeling all this, he rejoices to find that which was the dark surmise,

and the anxious wish of his heart, declared by revelation, and confirmed by his reason.

All these views are so congruous to our nature, as rational and moral beings, that I cannot doubt that they do constantly present themselves secretly and silently to the thoughts of thousands of Christians wholly unaccustomed to general speculation, and completely unable to communicate the grounds of their own belief to other minds. Thus is afforded an internal evidence of truth addressed to all who can think or feel; which requires no previous knowledge but the knowledge of their own hearts, and which the arts and doubts of scepticism cannot shake, because they can never reach it.

Literary men, conversant with the difficulties, the refined logic, and the clashing theories of moral science, as well as speculative theologians versed in the metaphysical subtleties of controversial divinity, looking back with complacent pride upon their own laborious studies, the long and patient attention which it has cost them to attain to any definite conclusions, and the perplexing doubts which still embarrass every part of their science, after employing and exhausting the genius of the most acute and profound inquiries from Aristotle to Jonathan Edwards; whilst they will most readily allow the moral sensibility of uneducated men to the powers of religious im-

pression, are slow to admit that vulgar minds and undisciplined intellects can gain any really rational perception of truths, connected with and involving such grand and high contemplations. They overlook the marked distinction between the nice analysis of principles, the accurate statement of definitions, the logical inferences from them, the daring solution of difficulties in the government of the world, and the structure of our own thoughts; in short, between all that constitutes the theory of metaphysical science, and these mysterious but certain first truths and rational instincts which are implanted in the breasts of all men, and which prepare them to confess the power of a Creator, to apprehend his perfections, and to know the obligation of his laws. The one is indeed an elevating employment of the intellect, but in its results how often vain and false—always how cold and inoperative! The others are in fact the germs and seeds of all intellectual and moral knowledge, and they are not the less efficient because they are not embodied in words, nor sorted and fashioned into systems. If philosophers will not confess them to be of reason, they must then be considered as something nobler and more divine than reason itself. They may lie dormant, in the darkness of ignorance, or the corruption of gross vice; but, when the occasion which is to call them

into energy arrives, they develop themselves, we know not how: heaven's beams shine upon them, and they burst into life and power.

How or why this is so, we cannot say; but so we know it to be. It is so with relation to the obligation of those social duties which require constantly to be proposed and enforced, but never to be proved; so it is with reference to our personal rights, and those fundamental rules of justice which may be violated, but can never be repealed by senates or nations, which need neither expounders nor commentators, which are the same at Rome and at Athens, in past and in future ages, which are universal and immortal, and acknowledge but one lawgiver, even the God of all men.* So, too, is it with reference to those yet higher duties, which involve or comprehend all others, and those noblest privileges of man, which admit him to the presence and the favour of his Maker.

The study of mental philosophy is but the development of the common intuitions of reason and the arrangement of the observed laws of our

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* Huic legi nec abrogari fas est, neque derogari ex hac aliquod licet, neque tota abrogari potest. Nec vero aut per senatum aut per populum solvi hac lege possumus. Neque est querendus explanator aut interpres ejus alius. Nec erit alia lex Romæ, alia Athenis—alia nunc, alia post-hac; sed et omnes gentes et omni tempore, una lex et sempitema, et immortalis continebit. Unusque erit communis quasi magister et imperator omnium, Deus. *Cicero.*

common nature ; and he to whom the philosophy of revelation is proposed, cannot need for its comprehension the previous discipline of Aristotle or Locke.

Nevertheless, in a general and speculative examination of this question, we ought not wholly to pass over the purely metaphysical proofs which have been brought in corroboration of certain of the grandest truths of Christianity. These proofs are exceedingly limited in their use, and very subject to be abused to foster the pride of intellect, and to give the dress of profound science to the vain imaginations of a philosophy " falsely so called."

If, however, leaving the firm, solid ground of humble faith, or of natural sentiment, common feelings and common sense, we ascend to those cloudy regions of lofty and cold speculation, into which philosophy has slowly toiled, in her aspirations to catch a nearer view of the eternal cause of all things, and the boundless foundations of his throne, it seems certain, that although the wise men of this world have for ages deluded themselves with a show of " vain wisdom and false philosophy," yet the cautious inquirer may, with Clarke, and Sir Isaac Newton, with Fenelon, Price, and Butler, arrive at some safe conclusions concerning the necessary existence of an eternal and infinite mind, and the immutable at-

tributes of his being, and fixed laws of his government. These conclusions were probably originally suggested by revelation, yet they are supported by arguments and demonstrations of another kind, and in all of them he who has the power of fixing and continuing his attention, and the logical acuteness necessary for tracing the steps of a very refined and subtile investigation, cannot but believe that he can discern the impression of eternal truth, although they be imperfectly apprehended, and on every side bounded by clouds and thick darkness.

These things, says Dr. Samuel Clarke, in his correspondence with Butler, speaking of one of the grandest and most demonstrative, and at the same time to my mind the most shadowy, and by far the least useful of all such speculations—the *à priori* argument for the necessary existence of one infinite and eternal being—"These things are indeed very difficult to express, and not easy to be conceived, but by very attentive minds; but to such as can and will attend, nothing, can I think, be more demonstratively certain."*

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that such remarks can have no application to those first and obvious truths, or instinctive principles of belief, (to which I have repeatedly referred,) and

* Correspondence between Butler and Clarke.

the immediate inferences from them that form the foundation of all moral reasoning, and either spring up of themselves in every mind, or require only to be stated to be received. They refer altogether to those subtile and abstract chains of reasoning by which speculative men, in all ages, aspiring to rival the long continuity of deduction which prevails in mathematical demonstration, have undertaken to argue out the great conclusions of religious and ethical truth, by the aid of the logical faculty alone, without recourse to the observed facts of human nature, or to external proof or instruction.

Thus it is that speculative and ingenious authors* have laboured to prove, from the first principles and data afforded by reason alone, (and often not unsuccessfully as to the logical accuracy of the argument, though generally, with the smallest possible power of impression for any purpose of conviction or of popular instruction,) the self-existence of an eternal Creator of all things; his unity, his infinity and necessary omnipotence; his perfection of wisdom and all excellence, truth, and justice; the unchange-

* Descartes, Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Clarke, Bentley, Dr. Price, Doddridge, Fenelon, and many more names, illustrious alike for their virtues and their talents, might be enumerated as having taken the "high à priori road," at which wits and satirists have sneered, but which I cannot think erroneous, though I am convinced it is of little utility.

able character of right and wrong resulting from his nature; the immortality and presumptive immateriality of the soul; the accountability and future judgment of man, and the moral government of the universe, administered by rewards and punishments.

Surely the faint glimpses which reason thus gains of the highest wisdom, cannot be in contradiction to the better defined and nearer views of true revelation. Sound philosophy must agree with, and in some manner tend to confirm, all true religion; and this agreement is again another and distinct species of internal evidence, of an unsubstantial and speculative kind, it is true, and it is equally certain, by no means extensive or efficacious in its influence, but yet not to be overlooked or rejected in any enlarged consideration of the subject.

Whether, therefore, we limit our consideration to the purely speculative inquiry, or, guided by a wiser and more useful philosophy, investigate the practical operation of revelation in the manner in which it may, and does, commend itself to the consciences and obedience of by far the greatest number of those who embrace it, it is quite evident, that the conclusions of those who absolutely deny the power of reason to judge in any degree of the truth and worth of a revelation, from the character of its doctrines and pre-

cepts, is rather the opposite of a dangerous error, than the sober truth itself.

So far is the extrinsic proof of the verity of any religious instruction (no matter how plain or immediate such proof may be) from excluding all consideration of its moral evidence, that it is in fact alike the first and warmest impulse of a devout heart, and the most natural tendency of a thinking mind, to examine, and study the truth so communicated, applying to this study all its powers of intellect and resources of knowledge; and this, most certainly, not as a judge, arrogating to decide upon the wisdom of God; but as an intelligent disciple, eager to understand the revelation, and confident of being able to find in it abundant matter for admiration and reverence.

Let us in imagination transport ourselves back to the times of the apostles, and place ourselves in the situation of the primitive Christians: suppose, for instance, of an intelligent Thessalonian or Colossian, to whom the preaching of Paul had been visibly confirmed, by undeniable miracles wrought before his eyes. On this ground he believes the religion which Paul teaches him to be true. But is that all? Would he who received it sincerely and fervently at that period, any more than at the present, limit his consideration to that single point, and be content to regard his religion merely as the certain but arbitrary will of an all-powerful being, whom he worships

solely as an omnipotent ruler? Would he not, on the contrary, examine and search into it in all its bearings, confidently trusting that he would find it, at least in some degree, and in confessedly imperfect apprehensions of its whole nature and objects, to show forth the wisdom and goodness of its author?

Now, if we hold that the human mind is necessarily incapable of forming any right judgment of the credibility of divine truth, prior to being convinced of its authenticity from some extrinsic source, and this, not because bad propensities and ungovernable passions cloud its view and turn away its attention, but solely because reason has in itself no possible capacity of judging upon such subjects; then it seems to follow, upon the same principles, that after being put in possession of the proper external proof, that that circumstance alone would be of little effect in throwing light upon the real character of the dispensation. But the fact is not so.

In the application of his reason to the examination of his religious duties and opinions, man finds no exemption from the universal law of his condition. He is still conscious that he is

> Placed on the isthmus of a middle state,
> A being darkly wise and feebly great.*

He is very ignorant, and on many subjects

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* A being darkly wise and *rudely* great. *Pope.*

he must be content to remain so. This ignorance should teach him humility. It should guard him from the folly of questioning the truth which comes to him with its proper proof, or from receiving in form the teachings of his Creator, and refining away their substance. Yet his ignorance is not total.

By the light of his own mind he can discern the forms of things present to it, placed within the range of its action or contemplation, and designed for its improvement. By that light alone he can often recognize the seal of their divine author's power and benevolence stamped upon them; but this light sheds its rays over but a narrow sphere, and cannot penetrate the thick darkness which enshrouds the future, the remote, the inaccessible, and the infinite.

As if to restrain his presumption, and to mortify his pride, an impenetrable cloud of darkness surrounds him on every side, and partially hides from his eager curiosity the things which are apparently most near and present, even himself and his own nature, and the material objects subject to his control. As if to elevate his conceptions and to fill his soul with the sense of his capacity for greater excellence, he has powers of observation, and knowledge, and reason, which neither time nor space can circumscribe, which can carry his mind far beyond the limits of his own little world, and instruct him

in the grandest and most universal laws of the creation, and finally lead him to the throne of God, there unveiling to him some faint but sure glimpses of the divine character and greatness. He has faculties bestowed upon him not unworthy of an immortal being. These do not, indeed, enable him to discover what the will and government of his Maker must be or ought to be; but by them, if exercised in candour and humility, whatever his share of learning or talent may be, he may attain to know whether the revelation be true—"if the doctrine be of heaven or of man." In this momentous employment of his faculties, he is not obliged to confine his search to the evidence contained in the records of history, and the books of human authors; for he can appeal also to the indelible laws of right reason, and to the living volumes of his own memory and heart.

ESSAY III.

The probable Characteristics of Truth in the Doctrines, Precepts, and Moral Influence of any Religion.

In one of the most celebrated dialogues of Plato,* Socrates is represented as meeting his favourite pupil Alcibiades, at the porch of a temple, where he is about to offer a sacrifice. The arrogant and aspiring young Athenian is wrapt in deep thought; his mind is filled with the wildest dreams of military and political ambition, not unmixed with nobler sentiments, and lofty meditations. In a short interrogatory conversation, conducted after his accustomed manner of guiding and exciting the minds of his disciples to develop their own conclusions for themselves, by following out the natural deductions of common sense, from familiar and generally acknowledged principles or facts, Socrates soon convinces his pupil of the vanity and inconsistency of his desires, and shows him that he does not know how to worship or to pray aright, nor to ask of heaven such things as are truly useful for him;

* Plato in Alcibiade II. See note D.

that if he should obtain the objects of his vows, they might perhaps be granted to him more in anger than in favour; and that even science itself, which seems to be the most unquestionable and unmixed good, will often prove an injury, rather than a blessing, if it do not also include the knowledge of the best and highest wisdom. Human sagacity, he intimates, can never dispel or penetrate this darkness; and he that would be truly wise, must therefore wait patiently until some divine teacher should vouchsafe to become his instructor. When that time at length arrived, he would, like Diomede, in the epic fable, see the clouds which darkened his natural vision roll away from around him, and find himself enabled to discern and confess the power and presence of the Divinity, and to perceive good and evil, as they are in themselves, and not as they appear in distorted forms and false colours through the misty illusions of life.

This instruction of the great philosopher of common sense, was founded upon a clear and true perception of human ignorance and frailty; —for we may justly look upon this as the philosophy of Socrates, although, in the writings of Plato, he is generally employed as a sort of dramatic personage, to utter the opinions of his more eloquent and speculative disciple.

Let us now suppose that Alcibiades, not content, as Plato describes him to have been, to wait in eager but ignorant expectation of the coming of his future divine teacher, in the meanwhile presenting to his "guide, philosopher, and friend," the garlands which he had intended to have placed on the altar of Jupiter or Mars, had gone further, and had made some such inquiries as these: "When this heavenly teacher, whose coming you have led me to expect, and of whose benevolent care you assure me, at length appears, of what character, think you, will his instructions be? Is it probable or not, arguing, so far as we may without rashness or presumption, upon such a subject, from experience or analogy, that this super-human teaching will be in entire contradiction to natural reason, or that it will be wholly and in all its parts beyond and above its examination? Is it not probable, on the contrary, that like those grand truths concerning figure and numbers, which have been revealed to us by those who have made known to us the learning of the east, this doctrine, too, though beyond our power to discover, will, when announced, approve itself at once, and almost intuitively, to the intellect? At any rate, how think you shall we be enabled to judge of its truth, and of the authority to which it may be entitled?"

Such an inquiry would form the subject of a dialogue worthy to exercise the learned ingenuity of Barthelemy, or the philosophical eloquence and moral wisdom of Berkeley or Fenelon.

I cannot attempt to fill up this outline. The answers which Socrates or Plato could have given to these inquiries, would, of necessity, have been most vague and unsatisfactory; but using the lights which the moral history of man now affords us, and following the known laws of human nature, and the ordinary observed course of the administration of the divine government, in whatever manner the argument might be conducted, it could, I think, be naturally and reasonably brought to some such results as the following:

I. Independently of all consideration of the peculiar character of the intrinsic signs of truth and authority which it might contain, a revelation designed for the instruction of mankind, or of any considerable portion of them, would, in all probability, be accompanied or supported by evidence of some kind or other, sufficient to establish its veracity to the satisfaction of those who had competent opportunities for examining it, and who were required to receive it; otherwise its uses and effect would be circumscribed to the comparatively few persons to whom it was immediately or originally communicated; or else the submission to its requisitions might be in no small de-

gree the effect of caprice, or of arbitrary choice, and not of enlightened preference. Even if this apparent difficulty was obviated, in some manner which our imperfect knowledge of the scheme of the divine government makes us unable to anticipate, religion would yet seem to be in danger of wanting authority to attract and command the attention of the careless, and to repel or repress the doubts and oppositions of the wilfully perverse.

Nevertheless, it does not necessarily follow from this consideration, that such proof or corroboration would be irresistible in its power of commanding attention and enforcing conviction upon any men, however enlightened or learned; since we too well know, that the evidence and authority of the clearest and most indisputable points of moral duty, are by no means such as invincibly to compel assent, and still less to secure uniform and unvarying obedience. As, in the conduct of life, passion is often a successful rebel against reason and her laws, so reason, in her turn, might be unfaithful and dishonest to religion.

It would, therefore, arguing from the analogy of the degree of evidence and authority given by our Creator to the plainest precepts of natural morality, be no strong objection to the authority of any system of revelation, if its evidence, whether external or internal, were not so strong as to make

rejection impossible. Though, on the other side, it is highly probable, for the same reasons, that it would have quite enough proof to satisfy those who are willing to acknowledge, and desirous to obey, the natural laws of morality.

This is but a preparatory consideration, and rather obviates objections, and excites to inquiry and investigation, than furnishes positive proof. Let us go on to search for some decisive signs of probable internal evidence.

II. A revelation made to a being of very limited mental powers, and those powers developed and instructed by so brief and narrow an experience as ours, would, of course, contain many truths far beyond what his own intellect could itself reason out by deduction, or discover by observation or experience; many things, too, in direct contradiction to some of the inferences which he had plausibly and naturally, but erroneously, drawn from his imperfect knowledge and partial observations; but it assuredly would not contradict—on the contrary, it must inevitably harmonize with those most sure first principles of truth, and those direct and immediate conclusions from them which man knows intuitively, or can ascertain with certainty. When candidly examined and compared with what is previously known of our race and our nature, or with what, if never before observed, is yet within the power of our

observation, when the attention is earnestly directed towards it, so far as man could judge of or comprehend it at all, (for there might well be some parts of it altogether beyond his power of forming any judgment whatever concerning them,) it would unquestionably be found to be true, just, right, fitting, and useful. It might teach many things which reason could never have made known to us, but which, when once seen, would be acknowledged; others, which reason would not have anticipated as probable; some things, doubtless, the fact of whose existence is sufficiently comprehensible, but the manner wholly incomprehensible; but surely nothing which reason could distinctly perceive to be plainly impossible. It might also, not improbably, contain some truths either previously discovered, or discoverable, by the exercise of our ordinary faculties, but those enforced by more weighty considerations, and placed in new and unexpected, but still natural and probable relations.

Such, for instance, among many others, are the commonly acknowledged moral duties of justice, fidelity, and veracity, which Revelation has strengthened by higher sanctions and new motives; by more distinct views of futurity, and a deeper sense of obligation; by all the considerations that can give intensity to penitence and shame,

and kindle higher aspirations after holiness—which it has also placed in new relations; so that, while they serve as rules for the conduct of life, and show us what we ought to be, they bid us also think of what we are, impress on us the sense of our need of mercy for the past, and of aid and assistance for the future, and make the gratitude of those who receive these favours the efficient sources of truer and purer virtues.

The conclusions just stated seem to be fairly deducible from the very idea of a revelation made to such a mixed being as man by his all-wise and infinite Maker.

If, dropping for a moment the consideration of a revelation involving social or religious duties, we should imagine that, for some wise and beneficent purpose, the Supreme had deigned to unfold to the greatest of natural and mathematical philosophers whom the world has yet beheld, those laws of his material creation which are far beyond the grasp of human observation; is it not reasonable to think—indeed, can we at all doubt—that in the boundless range of creation thus laid open to the astonished contemplation of the sage, he would find, together with many new uses, connections and bearings of well-known laws, which he never could have imagined or conjectured, things innumerable, which human science never would have pre-supposed or

excogitated from any received and established principle—yet such that, when he compared them with his former more limited knowledge, he would perceive at once to agree with what he before knew of the fixed laws of that little part of creation with which he was acquainted, harmonizing in one grand whole, with all the unity of truth; or that he would observe many laws, qualities and modes of existence, which, had they been proposed to him as mere conjectures of human sagacity, he would have rejected as false or improbable? Surely, however, he would behold nothing that could contradict those mathematical and necessary truths which man knows by a sort of natural and rational revelation, if he knows any thing with absolute certainty, to be the unchangeable laws of all material being and action.

It is on precisely the same principles, that he who examines the laws and doctrines of Christianity, will find in what it teaches us concerning the unity, nature, spirituality, infinity, and eternity of God, of his government by rewards and punishments, his wisdom and power, as well as in what we are there taught of man, his character, condition and duties, very much that no searching of the mind, no study of the heart, no logical subtilty ever could find out. Yet all this, when it is once clearly stated, is found to be so conformable to our perceptions, consciences, and experience, as to be

now theoretically received as undeniable by many who reject the revelation itself; and in the very face of all historical testimony, as to the real progress of the human mind, in the knowledge of ourselves and our duties, and our Maker, to be claimed as forming an essential part of the common moral notions of all thinking men, by such writers as Lord Herbert of Cherbury, among the older, and Rousseau among those more recent sceptics, who, rejecting the facts, are yet anxious to retain the ethics and the sentiments of the gospel.

This is peculiarly true as relates to the ethics of Christianty. Revelation showed us for the first time the nature and excellence of those gentle, pure and lowly virtues, and of that humble devotion, over whose beauty and obligation the pride or the fiercer passions of men had cast so thick a veil, that undirected reason could not, or would not, perceive them. But when these are authoritatively announced, when motives to them are offered, when they are embodied in lovely forms of action and character, gladdening society with their mild presence, lightening the calamities of life, and assuaging its sorrows—that same reason can never sufficiently admire them, and every heart pays the homage of undissembled and involuntary approbation. Heathen antiquity did not know them; its genius and phi-

losophy could not discover them : but once seen, their worth is acknowledged by the most ignorant, and their beauty by the most vicious.

It is, by the way, well worthy of remark, that the attempt to separate the morals of Christianity from its faith, has always carried with it its own practical refutation. That philosophical religion, which is without a creed and without worship, has resulted in a morality without motive and without practice.

Again: we know but very little of our own hearts. In the whole maze of our mysterious existence, there is no greater problem to man than his own character ; but his memory has registered his past feelings and thoughts, and he can discern his present propensities; and when revelation speaks to him of himself, his reason may compare that teaching with the faithful records of his own breast, and authenticate it all.

Upon other points of belief: such, to take a conspicuous example, as the great and fundamental truth of an atonement for guilt, through the merits of a mediator, we find a revealed doctrine, such as would confessedly not have been presumed or conjectured; and it may even be, what, if stated nakedly and without application, connection, or other evidence, we might rightly look upon as very improbable ; but, yet, such as does in no wise contradict sound reason, or the

analogy of the known government of the physical or of the moral world. It would be a superfluous labour to enter into the details of argument and doctrine, illustrating this beautiful harmony between the Christian revelation and the revelation of nature; and to demonstrate from it, that much of what at the first glance seems improbable, is by no means impossible, or without resemblance in other parts of God's government and works. All this has been most fully and satisfactorily done in the Analogy of Bishop Butler, a work which leaves nothing to be desired on this subject, or on any other upon which it touches, however transiently, except that the excellent author had combined a more perspicuous style, a more lucid arrangement, and a happier power of familiar example and illustration, with the spirit of meek philosophy, practical sagacity, profound and patient thought, and large observation which distinguish all his inquiries.*

Every page of that profound and original argument, presents some signal demonstration of that principle, which it has been endeavoured to state and develop in these Essays—the amazing strength, and the still more amazing weakness, of human reason; showing how utterly feeble, how wildly absurd it is, when it endeavours to

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* See Note E.

penetrate, by its own sagacity alone, into the laws and designs of the Creator; yet, how acute and how comprehensive that sagacity becomes, when it is limited to its proper office, the examination and study of those laws to which the Creator has himself invited our attention, by placing them within the sphere of our knowledge, and making an acquaintance with them necessary or conducive to our happiness or virtue. But to return to our subject:—

Upon the whole, therefore, it would clearly afford a perfectly valid proof of the divinity of a religion, if its doctrines, containing some instructions transcending our understanding, were yet never contrary to it, and were in many points strongly confirmed by its deductions; and if, whilst this revelation laid open new truths, it moreover gave new authority and new uses to old ones, and enabled those who were before in darkness, to compare this instruction with nature, with reason, and with themselves; with their hearts, consciences and experience, and find them all to correspond. To pass on to another point:

III. Such a communication from an all-wise and benevolent Ruler, to his dependant creatures, would scarcely take place without some great and beneficent purpose in view. Coming from the highest wisdom, it would probably be for the highest possible good. But what can be a high-

er good to man than that of rendering him fit for the favours of his Maker, increasing his virtue, purifying his heart, and elevating him in the scale of moral, and consequently of intellectual beings?

Learned and speculative men have sometimes doubted how far morality could ever be the subject of discovery or revelation. They have gone over the various heads of Christian ethics, and have shown how consonant they all are to right reason; how admirably conducive to the well-being of society and the happiness of individuals; how congenial to the universal moral sentiment of man, who can never refrain from involuntarily giving some attestation to their excellence, though he may practically reject their authority; how powerfully some of them have been enforced by the lessons and eloquence of ancient philosophers, and how the sentiments inspired by others have lent a vivid and lasting charm to those strains of classical poetry which awaken responsive sympathies in every breast, because they are felt to utter the unsophisticated and universal voice of nature. Thus they have laboured, by eloquence and learning, to corroborate and establish the truth and value of this system of ethics. But since it is so far and so manifestly rational and natural, it has been plausibly questioned, whether it can give any decided evidence

of the other truths with which it may be associated ; whether it proves any more than that its first teachers were in this matter wise men, though in others they might have erred. Sceptics have insinuated the objection, and Christian advocates* have almost conceded it, and have regarded the purity, truth and excellence of the gospel morality, as proving but little more than the high and certain obligation of those rules themselves, and the great probity and matchless good sense of those by whom they were first promulgated. From this they justly infer the respect consequently due to the testimony of such men, when they declared that their knowledge was divinely communicated, and the great improbability that such a doctrine could have been otherwise formed by these illiterate men, or indeed by any persons whatever of their age and nation.

This reasoning is so far sound and conclusive, yet it presents a most limited and imperfect consideration of these remarkable characteristics.

Whether we consider moral objection as founded in the unchangeable and eternal character of the Deity, whose will is always guided by unerring and unvariable wisdom, and look upon it in relation to ourselves, as springing immediately from the moral nature which he has given to us,

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* See note F.

and as having a character of essential truth, more or less clearly perceptible to reason; or if we look solely to that test of utility, which some popular moralists have wished to establish as the very essence of all virtue, and which is certainly a constant concomitant, and never failing mark and indication of it: we may satisfy ourselves, that Christian morality is at once agreeable to reason, and to all our moral perceptions and feelings, and at the same time is evidently beneficial in its effects, and calculated to diffuse happiness around, and refresh and gladden the face of society. However, it is just as certain, that either as a whole, or in its great features, it never was reasoned out by any effort of logical ingenuity, nor inferred from the widest observation of human life, by man unblessed by revelation. Parts of it have been familiar to all persons in all times; more especially those principles which are absolutely essential to the existence and good order of society, and which find powerful auxiliaries in the domestic affections, or in the selfish prudence of men. But in all that forms the morality of devotion, in all that relates to our duties towards our Maker, philosophy made but little progress. In its clearest and best conceptions of worship, it rose only to awe and veneration; but the very notion of love to God, even in its most abstract and theoretical sense, is peculiar to the Christian revela-

tion. So, too, is the consideration of meekness and humility, as being in any sense praiseworthy. All the heathen views of moral virtue, bright and luminous in some points, were in others imperfect, partial, without distinctness, and above all, without impressiveness or authority. They opposed feeble barriers indeed to the fierce activity of the passions, and every thinking man was left at liberty to suit his ethical theory to his own habits or propensities. But the simple fact of thus bringing together our duties into one grand and harmonious system—(if, in truth, it be not likening it too much to the formal methodical labour of human art to speak of it as a system)—the resolving them into a few single rules of boundless application; the giving to them a dignity, an impressiveness before unknown; following them through all the mazes of deed, and word, and thought; and breathing through all a spirit of purity and peace, seems to me to be a sufficient demonstration that this wisdom is from above.

It is from our uniform experience of the undisturbed order of nature, that we are able to ascertain the extraordinary interposition of its author. Long observation, for example, has taught us some of the powers of medicine, and the hidden virtues which lie "in herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities." But this same experience which shows us that the art of man can so often

combat successfully the fiercest attacks of disease, assures us that it has no efficacy which can enable a man, like one of us, to remove blindness with a touch, or to raise the dead with a word. If we should be witnesses of such a fact, or it should be satisfactorily proved to us, it necessarily follows that such an exertion of powers, so far transcending past experience, is a miracle, and proves the interference of the Deity himself. But the purity, the excellence, the perfection of this moral teaching, is of the nature of a moral miracle. During so many centuries, amongst so many millions of thinking and observing men, no such result was ever attained, or any thing approaching to it, or resembling it. Why is it not, then, a just inference to pronounce that man was unequal to the discovery; and that it must have been vouchsafed from the Father of lights?

The statement of an analogical case, may perhaps serve to illustrate this proof. No man who has ever thought, no matter how cursorily, upon law or legislation, or attended to the obvious suggestions of his own mind in his ordinary affairs, can deny that there are certain primary principles of justice, which should regulate all dealings between man and man, and some cardinal points of natural policy, which are not founded in any accidental human institutions, but are beneficial to mankind, as social beings, under all circumstances.

These are those fixed principles of justice and good government, which, "nec erit alia lex Romæ, alia Athenis," and are "law alike at Orleans and at Westminster Hall."* But it is quite certain, that no system of jurisprudence which the world has yet seen, has recognized such principles throughout, and such alone. Everywhere, even in the wisest and freest nations of the earth, have private cupidity, political ambition, ecclesiastical or professional superstition, prejudices of education, old habits and personal interests, combined to encumber the municipal law, in some way or other, with more or less of idle forms, unreal subtleties, unmeaning distinctions, impolitic or unjust regulations, useless or oppressive restrictions on the freedom of commerce, of the press, of the person, or of conscience. Such is the lot of man; so far as his own efforts can go, his liberty, his wisdom, his virtue, can be but comparative.

In many countries, we know that such perversions and corruptions have almost frustrated the great ends of society; and none can boast of a political, and still less of a legal system free from errors injurious to the community. No matter

* Sir William Jones' Preface to his "Essay on the Law of Bailment." This is the eulogium which this great English lawyer gave to the works of Pothier, the luminary of French jurisprudence, and in expressing it, he has imitated the language, and borrowed the thought of Cicero. It is impossible to compress more and higher authorities in fewer words.

how much national pride may excuse or defend them—no matter how successfully the apologists of all existing institutions may varnish over the imperfections, the absurdities, or, it may be, the atrocities of that code, which it is their interest to support: such evils are everywhere found and everywhere felt.

They frequently grow out of accidental or political institutions; but whatever may be their immediate cause, they are to be traced finally to the necessary imperfections of human reason, and the deficiency of public virtue.

If, then, a code were now to be presented to the world, claiming to have been prepared under the special guidance of heaven, which should embody all that was anywhere wise or excellent in human laws, should avoid all their imperfections, and should supply all their deficiencies; which was suited to every form of civil policy, and to all understandings; which never needed the help of judicial exposition or of legislation, to fill up or correct its defects; which was so far level to every man's comprehension as to direct him aright in all the multifarious concerns of life—let me ask, would such a claim to divine authority appear to be without foundation? Would it be wholly unreasonable to ascribe to super-human wisdom what human wisdom had so long, so often, and so vainly attempted? If this be at all or in any de-

gree whatever probable, in a system regulating the simple rights of property and personal liberty, how much more strongly will the argument apply to the divine origin of a body of moral instructions regulating all man's actions, his words, and thoughts, and desires, and reaching to his inmost soul! The promulgation of such a moral law is worthy of the great Lawgiver, and attests his interposition.

It will add not a little weight to this analogical argument, if we consider that the analogy holds good in another and remarkable particular. Moral impediments of the same nature, are the main obstacles to purity and perfection, alike in civil legislation and in the laws which should govern the conscience and the heart. In the one case the interests, the ambition, the unruly passions, and the base selfishness of mankind, combine with ignorance or indolence, to prevent equal and simple justice and political wisdom, from regulating the whole civil rule of life. In the other, that moral rule of life, which Christianity has laid before us, calls for such habitual and unqualified sacrifices of the selfish to the benevolent affections, imposes such restraints upon sensual appetites, and teaches truths so mortifying to the innate pride of the understanding, that, allowing mankind to be intellectually capable (of which there is, indeed, no

sufficient proof) of discovering that system, nevertheless, we cannot believe that their wishes and inclinations would have allowed them to have formed such a moral theory. Men, as was quaintly but sagaciously remarked by some old writer, have not reason enough to use their reason. We all can, and habitually do, blind ourselves to the truth which is displeasing to us. Therefore it is that the ethics of merely human philosophy always have been, and always will be in some degree formed to suit human passions and inclinations. If they impose some wise restraints upon our appetites, they compensate us by indulging our pride; if they bid us refrain from injuring our neighbours, they still tolerate, and perhaps inculcate the idolatry of self-love and self-admiration.

Since, therefore, the talent of mankind never did, in fact, invent or excogitate for itself a perfect system of ethics, there is a high moral probability that it was not capable of doing it. Add to this the stronger moral probability, that if men could have done this, they would not; and we must necessarily infer that such a morality must be divine. But if so, whilst it bears its own evidence upon its front, it also confirms the other doctrines of that revelation of which it forms a necessary and harmonious part.

The morality of Christianity is not an insulated part of this dispensation, which might be

transplanted into any other system of belief with equal efficacy. It is connected with, and entwined in, all its essential doctrines. It is not given simply as a rule of life, but as a test of character; teaching those who acknowledge it the secrets of their own hearts; making them feel the chains which bind them to sin and misery, and bidding them to look for deliverance to an arm more powerful than their own; while this same revelation, which detects the lurking diseases of human nature, prescribes and supplies the remedy.

Thus, the moral tendency of a religion, if it be clear and decided, and still more, if it be also original, would constitute a palpable and prominent, and most convincing sign of its truth.

IV. If, then, this revelation be designed to improve the character of man, and if it proceeds from an all-powerful author, it will not, it cannot fail of its effects. The result will be visible in the lives and character of those who receive it—perhaps in different degrees, and operating gradually; perhaps differently in different individuals, ages, and nations, and of course according to the declarations or promises of the revelation itself. Not improbably, too, the perfection of this religion might be at such an immeasurable height above the weakness of those who profess it, and allowing of such an indefinite if not infinite progression in improvement, that a comparison of

its precepts with the practice of them would make its moral influence appear to an observer to be small indeed, until he turned to the contrast afforded by the lives and dispositions of those who walked by the light of their own inventions, and not by that of heaven.

In spite of all these defects or imperfections, this moral effect of divine revelation would doubtless be perceptible in some such way as to be at once a consequence of the doctrine, and a testimony to it; forming an indirect but highly probable evidence to those who observe this influence in others, but of the most positive and conclusive kind to those who experience it in themselves. To such, this evidence will grow more and more vivid and intense in the same degree as the religion incorporates itself with their habitual thoughts, regulates their affections, and guides their lives.

But if the evidence, the motives, and the influences of this revelation, were not such as irresistibly and universally to extort and compel submission—if the will of man, his passions and innate propensities, as well as the higher parts of his nature, were left free to act in reference to its claims, it might then be passed by with disgust, or boldly rejected by very many. In this case it is every way likely, previously to any actual knowledge of the fact, that these persons

would show forth in their lives and dispositions, (not judged by the revealed doctrine, but by the rules of moral prudence and duty acknowledged by themselves, by the promptings of the moral sense, or by the effects of their actions on their own happiness and that of others) the predominance of those motives and appetites which hardened their hearts, and closed the eyes of their understanding against the offers and arguments of a religion inculcating and promising purity, holiness, and peace.

We should, however, always recollect, that so strange, and, to us, so unaccountable are the operations of prejudice, the effects of involuntary ignorance, and the force of passions and misdirected affections; so mixed is our whole nature, that it may often be impossible to apply this rule in relation to individuals, without hazarding the indulgence of a harsh and censorious spirit of judgment on private character. But the general aspect of society will furnish evidence enough to show that in this manner the lives, tempers, and characters of the mass of those who freely embrace, or decidedly reject, a religion, will afford, if not unerring, yet certainly very strong indications of the source from whence it springs.

V. There is certainly no just ground for inferring, *à priori*, that such a revelation would be

fitted for the use of all mankind, and not confined to a particular people, or a narrow sect of learned philosophers. The mysterious fact, that the blessings of liberty, letters, science, and morals have been distributed in such very unequal proportions among the numerous families and members of the human race, affords a powerful analogical argument against any such expectation. But if a revelation, when actually made, did claim to be of universal use, and of eternal interest and duration; if its first teachers and early disciples were commanded to go abroad and instruct all the world in a religion which was to endure until the end of time; then it seems clear that that religion would not be necessarily connected with any local cause or temporary state of society, and far less with any positive human institution, civil or political.

A religion, thus independent of external circumstances, would accordingly be able to exert an efficacy in all climes, and in every stage of civilization. It could exist alike in the rudest and in the most cultivated states, from pastoral simplicity to the most artificial and complicated forms of refined and polished life.

This indication of truth has a two-fold aspect. It may be tried by an enlarged and philosophical observation of man, as he exists in various stages of refinement, and under contrary forms of go-

vernment and civil order, and there tracing the influence which religion has been found to possess over his actions and character. So far this inquiry is fitted only for well-informed and curious minds.

But it has also a direct and personal application. Every one who is awakened to a sense of his real wants, and becomes wearied with the burden of his own vices, may judge for and from himself, whether or no this religion, which freely invites the acceptance of all, and which he sees professed and obeyed by so many persons of various stations and dispositions, be not also fitted for himself; as if the peculiarities of his individual situation and character, his own private errors, sufferings, or crimes, had been foreseen and provided for by its benevolent and omniscient Author. In this manner it was that the religion of Palestine has commended itself to the affections and consciences of the inhabitants of Greenland and Caffraria. Thus, too, the doctrines originally proclaimed to the poor and illiterate, by men unskilled in all human science, have subdued the will and enlightened the understandings of such men as Newton, Pascal, and Hale.

I am indebted, for the suggestion of this peculiar and very interesting view of the universal nature of the Christian dispensation, to an eloquent and original passage in the admirable

Dudleian Lecture of Dr. Channing, of Boston, which it would be doing an injustice to this head of the argument not to quote. It does not comprise the whole range of this striking principle's operation; but it is impossible to paint more powerfully, or more beautifully, the adaptation of Christianity to those habits and sentiments which spring up in the advancement of knowledge and refinement, and seem destined to continue for ages, as they have done for the last three centuries, to spread themselves more and more widely over the human race.

"I will make," says he, "one remark on this "religion, which strikes my own mind very for- "cibly. Since its introduction, human nature "has made great progress, and society experi- "enced great changes; and, in the advanced "condition of the world, Christianity, instead of "losing its application and importance, is found "to be more and more congenial and adapted "to man's nature and wants. Men have out- "grown the other institutions of that period "when Christianity appeared, its philosophy, its "modes of warfare, its policy, its public and pri- "vate economy; but Christianity has never "shrunk as intellect has opened; but has al- "ways kept in advance of man's faculties, and "unfolded nobler views in proportion as they "have ascended. The highest powers and "affections which our nature has developed find

"more than adequate objects in this religion
"Christianity is indeed peculiarly fitted for the
"more improved stages of society, to the more
"delicate sensibilities of refined minds, and es-
"pecially to that dissatisfaction of the present
"state which always grows with the growth of our
"moral powers and affections. As men advance
"in civilization they become susceptible of men-
"tal suffering to which ruder ages are strangers;
"and these, Christianity is fitted to assuage. Im-
"agination and intellect become more restless;
"and Christianity brings them tranquillity, by the
"eternal and magnificent truths, the solemn and
"unbounded prospects, which it unfolds. This
"fitness of our religion to more advanced stages
"of society than that in which it was introduced,
"to wants of human nature, not then developed,
"seems to me very striking. The religion bears
"the marks of having come from a Being who
"perfectly understood the human mind, and had
"power to provide for its progress. This fea-
"ture of Christianity is of the nature of prophe-
"cy. It is an anticipation of future and distant
"ages; and when we consider among whom our
"religion sprung up, where but in God can we
"find an explanation of this peculiarity?"*

* "Discourse on the Evidences of Revealed Religion; delivered before the University of Cambridge, (Massachusetts,) at the Dudleian Lecture, by William C. Channing, Boston, 1821." This tract contains, among many

The several heads which have been successively touched upon, furnish us a very brief and imperfect sketch of some portion of the evidence resulting from the reasonableness, the tendency, and the efficient moral power of revelation. May not the *manner* in which it is presented, and the motives by which it is enforced and recommended, add some additional weight to this evidence?

VI. In corroboration of the foregoing marks of authenticity, it seems proper to add, that it would be natural and reasonable to think, that such a dispensation as has been described, coming from him who perfectly knows what is in man, and how he is to be swayed, would not be addressed solely to his intellect; but that while its purity and excellence would call forth his admiration and reverence, it would, by its personal application, and by the manner in which it enforces its claims, by the motives which it propounds, and the examples which it sets forth, come home to the inmost breasts of individuals, and would act through the affections as well as upon them; pu-

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other views of great value, a most perspicuous and philosophical statement of the true principles upon which our belief in human testimony is regulated. It is no mean praise to any reasoner, to be able to throw new light upon a subject which has employed the minds of Hume, Campbell, Reid, and Price. Out of his own city, Dr. Channing is chiefly known as a controversial writer. His peculiar opinions are not mine; but I could not pass by this opportunity of calling the public attention to a work which does equal honour to the literature and the philosophy of our country.

rifying and regulating the passions, by the operation of the passions themselves; calling not upon self-love, or upon the sense of duty alone, but kindling in the heart, shame or sorrow, gratitude, zeal, and love.

The beams which flowfrom the great Source of all mental illumination, might be expected to have heat as well as light. They would warm as well as illuminate. As, in all the great concerns of life, man is most efficiently moved by those motives which rouse, animate, and excite him, or which alarm his fears, or touch his feelings; as he is so constituted that eloquence and poetry must have always greater sway over him than calm logic, so it would seem probable (for this is not proposed as a direct and certain proof) that a religion which delivered to him so momentous a message, which was to wake him from the sleep of death, and raise him to new life, would come clothed with power over his hopes, and fears, and passions. He is guilty, and his conscience may be alarmed. Though immersed in the low cares of a moment, he is capable of large discourse, looking before and after, and he may be made to tremble or to exult at the prospect of the future. In the retrospection of the past he may find cause for bitter regret, or for gratitude. Above all, he is encompassed with sorrows, and he may be soothed or consoled; he may be purified and

humbled, and made wiser and better by afflictions. A religion that so governed its disciples must be one of truth and power.

I do not wish to be understood as maintaining, nor do I in fact believe, that each of these several internal marks of veracity and authority, could have been actually established from reasoning, previous to any experience, by the most enlightened and persevering inquirers of antiquity.

They are stated simply as propositions, which are, in fact, derived from the knowledge of Christianity, and which, in all ordinary human probability, would never have been known without it, yet, like much other moral wisdom to which the same light has guided us, they are in the highest degree probable, on principles of pure reason; and such as Socrates or Plato would have assented to, had they been proposed to them without reference to their bearing upon any particular system of faith or ethics.

True philosophy could not but acknowledge that that religion must be divine whose doctrines, while they were beyond human discovery, are also consonant to reason; whose morals are of surpassing excellence, and yet original in their perfection, in their application, and their consistency; whose moral efficacy over its real disciples is energetic and unparalleled; whose pure ethics, and whose wonderful doctrines, are so in-

terwoven that those who spurn at the one will reject the other; which is fitted for men of all degrees, giving wisdom to the foolish and sight to the blind, and which acts not alone by instructing the understanding, but by filling the heart.

To the truth of such a religion a genuine philosophy must assent, and could Christianity be received as a speculative theory, without further claims upon us, it would always extort the assent of thinking men. But the wise of this world have, like others, their passions, appetites, and prejudices; and they have, more than others, their pride of opinion, and their love of distinction: the light of truth too often becomes painful to their senses, and they can shut the eyes of their understanding against its beams.

We may safely apply these rules of judgment to all that pretends to be divine revelation, or supernatural history, in classical or in oriental mythology, or in the Mahometan creed. I say to all that pretends to be revelation, since there is, in most false religions, some admixture of natural morality, or of traditional truth, which is rather debased and polluted, than strengthened by the doctrinal and positive religious creed.

What is there in any of them not previously discoverable, and in fact, long before actually discovered by reason, which is yet at once acknowledged as true when proposed, and as excellent in

itself? Examine even the simplest, wisest, and purest of them all, the religion of Mahomet, by the test—I will not say of Christian ethics, but, of an enlightened heathen philosophy; and in the blind fatalism which it teaches, in the wars of conquest and desolation, the incitement to which is wrought into the very substance of the religion, in the polygamy, and the consequent degradation of the female sex, which it not only permits, but expressly encourages—how much is there in obvious contradiction to the safest conclusions of reason, and the instructions of experience with regard to man's moral nature, and the welfare and happiness of society? If we proceed to consider the probable effects of any of these religious opinions, we shall find (with the exception of that portion of Christian belief and morals, which Mahomet has incorporated into his system) nothing to elevate or to purify, and every thing to depress and degrade the intellectual and social character of man.

Such is their obvious tendency; but the actual practical result, as witnessed in every age, and throughout the fairest portions of the earth, is yet more gloomy than the theory could have led us to anticipate. There, over the noblest races of mankind, upon whom nature has poured her gifts in lavish exuberance, an all-pervading political, and a far more gloomy and depressing domestic

tyranny, has established her empire; there the mind slumbers, unawakened by any of those inspiring motives and ennobling contemplations which invigorate its energies, dignify its pursuits, "spread the young thought, and warm the open-"ing heart."

If, in some of those bright periods of antiquity, to which literary enthusiasm loves to turn, some few amongst those who dwelt in darkness, and bowed down before idols, were capable of the grandest exertions of genius, on which posterity still gazes with admiration, how feeble, how partial, was their influence upon the mass of the community! How slight the effects of the compositions of the wisest philosophers, and the greatest of poets upon the intellectual character, and how much less upon the moral habits and opinions of their countrymen. These few and scattered lights, served but to show the thickness of the gloom by which they were surrounded. The lofty and grave strains of their eloquent sages, and their poets—

> ——————— Teachers best
> Of moral prudence, with delight received
> In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
> Of fate, and chance, and change, in human life,
> High actions and high passions best describing—

fell sweetly on the ear, but could never reach the hearts of the worshippers of licentious, sensual, and cruel divinities.

It is not, therefore, any transgression against the sound rules of the Inductive Philosophy, when, without much consideration, and certainly without any very critical examination of its external testimonies, we reject the Koran, and the whole Mahometan creed, simply upon the moral internal evidence of its falsehood, and say with Jeremy Taylor—"He that considers, concerning "the religion and person of Mahomet, that *he* "(the prophet) was a vicious person, lustful and "tyrannical; that he propounded incredible and "ridiculous propositions to his disciples; that it "(the religion) entered by the sword, by blood "and violence, by murder and robbery; that it "propounds sensual rewards, and allures to com-"pliance by bribing our basest lusts; that it con-"tinues itself by the same means it entered; "that it is unlearned and foolish, against reason, "and the discourse of all wise men; in short, "that in the person that founded it, in the article "it persuades, in the manner of prevailing, in "the reward it offers, it is unholy, and foolish, "and rude; it must needs appear to be void "of all pretence, and that no man of reason can "ever be fairly persuaded by argument, that it is "the daughter of God, and came down from "heaven."*

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* Ductor Dubitantium.

This is a just and natural course of reasoning. Now, it is by a process of ratiocination, of precisely the same logical character, and founded on the same principles, that, from our moral approbation of the doctrines, precepts, and influence of Christianity, we may, independently of all the external attestations to its miraculous propagation and primitive history, without justly exposing ourselves to the charge of being either weak or fanatical, embrace that religion, whose goodness and excellence, to borrow again some of the beautiful imagery of Taylor—"enters among men like rain into a fleece of wool, or the sun into a window, without noise or violence, without emotion or disordering the political constitution, without trouble to any man, but what his own ignorance and peevishness causes; which defended itself against enemies by patience, and overcame them by kindness, and was the great instrument of God, to demonstrate his power in our weaknesses, and to do good to mankind by the demonstration of his excellent goodness; a religion changing the face of things, piercing into the secrets of the soul, unravelling the mysteries of all hearts, reforming vile thoughts, and breaking vile habits into gentleness and counsel."

Indeed, it appears to me, that the applying, in this way, the argument against the possibility of

any internal evidence of religion level to human comprehension, which takes for granted man' sentire incompetence to judge of God's works and will, to the superstitions of India, or to any other religious system, inculcating, as a necessary part of its doctrine, false, sensual or corrupt morality, is a fair *experimentum Crucis*, (to use the language and the logic of Bacon,) and affords a decisive proof of its unsoundness. If those who hold this opinion, be correct in their general principles and deductions, then it is a legitimate consequence, that an immoral and impure religion, one dangerous to the good order of society, degrading the man, and corrupting the citizen—the Hindoo superstition, for example, with all its rabble of divinities, and its varied abominations of worship, would stand precisely on the same ground of authority and claim for reception, with a doctrine of purity and holiness, previous to the examination of the history and external proofs of either. We must look merely to that part of their attestation, and the very same quantit yand proportion of it would be sufficient for either or for both.

Without doubt, this conclusion is against the common sense of all men, and in contradiction to the manner in which we are all irresistibly led to form our estimates of any dogmas or precepts whatever, which are authoritatively proposed for our belief and obedience.

Every one who will seriously reflect upon the subject, will be able to fill up for himself the details of the several heads of inquiry which have been rather generally stated than explained in the foregoing pages. This he can do for himself much more satisfactorily than it can be done for him by another; since, from the moral and physical diversity of human consitutions, of characters, and of personal experience in life, there are particular points of evidence or argument, which carry to certain minds degrees of luminousness and impression which must be far less distinctly felt by others.

From the whole of these, or from the combination of any number of them, results that cumulative effect which has already been repeatedly insisted upon as a grand characteristic of this whole evidence; an effect so powerful in its impression, and yet so difficult to be expressed.

In brief, however, the force of the whole argument from the internal evidence of the prominent truths of revelation (as completely separated from that of a strictly historical or critical character) may be thus compendiously stated:

If a religion contains and inculcates among those doctrines, which we are sure are fundamental and essential to it, and neither our inferences from its laws, nor positive human institutions or inventions, engrafted upon them,

none directly contrary to the first and universal principles of sound reason or the fundamental truths of morals, even though some of these doctrines may be widely different from what we might have, with no small probability conjectured, or have, from analogy, presumed to be true—

If these doctrines (on this very account just stated, not likely to have been invented by man to deceive man) contain many facts and instructions, which reason never did nor never could discover, but when once announced, and candidly weighed, are perceived to be true, right and just; and though not discoverable by the understanding, are yet in accordance with it; or, though never before observed, yet now agree with present observation and past experience—

If these relate to the most solemn and important subjects, to which the mind can be applied, such as the nature, and government, and attributes of the Creator; the state, duties, and destinies of men—

If they declare to us, simply and powerfully, those secrets of the heart, which all have felt, but none have told, none understood—

If their tendencies are altogether perfective of our nature, to alter, to improve, to elevate the character, teaching new duties, supplying new assistances, kindling holier aspirations, and suggesting higher motives—

If all this be not only the obvious intention and tendency of these doctrines, but their apparent and practical effect, though that should be as yet partial and imperfect—

If, when they are rejected, disregarded, or corrupted, there may be ordinerily traced some corresponding moral defect in actions and dispositions, which are either the efficient cause of such rejection, or result as a consequence from it—

If their secret and gentle influence has extended to thousands, upon whom the restraints of human law are necessarily very feeble, and by whom the systematic instructions of human wisdom could never be comprehended, as well as to many others of more cultivated intelligence, upon whom the moralist,

> Strutting and vapouring in an empty school,
> Had spent his force, but made no proselyte—

If all these doctrines, precepts, and motives, are singularly adapted to the sympathies, the affections, the miseries, and the frailties of mankind—then we arrive at a very high degree of moral certainty that this religion is true.

The more numerous, and the more important, the particulars in which such marks of moral truth meet, the greater this probability becomes, and, by the accumulation of many such indications of truth, the honest inquirer may attain to a

well-founded and satisfactory moral assurance, independent of any proof of an historical or critical nature.

But this evidence is not intended to be inoperative. It is not given to gratify learned curiosity. If, then, the inquirer is content to look upon it in that light, to regard it as an uninterested spectator, to suffer it to remain as it were external to him, he will imperfectly comprehend that pure and peaceable wisdom which is from above. Pleasure breathes her soft influence over his senses, or the blast of some stern and fierce passion arises, and all this goodly show of argument and reason vanishes into air. The clear conclusions, to which his understanding assented, then fade away into visionary indistinctness, and he turns gladly to rest his mind on the palpable realities of the world.

But if, after the first willing reception of the doctrines of Jesus, or of those parts of them most consonant to the understanding, the necessities, or the affections of the individual—no matter upon what ground of reason, or sentiment, or authority, or, we may add, of prejudice and custom, they may have been embraced, their moral efficacy is not simply observed, but felt and experienced ; if it be from his own heart, that he, who confesses the faith, draws his confidence that it is from God ; if he finds this to be not only a

convincing but a growing and germinant evidence, becoming clearer the more it is studied, and more intense the more it regulates the thoughts and life: surely, reason can ask no higher proof. Such a one has a witness within himself, and this is, at least to *him*, a demonstration.

It is, as it were, a kind of personal prophecy fulfilled—a predictive promise which he finds accomplished in his own life; others cannot judge concerning it, but to himself it is more than argument—it is proof, it is conviction.

Thus is it, in fact, that these internal evidences of Christianity are those upon which it is most generally, and far most sincerely and fervently, believed; so that the unlettered Christian, who is utterly ignorant of that body of history and learning which attests the veracity of the Gospel narrative; and who, so far from being able to refute the objections of an ingenious opponent, would find it exceedingly difficult, (or not improbably, wholly impossible,) to explain the reasons of his belief to another, may yet possess a ground of confidence in its truth, not resting upon logical argument, yet of a strictly rational character, which, in his mind, could derive but little additional strength from the learned labours of Lardner, the ingenuity of Warburton, or the sagacity of Paley.

Doubts which he cannot solve have no power to disturb him. Objections which he cannot refute do not perplex him. He has the certainty and the consciousness of truth, and in this he rests in peace.

For him more learned, yet far more ignorant, who has no such intimate conviction of the one great truth, but who can discern speculatively what he knows others to read within themselves, what remains? Let him strive

——————— "To seek
Those helps, for his occasions ever nigh,
Who lacks not will to use them; vows renewed
On the first motion of a holy thought,
Vigils of contemplation; praise and prayer—
A stream which, from the fountains of the heart
Issuing however feebly, nowhere flows
Without access of unexpected strength.
But, above all, the victory is most sure
To him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
To yield entire submission to the law
Of Conscience;—Conscience reverenced and obeyed,
As God's most intimate presence in the soul,
And his most perfect image in the world."

Wordsworth.

ESSAY IV.

The Intention and Uses of the different Kinds of Evidences for the Truth of Christianity.

In the two preceding Essays it has been endeavoured to present a sketch of the more prominent of those arguments for the divine origin of Christianity, which may be drawn from that internal evidence of truth which its doctrines contain. These are, in the main, of a nature which causes them to be more frequently felt than advanced, and renders them more fit for the conviction of the individual who comprehends them, than for the exercise of logical ingenuity in contending with the captious and sceptical. Yet they are so strong, that I cannot but believe that it must be more from want of clearness in the statement than of force in the arguments, if it has not been satisfactorily proved, that when divines, philosophers, and scholars, whose opinions are otherwise entitled to high respect, impressed with a deep conviction of the frailty of human reason, and the presumption of theoretical speculation, deny that we have, or can have, any means of judging of the authority of revealed truth inde-

pendently of its outward attestations, they carry a principle sound in itself to a fallacious and very dangerous extreme.

A rapid review of the principles which have been before established or examined, may lead us on to other inquiries intimately connected with these, and throw some light upon the character of the revelation, and the intention and uses of its various evidences.

The error which has been combated is chiefly founded in the opinion that man's ignorance of his duties, character, and revelation to his Maker, independently of express revelation, is total. But if there be, as all nature cries aloud, and as revelation itself teaches—if there be in man some power, however feeble, of discerning or discovering moral truths, the truths thus within the reach of reason cannot but harmonize with those of revealed religion. Truth cannot be in hostility to itself. On the contrary, all truth, and especially all truth of the same species, and relating to the same class of beings, is mutually connected, and in full accordance throughout; so that Hooker had good ground for his sublime metaphysical conjecture, that it may possibly be, "that by long circuit of deduction, all truth out of any truth may be concluded."

It has been stated and shown that, upon this account, the rational and moral internal evidence

would consist primarily in an agreement and harmony between the revealed religion, and the clear intuitions or unaided deductions of reason, respecting our moral character and obligations, and the power and being of a great First Cause. Besides this, reason, though limited on every side, and its most daring and most successful exercise constantly reminding us of our feebleness and blindness, is yet able to compare, weigh, examine, and judge many things when submitted to her inspection, which no undirected search or unassisted effort of her own could have ever reached.

In the investigation of the laws of mathematics and physics, an every-day understanding can follow each step of the demonstrations, and rest with certainty in those conclusions of science, the actual discovery of which had been reserved for those rare intellects, whose appearance in our world, from time to time, marks the great epochs of the history of knowledge. In a manner analogous to this natural revelation, the patient and teachable mind is capable of comprehending the various rational perceptions of truth, beauty, and conformity to right reason, which shine forth in the sublimer moral revelation of the divine Teacher.

Nor is it solely by means of the cold and abstract perceptions of truth, by the dry, clear light of intellect, the *lumen siccum*, (as Bacon terms it,)

that man is enabled to see the value of his religion. He has within himself a more efficacious test. The heart knows its own sorrows; and he that has tasted how bitter is the knowledge of good and evil, and has been taught by the stern discipline of life to look into himself, becomes capable at length of comparing the religion offered to his acceptance with his own moral nature, and of judging of its adaptation to his present infirmities, sorrows, or needs, and to his hopes and his dread of futurity. It is not, then, only as a guide to the understanding that it is offered, but as a medicine to the heart and conscience. To these, it comes with arguments "which leave us something of choice and love, "and though not as evident as the principles of "geometry, yet as sure. It is so humane, so per-"suasive, so complying with the nature and infir-"mities of man, with the actions of his life and his "manner of operation, that it seems to have been "created on purpose for the needs and uses "of this life, for virtues and for hopes, for faith "and for charity, to make us believe by love and "love by believing."*

Lastly, when the operation and influence of this faith, upon the characters and lives of those who embrace it, are observed, we find that these effects,

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* Jeremy Taylor.

so far forth as they are good, are clearly, and by the confession of all its followers, to be ascribed to the power of the religion so received; while the evil mixed up with it is as evidently an evil of imperfection, not in harmony with its precepts or tendencies, nor naturally springing from its doctrine, (in the manner in which brutal passions and degrading vices are necessarily excited, or cherished, or commanded by the oriental or ancient superstitions,) but is in plain opposition to all its clearest precepts and strongest motives, and therefore proves only that this religion is not usually immediate, perfect, and irresistible in its control. Such a result, whether inferred from the exterior conduct of others, or known and felt by the believer himself, from the comparison of his present with his past character, forms another and very copious source of moral testimony.

All this constitutes a chain of legitimate demonstration according to the strictest rules which the inductive philosophy has laid down for the investigation of nature's laws. Considered intellectually, without reference to personal feelings, it is founded upon the same principle which teaches the sagacious and enlightened physician to repose, with unhesitating confidence, upon the chemical or mechanical powers of those remedies whose efficacy he has repeatedly witnessed. It is within the comprehension of the humblest

and most uncultivated minds, which are usually those which most readily imbibe the spirit of this religion, and exult in its hopes, and abound in its fruits. At the same time, it has no cause to shrink from the scrutiny of those true philosophers who have been disciplined in the school of rigid science, and there taught, that though the magnificent speculations of mere theory are as gratifying to our vanity as they are indulgent to our indolence, real knowledge is only to be attained by seeking it with cheerful submission and humble diligence in the rough paths of experience.

If this be correct, Christianity carries with it its own evidence to those who are willing to find it true; and to the mass of mankind its authority will always be most powerfully enforced by the simple and clear exposition of its leading doctrines, the inculcation of its plainest precepts, and the manifestation of its nature and operation, exhibited in the "daily beauty" of the lives of its disciples. From these causes, and neither from blind submission to authority, nor from the wild impulses of an undiscerning enthusiasm, it has been honoured and obeyed by thousands who have walked humbly through life, guided by hope, and feeling, and faith, and not by book-learned wisdom; but who, in the very exercise of that faith, feeling, and hope, have, at the same time,

exerted the highest and surest powers of the understanding.

I am well aware that the statements which have here been given of this great argument, are somewhat loose and general. This has arisen partly from a desire to present in one view its broad and grand features, without distracting the attention, or exciting the prejudices of any, by the introduction of the debateable points of theological controversy; but more because it is a subject where every man must, in a good degree, furnish for himself the materials for his own judgment; and the manner in which he decides is governed and controlled by moral causes, acting in a way which it is difficult or impossible to explain distinctly in words. It may, therefore, be variously received by various dispositions, and even oppositely by the same person under different circumstances. It is best studied in the books and practice of the religion itself; and the force of the argument consists not in the logical accuracy of its deductions, but in the power which its several parts bear conviction to the heart.

There is a broad and undefined grandeur in the great truths of religion, mysteriously partaking of the infinite character of their Author, and of the eternal uses to which he has destined them.

Being intended for the illumination of millions of different intellects, upon many millions of

occasions, they cannot be reduced into the form of logical definitions and technical system, without losing a part of their sublimity and beauty, and far more of their power. It is not meant to deny that systems and articles of faith have their use in excluding error, and perhaps in facilitating the acquisition of knowledge; but such vast truths cannot pass through any human intellect, and be adapted to the comprehension of any particular understanding, without, in some measure, assuming the character of mere human science, by being, as it were, narrowed down to that limited standard, and curtailed of that comprehensiveness, which, in the midst of the greatest simplicity, abounds with measureless variety of instructions and motives. What to one mind may be dark or wholly incomprehensible, or, if understood, thrown aside as of no practical use, to another, may be full of light and truth.

I know, too, that in the eyes of some of those who are inclined to reduce all revelation to a mere authoritative declaration of natural morality, some of these positions may seem extravagant, and perhaps fanatical.

Of this every reader must judge for himself. But I cannot refrain from quoting, not for the purpose of authority, but for that of illustration, a passage from one of Bishop Horsley's Sermons, in which he expresses, evidently as the result of

his own personal observation, (for he reiterates and insists upon the same opinions in other parts of his works,) his conviction of the effect of the study of our English Bible, upon a sincere and inquiring, but illiterate Christian. It presents more personally and practically, but substantially the very same estimate of the strength of the internal evidence which has been maintained in these pages. This attestation is the more valuable, as it comes from a scholar of uncommonly varied and splendid acquirements, and a reasoner of great intellectual vigour and comprehension, who may be singled out from among all the great writers of our own day, as having rendered the most marked homage of intellect to the majesty of truth.

With little of a devotional spirit—I speak not of his personal character, but of the tone of his writings—with little sympathy for the elevation, the sentiment, or even for the poetry of Christianity, still, the clear convictions of his luminous understanding gave unhesitating submission to its doctrines—perhaps without his feeling, and certainly without his much relying upon, or at all giving expression to, the warmer emotions of the heart.

"I shall not scruple to assert," says this strong and original writer, in a passage marked with all the peculiarities of his style and turn of thought,

in which he speaks of the proficiency which may be made in Christian knowledge by studying the scriptures, without any other commentary or exposition than what the different parts of the sacred volume furnish each other—"that the most "illiterate Christian, if he can but read his En- "glish Bible, and will take the pains to read it in "this way, will not only attain to all that practical "knowledge which is necessary to his salvation, "but by God's help he will become learned in "every thing relating to his religion in such a de- "gree that he would not be liable to be misled, "either by the refined arguments, or by the false "assertions of those who endeavour to engraft "their own opinions upon the oracles of God.

"He may safely be ignorant of all philosophy, "except what is to be learned from the sacred "books, which, indeed, contain the highest phi- "losophy, adapted to the lowest apprehensions. "He may safely remain ignorant of all history, "except so much of the history of the first ages "of the Jewish and Christian churches, as is to "be gathered from the canonical books of the Old "and New Testament. Let him study these in "the manner I recommend, and let him never "cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit "by which these books were dictated, and the "whole compass of abstruse philosophy and re- "condite history shall furnish no argument with

"which the perverse will of man shall be able to "shake this learned Christian's faith. The Bi- "ble thus studied, will prove what we Protestants "esteem it, a certain and sufficient rule of faith "and practice, which alone may quench the fiery "darts of the wicked."*

Here a very curious, and certainly a very important inquiry, naturally suggests itself. If this religion contain so large and so efficacious a share of its evidence within itself—if the sacred books which teach it, bear witness unto themselves, it may be naturally asked what is the use or importance of any additional proof?

What occasion can there be for historical, or critical, or other evidences? What have we to do with deductions from human learning, in history, languages or antiquities? May not the study of such evidences be worse than useless? Are not all these things the presumptuous and vain inventions of man, ambitious to add his little mite to the measureless treasures of his Maker's wisdom?

These are not sceptical difficulties, raised only to be answered. It is very true, that they are not now commonly to be met with in the books of the day, nor are they ever heard from the pulpits of our educated clergy; but they have no inconsiderable sway over the opi-

* Horsley's Five Sermons.

nions of many, who, though scorned by some as fanatical, are allowed by all to be honest, whose sincerity and fervour give them a large and just influence in the community; and whose pure zeal and humble virtues will always command the respect of the wise and good. Nor are these opinions without the countenance of great names. There are passages in the works of Calvin, which, if they do not amount to a distinct avowal of this sentiment in its full extent, afford ground for thinking that this was the inclination of the great Reformer's mind.

But by far the most valuable result to be expected from such an inquiry is, that its prosecution must necessarily involve the establishment of some principles of great and extensive utility; and the knowledge of these may serve to give us more distinct perceptions of the character and uses of the Christian evidences.

To the questions which have just been asked, it may be a sufficient reply, in general terms, that it has pleased the Almighty to offer a variety of inducements to invite, and various confirmations to strengthen, according to their acquirements or talents, the faith of those who receive his commandments and instructions, with "an honest and good heart," as well as to leave obstinate incredulity, or scarcely less culpable negligence, without excuse, by connecting with the records of his

manifestation of himself to mankind, strong external attestations, similar to the evidence upon which we believe and act in the ordinary affairs of life. It is, moreover, quite clear that the external corroboration of the miraculous history of revelation, is well fitted to command attention and to invite to serious examination, thus giving a more authoritative character to its whole system of doctrines. Had it been proposed, without any external corroboration, as an unsupported body of moral truth, it might have seemed, to cultivated minds, and bold reasoners, a beautiful and probable speculation, but resting upon the same foundation with the ethics of Socrates or Cicero; and, therefore, one which we are not imperatively called upon to receive as the unerring guide of life and opinion. They would, for this reason, feel themselves perfectly at liberty to select from it, and adopt those parts only most congenial to their tastes and dispositions, most conformable to their preconceived notions, and least hostile to the idols of their own secret worship.*

A more ample and satisfactory development of the whole subject will be furnished by considering separately these several points:

I. The relation which these distinct species of evidence bear to the external circumstances, the

* See note G.

characters, tempers, and moral dispositions of individuals.

II. The order and apparent intention of Providence in the unequal distribution of certain intellectual gifts, and in the several means of information offered to the different classes of society, and the consequent duties imposed upon men arising from the talents, natural or acquired, respectively committed to their trust.

III. The extent to which the internal evidence can be applied and made to bear witness to the authority of any doctrines or commandments; and as intimately connected with this consideration—

IV. The source of the peculiar claim to authority, which is due to the whole body of revelation, extending even to the obligation of its ritual and positive institutions.

The internal evidence, in its highest and peculiar sense, as has before been observed, is entirely of a moral nature. When the first teachers of Christianity proclaimed the necessity of belief and repentance, coupling them together as forming the necessary groundwork and first stages of the Christian character, that is no accidental or arbitrary association. It is in congruity with the nature of man, who, frail, feeble, and uncertain in his purposes, is yet of "large discourse of reason, looking before and after." Half animal and half intellectual, he is born the slave of passions,

which frequently overpower, but oftener delude, that reason which is entitled to rule and restrain them. But the doctrines of such a religion as ours are little suited to be, on their own account, even speculatively allowed by men unawakened to a sense of their own real wants and their true nature, who are dazzled with the bright phantoms of life, or maddened with its pleasures, fevered with the contests of ambition, or eager in the pursuit of wealth. It is true, that if we bring to their contemplation pure eyes and uncorrupted senses, we may see in them a divine majesty, powerful to subdue all opposition. "Si puros oculos, et integros sensus afferimus, statim occurret Dei majestas, quæ, subactâ rectamandi audaciâ nos sibi parere cogat,"* says Calvin, and he says wisely and well. But when the pure eyes and uncorrupt senses are not there, the doctrines well-suited to their apprehension will seem to eyes blinded by the glories, and to senses blunted by the pleasures of the world, but as cunningly devised fables. Or, if not thus scornfully refused, they will, at least, be received by men wholly occupied with the cares and enjoyments which press upon their attention as things distant, shadowy, and unreal, in which, whether true or false, they have no immediate interest, and if to be submit-

* Calvin. Institut. lib. I. cap. 7.

ted to at all, certainly not until some more convenient season.

The proud man can see no beauty to charm, or sign of truth to convince, in the religion of humility, nor the gross sensualist in the doctrines of purity. He who feels no remorse or shame for past transgression, cannot be much touched with an offer of pardon, or cherish any ardent desire to be relieved from the thraldom of his vices. Until the gay illusion of life is dissipated, until man, in the expressive phrase of Jansenist morality, is undeceived, all these things are foolishness to him. It is needless to show that these views are consonant with the doctrines of Christianity; but, independently of that authority, the observation of mankind and of ourselves will show us one great law governing our whole moral being—that moral and religious truth, to be understood, must be felt; that men whose deeds are evil, will "love darkness rather than light," and that, in order to know clearly the will of our Maker, we must be desirous to do it.

Now the historical evidence throughout all its ramifications is wholly of another sort. It is founded upon the ordinary rules of testimony, such as we act upon in the common course of life, and such as regulate the acquisition, and establish the certainty, of all human knowledge, excepting only the demonstrative deductions of pure science.

in the ancient and strictest sense of that term. It requires no peculiarity of moral disposition to precede or to accompany it. It demands nothing of those who are of competent good sense and information, but ordinary fairness and candour. It is true, that even here, prejudices, arising from repugnancy to the purifying and humbling doctrines of redemption, may intrude, and produce self-willed blindness, or, perhaps, rise to an infuriated malignity of opposition. Still, this kind of evidence is such, that whoever is competent to decide upon any other mass of historical facts, may judge of this also, if he will consider it with that same share of candid attention which is necessary to form a just estimate of any complicated chain of evidence whatever. This honest and fair reception of historical truth, allowing it to be wholly speculative, and, for a season, inoperative, is yet well fitted to prepare the mind for submission to the grander and more efficacious doctrinal and ethical truths of which the history is but the vehicle.

The full possession and comprehension of the external evidence is like going back to the apostolic age, and placing before our own eyes the very miracles performed in authentication of the divine message; and though it was said of old, "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed," there are not wanting minds in any

age, who, like the doubting apostle, believe only because they have seen. Having satisfied themselves that the books of the scriptures contain the will of God, they receive that will—if not gladly, yet still they do receive it. Though they may be blind to much of its excellence and its beauty, and feel little or nothing of its power, they find themselves compelled, as honest men, to allow its truth; and thus it is not unfrequently found that, as the majority of unlearned Christians are led to belief and knowledge by the affections or sorrows of the heart, so, in another much smaller class of improved and cultivated intellects, the understanding is first coldly convinced by metaphysical or historical proofs, and when that conviction has taken firm root, it is often made, by time and culture, to produce a nobler and purer faith, and to bring forth plenteously the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

It is plain that this process of conviction, and these appeals to historical proof, are out of the reach of many; and in some ages and countries must be exceedingly limited in their influence, though far less so in our state of society in this country than in most other parts of the Christian world, or than has universally been the case in former times. It seems probable, too, that this evidence is destined, in the natural progress of society, to be of far greater efficacy than it now

is. The argument is every day becoming more popular in its character, and more extensive in its use, and will continue to become so. This is a reasonable and natural anticipation from the present cheering prospects of society, when education is every where making unexampled progress, when the political condition of a large portion of the human race, in spite of numerous obstacles, is decidedly improving, and when commerce, and the spirit of adventure and scientific curiosity, are making their way in all directions through the distant and less enlightened nations of the globe.

This is, also, a fair inference from the experience of the last two centuries. It is now about one hundred and eighty years since the illustrious Grotius published his learned treatise De Veritate, in proof of the truth of Christianity. This was a book fitted only for scholars, and could, of course, be read only by a few hundred persons in all Europe. Yet it was by far the most popular essay on the subject which had then been written. How different is the character of Paley's work on the same subject! How much less scholastic, how much more fitted for general circulation! And, in fact, it probably is now read by thousands of readers for every single one which Grotius' work, with all the deserved popularity of its author, had in his day.

Some metaphysical sceptics, arguing from what La Place has termed the necessary degradation of evidence by successive transmission, have asserted that the whole proof of any history, as it recedes from the time of the original witnesses, is continually growing fainter and fainter, from the chance of mistake or fraud in every successive stage. Consequently, the fact of the assassination of Cæsar in the Capitol is less probable now than it was in the days of Columbus, and will become still less so in each succeeding century. It is not worth while to point out in this place the obvious fallacy of this position; but it is remarkable that in the particular evidence of Christian history, the fact is now precisely the reverse. In the progress of society, knowledge has not only made unexampled attainments, but it has spread those attainments more and more abroad, and in every generation extended its influence to a wider and wider circle. Each age, as it recedes from that of the original witnesses, is going on to increase the number of secondary and derivative ones; to augment the collateral and circumstantial proofs which corroborate their declarations, and to make the moral evidence shine forth more and more luminously. Besides this, the diffusion of useful knowledge among the people in later years, has brought the historical question, with all its formerly re-

condite learning, down to the level of a much greater number of judges.

If we look back to the period which may be regarded as the commencing epoch of modern European manners, tastes, opinions, politics, and letters, beginning at the revolution of 1688, and going down to the middle of the last century, we shall see that this field of argument was then trodden only by scholars and critics, and the public combat was between such learned men as Clarke and Bentley, Bolingbroke and Toland; while the sole readers and judges of their labours were the elegant scholars and well-educated men of the day. Since that time, reading has become more universal; the elements of useful knowledge have been communicated to thousands, and the antiquarian and critical facts upon which some parts of the discussion turn, absolutely and indisputably settled by mutual concessions, or the universal consent of the learned. When Christianity is now assailed on this ground, she no longer demands for her defence the profound researches of a Lardner, and plain artizans and farmers here, and in some parts of Europe, are able to decide for themselves between the popular statements of Paine and Watson. This, accordingly, seems to be a sort of evidence constantly becoming, and destined to become, more and more extensive in its use, and more authoritative, as the decisions

upon it are successively confirmed by numerous and unprejudiced judges. It will grow every day more powerful as knowledge augments, as education becomes common, and as liberty and equal laws give free scope throughout the world to the "might that slumbers in the peasant's soul."* In this respect I cannot help thinking, that the animating prospects which a benevolent philosophy suggests, concerning the high destinies of our race, and for the fulfilment of which she looks confidently to the mighty agency of popular education, of the press, and the spirit of freedom, coincide with the predictions which revelation has made concerning her own future triumphs and universal empire.

Let us now proceed a few steps further, and contemplate this subject as it were from another station, and under a different light. We may, I trust, without presumption, inquire what appears to be the ultimate design of Providence in this adaptation of evidence to the various ranks and classes of Christians.

It is an obvious fact, that to very few indeed, (in proportion to the whole number in all nations and times,) are given the gifts of learning, even employing that word in its most humble and limited sense, and not as in any wise implying

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* "The might that slumbers in the peasant's *arm*."

the profound scholarship of Bossuet or Bentley, Porson or Parr.

The external argument, in its several diversified forms and parts, is more peculiarly fitted, as has been said, to attract the attention, and to satisfy the reason of a certain order of minds. Amongst these are some, which, though few in number, are high in authority, and of an almost unbounded extent of influence over public opinion. They are, generally speaking, men who, either from constitutional character or external circumstances, are less prepared by the study of themselves for a grateful reception of the faith in its simple majesty, but who, from having been long exercised in the affairs of the world, or in the study of abstract science and curious research, have been thus trained and rendered expert to judge of speculative or of external truth. Such were, among divines, Watson and Lardner; or, far greater than they, Warburton, and Horsley, and Barrow; or among illustrious laymen, such men as Chancellor D'Aguesseau, and Duplessis Mornai in France; Grotius and Boerhaave in Holland; Lord Bacon, Chief Justice Hale, Lord President Forbes, Newton, Locke, Addison, and Sir William Jones, in Great Britain, and our own Hamilton. Whether this truth so allowed, remain dormant, and purely speculative in their minds, is a question of the highest interest to each of the

individuals of this class; but whether it does so or not, the effect either way of their opinions and influence, must be very great.

By the natural and essential order of civilized society, springing out of the universal constitution of human nature, there are very many subjects upon which the vast majority must, and ought, in a considerable degree, to rely ultimately upon the authority of those original and accomplished minds, who communicate to their age and nation their own character and impression, as well as more immediately upon that of the much more numerous, but still comparatively small, class of enlightened understandings, who are able perfectly to estimate the arguments, to judge of the genius, and to assent rationally to the deductions of the grander and guiding minds of the times. Through these channels, the external evidence comes to illiterate Christians, not in the way of arbitrary requisition to submit to authority without an inquiry, but as resting upon the deliberate and disinterested decisions of those well qualified to investigate and decide thereon. It is consequently entitled to respect upon the same general principles, and (it ought to be particularly observed) with the same or similar limitations and exceptions, as the unbiassed opinions of any class of professional or scientific men, in relation to some peculiar object of their studies.

This is in accordance with those common principles of good sense, upon which, in fact, all intelligent men are constantly obliged to regulate their conduct in some or other of the most important affairs of life. This rational and qualified submission to such authority, comprehends some exercise of candour, humility, and fair judgment in the estimate of the authority itself. Not unfrequently, too, it comprehends an appeal to the reason to weigh the general force of the argument, although the accuracy of its details must be taken on trust. Without being able to enter into the details of the question, a man of good sense may apply his mind to the consideration, whether the inferences are fairly drawn; whether the character of any of the instructors entitle him to the confidence he claims; whether he is a fair and unbiassed judge or witness; and what share personal or professional prejudices or interests may have in inducing him to form the conclusions he urges upon others.

In this, or some similar way, is insensibly formed and adopted to the use of Christians of every degree of learning, a most valuable collateral testimony to the truth of that religion which had originally recommended itself to their acceptance, by its purity and excellence, on wholly different grounds: while, to those who are strangers to its influence, to the young, the ignorant,

and the careless, is thus furnished a highly probable *primâ facie* proof of its truth, that at least commands respect, and asserts an undeniable claim to examination and attention. In this way the external proof, in some sort performs, in our age, the same office which the original miraculous attestation accomplished in the primitive times.

This influence, it is quite obvious, will not operate generally and strongly, except in civilized communities, where the whole body feels the effect, and can more or less fully estimate the just worth of its more enlightened members; and where, too, the number and the moral power of such members are by far the greatest. The entire absence of this sort of proof, acting either directly or indirectly, strikes me as being one of the most efficient secondary causes to which may be ascribed, in the order of Providence, the relatively small progress of the Gospel in many barbarous and ignorant nations. No inconsiderable portion of their torpid indifference towards Christianity may be distinctly traced to what Dr. Paley, in pointing out the causes of the same apparent apathy among ancient scholars, and showing the little reliance which can be placed upon the judgments of the most acute minds on subjects which they are pleased to despise, has termed, with philosophical accuracy and brevity, "contempt prior to examination."

Moreover, however clear and convincing the internal evidence may be to individuals, yet a religion which is so interwoven with the history and progress of society, and of which the miraculous confirmation does in fact form a part of the system itself, cannot well be without some ample historical proof, whether it rests its claims mainly upon that, or on other grounds. The total want, or the partial deficiency of such proof, would form a positive and perplexing argument against its veracity; and it is in reality upon this point of attack, that the more popular and successful infidel writers have chiefly laboured. The external proofs here become of admirable use in the defence of truth, and in the refutation of those doubts which might otherwise overthrow the faith of many, or perhaps perplex and harass those whom they could not seduce.

By these arms Infidelity has been again and again repelled in her assaults; sometimes daring and open; sometimes insidious and covert; employing in her unhallowed service, in turns, the magnificent declamation of Bolingbroke, the various learning and sarcastic irony of Gibbon, and the sparkling wit, the ready and versatile talent, and the gay profligacy of Voltaire.

It is, by the way, well worthy of a passing remark, that, as in our own country a certain degree of reading and information is very widely diffused.

much more of this literary scepticism is to be found lurking in certain classes of society than is commonly supposed by the clergy, whose official character represses a frank expression of opinion, and whose associations in life are not commonly such as to give them, in all respects, accurate views of the real state of religious sentiment among the laity. Therefore, though it can never by any means form the most important or edifying part of their public ministrations, it seems, on various accounts, proper that they should present occasionally to their hearers, in a summary and popular form, some of those extrinsic proofs with which our religion is so wonderfully fortified.

To the same hands and to the same weapons to which has thus been confided the defence of these outworks of sacred truth, has been also, in a remarkable degree, (though not wholly,) entrusted the preservation of its purity.

No stronger example can be given of the value of that evidence, which is founded upon human testimony, and judged of by means of human learning, than its utility in settling that canon of scripture, from which the rules of our belief and practice are to be drawn. A minute survey of the various heresies and contests which have agitated the Christian world, would show very clearly how efficient an instrument learning applied to the ex-

ternal proof of doctrine has ever been, in checking, and not unfrequently in wholly exterminating error. Though it must be confessed, that the most unhallowed passions have too often mingled with the conflicts and the triumphs of learning, that few of her victories have been unpolluted by the bitter intolerance of controversy, and good men in all ages have seen with mixed feelings of exultation and sorrow,

"The Truth preserved, and Charity forgot."

These considerations naturally lead us to the further examination of another point—the extent to which this internal evidence of doctrine can be applied. It may be asked, if these doctrines thus bear indelible marks of their truth about them—does not that consideration alone afford a true and unfailing rule for the decision of controversy, the termination of all doubts, and the irrefutable establishment of truth? Is the general authority of revelation ever to be taken into account? and does not every dogma proposed prove or refute itself at once to attentive and honest minds, without any necessity of our entering into laboured investigation as to the interpretation of the passages in which it may be supposed to be alleged?

The very statement of these questions furnishes the answer.

The internal evidence, such as I have endeavoured to portray its features, is of a very gene-

ral nature. Though bearing an immediate and decisive testimony to those revealed doctrines which most immediately affect the feelings, and decidedly ameliorate the character of individuals, still it does not by any means appear sufficient to preserve from many errors and diversities of opinion, and these, though not fatal, nor, strictly speaking, fundamental, yet undoubtedly, in very many cases, of a pernicious tendency.

It cannot reasonably be questioned, by candid and tolerant observers, that, in the darkest superstitions which have overshadowed the Church in her most benighted age, as well as in many of the wildest extravagances of Protestant fanaticism, this religion has in substance and in power approved itself, in some manner or other, to the consciences and the understandings of many sincere and virtuous men who accepted it, mixed with vain or corrupt inventions, or the incoherent dreams of enthusiasm.

Upon the same great foundation, sect after sect has built its own narrow superstructure, mixing base materials with the stones of the temple. Over all, Truth has constantly shone forth, warning, guiding, and cheering all who came to its light; but, at the same time, shedding something of its own sanctity over the follies, and even the corruptions which had risen up beneath its beams. John Wesley, speaking of those strange delusions which accompanied the mys-

ticism of Jansenist devotion in his days, says, in a passage, of which I have often admired alike the sound philosophy and the Christian spirit—"In all these things I see great faith and great superstition; and it may well be, that God has accepted the faith, and pardoned the superstition."* He had reference, I believe, particularly to the miracles said to have been performed at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, and of course could not have been informed, at the time, of those circumstances which afterwards enabled more rigid judges, as well Catholic as Protestant, to show the true nature of these extraordinary, but not supernatural events. But his principle was wise and liberal, and it extends not only to honest differences of opinion on points indifferent or secondary, but also to many gross errors and wild delusions which have prevailed among Christians.

The fair and rational inference from the fact, that truth has given such decisive signs of power, while falsehood and fraud have been permitted to follow and participate in her triumphs, is, that in these doctrines and precepts there is a positive internal evidence, how far extending is not easy to

* This is quoted from memory. I have not seen the passage for several years, and cannot now refer to it. It is possible that Wesley may have alluded to some other occurrences than the prodigies at the tomb of the Abbé Paris. But his sentiment, and I believe his language, are nearly as above represented.

trace, but certainly only to such instruction as is the most essential and practical. Besides this, what is essential and practical to one, may to another be but partial and elementary; and this moral light, too, differs in clearness and intensity, according to the circumstances of situation, of character, and intellectual and moral culture; varying according to the temptations which surround us, the difficulties we are called upon to encounter, and the duties we are bound to perform. In whatever degree, however, it may exist, it is this that recommends their religion to the mass of believers; while those who have the power of forming their opinions on the theory of their creed for themselves, by study and investigation, and especially those who aspire to become in any manner the guides and teachers of their brethren, have no right, nor can they with safety neglect that fuller rule of faith which is within their reach. The internal evidence attests to that rule, but does not supply its place. It is positive only to a certain and limited extent, and does not often act negatively, to the exclusion of falsehood. It bears testimony to truth, but not to all truth, nor against all error.

Every creed does and must contain some articles relating to purely positive institutions, and to matters and events wholly beyond the reach of our knowledge or observation, none of which

are within the cognizance of reason or of sentiment, except so far as to enable us to perceive that they are not contradictory and impossible. Concerning these, therefore, the only questions can be "how is it written?" and what is the right interpretation, and the just authority of that writing? Yet these articles bear such claims, that, if true and right, they cannot be rejected wilfully without much guilt, or ignorantly without some danger.

The examination of some prominent instance of the use and necessity of external evidence, will make these views clearer than can be done by general reflections.

Let us briefly consider the question with reference to a very important subject, the canonical authority of the several books or parts of Scripture, and this decision materially involves that of numerous collateral questions.

Upon the principles which have been maintained in these Essays, we may fully assent to Calvin,* when he says that there are in the Scriptures manifest evidences of God speaking in them, and that the divine majesty will appear to those who examine them with clear understandings and obedient wills. But when he goes on to assert that this belief is self-dependant, and that

* Calvin. Inst. Lib. i. Cap. 7. s. 4, 5. "Hanc quidem esse αὐτόπιστον neque demonstratione aut rationibus subjici eam fas est," &c.

it is not allowable to support it by argument or demonstration; and when some of his followers have asserted that they know the apocryphal from the canonical books solely by this internal evidence and persuasion, then they go to an extent not warranted by any express declaration of revelation; not borne out by facts; and, though clearly possible, yet, unless backed by direct proof, not probable to reason.

Is it the fact that when Luther denied the authenticity of the epistle of James, or when certain modern theologians and biblical critics disputed the first chapter of Matthew's gospel, that either of these were questions to be decided barely upon internal evidence; or that private individuals could lay claim to the light of inspiration directing their judgment upon them? Or, to take perhaps a stronger instance, when Whiston, in the beginning of the last century, reviving an opinion of the ancient church, claimed the authority of an inspired and apostolic writing for the first epistle of Clemens Romanus, a composition beautiful for its meek benevolence, admirable for its pure morality, inculcating the doctrines of Paul, and breathing the spirit of John; is it true that it was simply upon an internal evidence, either of natural reason or of supernatural illumination, exclusive of the ordinary aids furnished by historical, critical, and theological learning,

that the whole Christian world have concurred in rejecting it from the canon of their faith, though they have, with few exceptions, united in placing it in the most honoured rank of primitive and holy, though uninspired, compositions?

Whatever opinions of this nature, excellent and wise men have been led to maintain by their zeal for the efficacy of the written word, yet almost all well-informed Christians in our day act upon very different principles. In spite even of Calvin's name and authority, I believe that most of those who now bear his name will confess, with that illustrious ornament of their communion, Richard Baxter, that we must look to exterior and human testimony to draw the precise line between the canonical and apocryphal writings, and to attest to the superior authority of some merely historical books over others.*

Indeed, with regard to Calvin, I am inclined to consider his remarks on this point as being in truth a general and unqualified expression of sound opinion, founded on a vivid conviction of the power of the internal and moral evidence, and stated very broadly, and, after his manner, very strongly, in opposition to those of his theological antagonists of the Roman Catholic church, who, resting the authority of the scriptures solely

* See Baxter, and others, as quoted by Jones on the Canon, Vol. I

upon that of the church, spoke with unbridled contempt of all other proof.*

This whole subject is extremely well and candidly discussed by Jeremiah Jones, in the first part of his valuable and learned book on the canonical authority of the New Testament, to which the curious reader may be referred for an ample, learned, and judicious statement of that controversy.

All the foregoing considerations combine to point out another, and probably the most important, use of the historical and external evidences.

They give to the whole body of revelation a uniform and authoritative claim to reverence and reception, founded upon arguments specially fitted for, and addressed to, those who are constituted by talents, education, and station, either ecclesiastical or civil, the natural guides and teachers of their fellow-Christians, by whom they are looked up to for instruction in the theory of religion, and who are, in no small measure, responsible for the

* Cardinal Hosius, a cotemporary of Calvin, is quoted as saying, "scripturas, si desit ecclesiæ autoritas, tantum valere quantum fabulas Esopi." The *Horæ Biblicæ* of Charles Butler, a distinguished living Roman Catholic lawyer, well known to his profession as the learned commentator upon Lord Coke, and not less honored among general scholars for the extent and accuracy of his attainments, breathes a very different spirit, and the contrast it presents to this and similar passages should teach us to be cautious of charging upon those who differ from us those extravagances of conduct or opinion, which are often the errors solely of the age, or, it may be, of the individual.

errors of those whom they wilfully or carelessly mislead by precept or example.

With whatever degree of light and clearness, so much, and that the most efficacious portion, of moral and revealed truth may approve itself to the consciences and understandings of the honest and penitent, yet it is highly probable, *à priori*, and it is most certain, in fact, that the Christian revelation must and does contain, together with something of purely positive institution, much that is beyond our observation, remote from our experience, and concerning which man has no power of judging whether it be true or false, right or wrong, except that he perceives that it is not in palpable repugnance to common sense, and therefore, so far as his reason can show him, may or may not be true. Of this not a little is plainly and expressly designed to curb the passions, and to humble the pride, and therefore, if we could get rid of it, it is certain that we should gladly wish it away.

The variety of sects and opinions which have prevailed in the Christian world, have not all of them arisen—at least, most certainly, they have not entirely arisen—from honest errors of interpretation, from want of knowledge, or want of understanding. Much of this unhappy discord has been the fruit of the moral causes which have been before intimated. If, then, the doc-

trines of revelation had no other authority than their internal evidence, though they would still bear conviction to thousands, what would there have been left to guide the honest inquirer, amidst jarring theories and subtile disputations; or to check the ambitious zealot, and the speculative philosophist, from selecting and rejecting, at their own discretion, and without blame or restraint, the doctrines which they approved, or the institutions which they might think reasonable?

As long as human passions are left free to act, and the constitution of our intellectual nature remains as it is, influenced by prejudices, and liable to errors, this danger will never be wholly excluded. But what better moral guard can be imagined, than a strong and complicated testimony, peculiarly fitted for inviting the most rigorous examination of all who are in fact the guides and teachers of their brethren, whether actually discharging the offices of pastoral instruction and duty, or indirectly influencing the opinions of the people from other causes?—a class not inconsiderable in any Christian age or country, but in this period of increased and increasing light, and diffused information, every day becoming more and more numerous. To all such the external evidence brings down the original miraculous attestation of the preaching of our Lord and his apostles, as it were, to their

own days, and places it before them, stamping upon the book so evidenced, the proof of its containing a message from God. This gives a unity of claim, an equal right to reception to the whole, and when once it has been acknowledged whether upon that proof alone, or from the character of its more prominent doctrines, it demands an honest and unreserved submission to all that we conscientiously believe it to inculcate. It affords an authorized rule, a code of revealed law, whereby we may try the teaching of religious rulers and chiefs, speaking with authority, where reason can only muse in silent wonder, which reminds man of his frailty and ignorance, and bids him accept, with undoubting gratitude and submission, the gift of his Judge's mercy, and the lessons of omniscient wisdom.

If presumption and false philosophy are not thus expelled from the temple, or repulsed from the altar, they are at least checked in their boldness, and made manifest to themselves and to others. By these means, amidst varieties of creed, distinctions of sect, and fierce controversy, there has been preserved, in the great body of believers, a unity of faith in much that is most necessary for each individual to know; which he who judges solely from the exterior aspect of the Christian world, would never suppose to exist.

The teacher or priest may frame to himself, and proclaim to the world, a corrupt and spurious religion, debased with vain inventions and dark superstitions, or he may substitute his own theories, and what he proudly deems to be philosophy, to the simple and efficacious truths of Christianity; but until he can throw off all respect for the authenticity of its sacred books, and ceases to acknowledge them as containing the substance of his creed, he must continue to declare to his people the leading parts of revelation, and the most instructive circumstances of its history. He must use their language, and clothe his opinions, however wild or extravagant, however presumptuous or sceptical, in sound forms of words. He may by sophistry, or a show of learning, mislead many of the intelligent and well informed; he may keep out of view, or mutilate, or render useless, the most powerful and efficacious truths of revelation; yet as long as he is under this restraint, his errors, though not harmless, will lose some portion of their injurious effect. The teacher is often unconsciously the means of communicating to others, sounder and purer knowledge than he possesses himself. The ignorant are in some degree guarded by their own weakness from presumptuous speculation. The practices of superstition may be duly and reverently per-

formed, and remain in effect but unmeaning forms. In the mean while, the truths most essential to the guidance and assistance of men perform their due office, and afford to the humble and penitent, all that their great Author has promised to them that seek him.

The result of the considerations which have been stated, in regard to the uses and characters of these different kinds of evidence, then is, that the reception of the Christian scriptures, by the great body of unlearned believers, does not depend upon the arbitrary authority of men, nor need it rest solely upon the internal evidence either of the style of the sacred books, or of the instruction conveyed in them. It is founded upon the general testimony of the universal church, as the natural depository and guardian of truth, and upon her authority considered as expressing the united judgments of a vast number of men in different ages and nations, known to be competent from education, talents, or other opportunities, to decide upon the facts substantiating their authority and credit.

This is far more powerfully corroborated by a rational conviction of the excellence, worthiness, and usefulness of the doctrines. Upon this the faith is substantially founded, while its efficacy is made manifest to the heart and consciences of all who truly seek its aid.

The perception of truth and excellence in the revelation of Jesus, is level to understandings uncultivated by human learning, but exercised in the study of themselves. This perception is of a general nature, and differs according to the measure of intellectual or moral wisdom bestowed upon individuals, while the means of judging accurately and critically of the several heads of historical inquiry, of determining upon the questions of the canonical authority of particular books, chapters or passages; of deciding upon the true readings and other criticisms of the text, as well as upon its right translation, are afforded, though not literally to a few, yet, comparatively, to not very many. To these few, according to the universal and natural order of Providence, in the organization and constitution of society, is confided, in this, as in other important interests, that intellectual authority upon which most of us must, and in common prudence ought, to accept the information upon which we are compelled to regulate our conduct in our most momentous concerns.

There is no reason to regard this as a degrading dependence, or to consider a reliance upon it as at all inconsistent with good sense. It is, in fact, the same sort of evidence (the case is not cited as precisely parallel, but as strongly analogical) as that on which the great majority of the

citizens of a free state, who occasionally consult the statute law of the land, believe any statute or decision to be in reality the law, and not a mere forgery. Few of them are competent, if an ingenious doubt were raised, to prove, by any show of direct and positive argument, that the volume in their hands is really a collection of the public acts, passed many years ago. But they have the silent and irresistible testimony of all who receive and obey it, the authority of those who, from general information or professional studies, are the most competent judges of the matter, and the palpable internal evidence of probability and veracity in the book itself; all of which taken together, amount to so strong a proof, that they not only exclude doubt, but even prevent the bare suggestion of it. The natural belief, so founded, is of the most efficient and practical sort, since we act constantly and unhesitatingly upon it, in affairs involving our property, our liberty, and, it may be, our lives.

We are all in our turns called upon to display, at every moment, some instance of such a rational submission to authority. No matter how great the intellectual superiority, or how universal the knowledge of any gifted and accomplished individual may be, on some subject or other, he must in his turn trust to the superior skill and information of others. A spirit of contradiction to

all authority and evidence, not level to our own judgment, is so little connected, either with mental acuteness or honest independence, that in fact its true spring is commonly to be found in vanity, in obstinacy, or in the love of singularity, usurping the place of common sense.

Such seem to be the different, and in some respects opposite, though by no means contradictory, uses and characters of the several marks of its veracity and power, which the Christian Revelation presents to man; and I can see no sound reason for rejecting any of them. It is not wise either to go into the extreme of despising the outward proof, or to rush into the more dangerous paradox of denying the possibility of any internal evidence, founded upon rational principles, and capable of being intellectually observed.

All of these several arguments have their use and efficacy; all of them are given by heaven for the use of mankind. Their intention and their final causes may be partially traced, and sound discretion will enable us to apply them to their proper objects. Though it be true in the present day, as in the days of David, that the Champion of Israel may safely throw aside the massive armour of human warfare, when he finds it to cumber and impede his march, and may go forth without it in full confidence of victory; yet, there

are very many occasions, when Religion lifts her crowned head in the temples and high places of the earth, and whilst the heathen rage, or those of her own household rebel against her, permits and invites all her sons, according to their several endowments, to defend or to adorn her throne, commanding, as of old, "every wise-hearted man, in whom the Lord had put wisdom, to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary."

ESSAY V.

The Critical Internal Evidence.

When a scholar and man of taste, in the study of some admired work of genius, has become deeply interested in its history or argument, animated by its eloquence, or touched by its sentiment, he at length gradually assimilates his own mind to that of his favourite author, kindles with his fires, and feels a community with his wisdom and genius.

If, whilst all these natural feelings are fresh and glowing, he is suddenly obliged to transfer his attention to the little details of verbal criticism, in settling the text of his author, or to some antiquarian research, necessary to clear up accidental obscurities, or reconcile apparent but unimportant contradictions, the transition is not merely unpleasant—it is somewhat mortifying. He is sensible that he is descending from a nobler exercise of his faculties to one that is lower and meaner.

As he feels those animating sympathies and sensibilities, common to our moral nature, subside; as he recedes from the contemplation of

those great principles of reason or of virtue, the knowledge of which gives man his rank in the intellectual creation, he finds that his soul dwindles, as it were, with the objects which employ its attention. He ceases to feel the ennobling and animating consciousness of his character as an intellectual and moral being, and remembers only that he is a linguist, a lawyer, or an antiquary.

This does not take place solely in our purely literary studies; it seems to belong to a general law of our being. The most satisfactory, and, at the same time, the most gratifying employments of the understanding, are those which most depend upon, or involve, general principles of human nature. In proportion as we fix our attention, and employ our faculties upon subjects of narrower concern, or those confined within the sphere of a necessarily limited portion of society, however useful the employment may be, the interest becomes less intense, and the conclusions, though not always less certain, yet of far less power.

This appears to me to be peculiarly true with regard to the study of the several kinds of evidence of the truth of revelation.

To turn from the moral internal evidence of its doctrines, to the critical internal evidence of its books—from the internal marks of truth in

the religion, to the internal signs of genuineness in the ancient writings which relate its history, is leaving a grander, and broader, and most powerful evidence, to seek for one of a lower class, which, though in its way sufficient, is less conclusive, less satisfactory, and much less impressive and efficacious. The direct and positive testimony of history and fulfilled predictions, requires also a certain degree of knowledge to be able to comprehend it; but the authority of that testimony is founded upon ordinary principles of belief, and is therefore plain and palpable, and may be made intelligible to thousands. Upon this, too, the mind, when once satisfied in the examination, can repose with confidence. It is otherwise with regard to a large portion of the critical evidence, and more especially with that part of it which is most strictly entitled to that name, and on which scholars commonly most insist. It demands a microscopic minuteness of examination of numerous small particulars, which can be given only by very acute and cultivated understandings, and, like most other inquiries of the same sort, the result is argumentative, and perhaps unanswerable proof, but seldom heartfelt conviction.

Since, however, all that relates to the study or the authority of books of the Christian relation must have its use, and as many very in-

genious and deeply learned men have diligently collected a great mass of curious observations on this subject, every sketch of the Christian evidences, however brief or general in its design, must be imperfect, without some notice of this head of proof. Above all, though the strictly critical evidence of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, is not, I think, likely to produce much positive effect in enforcing their sincere reception, yet it surely affords materials for abundant and unanswerable refutation of the objections and cavils of those who assail their historical veracity.

Books written in the same languages and age, and under the same external circumstances with these, would of necessity contain numerous indications of their authenticity, fitted for the examination of the learned and critical. Considered purely in the light of ancient compositions, they must have some share of this sort of internal probability ; and though this be not the evidence which is to recommend them effectually and extensively, yet the absence or deficiency of such critical evidence, might lead to doubt or suspicion among the learned, as well as afford popular arguments addressed to the mass of society.

It is my design, in the following Essay, to state, without entering much into particulars, what appear to me to be the leading principles of this

species of evidence, and how they are applicable to the consideration of this particular question, as relates to the New Testament, considering the gospels and epistles simply as ancient and curious compositions, containing the relation of certain remarkable events.

The particularity of narrations—the truth, ease, and naturalness of allusion to the public or private history of the times, to the manners of the age, and the customs, scenery, or other peculiarities of the country—the agreement of style, language, taste, and idiom to the character and station of the alleged authors—the coherence of the narrative with itself—the peculiar tone and manner, (independently of any consideration of the matter of their relations, or their opinions)—all these form very strong indications of genuineness and veracity in any composition whatever. They afford clear signs of the authors being really what they profess to be, and, it may also be, of their sincere belief in the facts which they relate, or the opinions which they inculcate. Circumstances of this sort have accordingly, in a former Essay, been observed to constitute what I have there denominated the Critical Internal Evidence of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. As the doctrinal internal evidence must be examined by cautious reason, by well regulated sentiment, and the comparison of it with the knowledge of ourselves; so this critical evidence is to be tried

by our knowledge of history, antiquities and languages, by an acquaintance with the characters of men as they exhibit themselves in life and society, and (in some points) by natural feeling or cultivated literary taste. It is very obvious, that the inferences to be drawn from the several points which have been mentioned as comprising it, do not end in one uniform result. They bear upon different, though not unconnected points of the argument.

There is a well settled distinction in the English law, and a very old one, though first clearly defined upon rational principles, and freed from legal subtleties, by Lord Mansfield, but to which something analogous must be found in every system of cultivated jurisprudence;* between those circumstances, which affect the competency or admissibility of any witness, and those which augment or impair his credit; between those facts which show whether he ought to be heard at all, and those which indicate the degree of weight to be given to his testimony.

The same rules, in principle, may be applied to the evidence now under consideration. Much

* The good sense of this rule could not fail to recommend it to the notice of the civil law, though I think that it has never there taken the form of a verbal and technical distinction. The Digest *(Cap. de Testibus)* has several opinions and decisions as to the character of witnesses, who are competent—*idonei testes* and those who ought not to be permitted to testify—*Quos interrogarri non placet*, or *produci non debet*.

of it goes simply to show that the writers of the gospels and epistles were not second-hand or hearsay witnesses, living in an after age and a distant country; nor to be rejected on the ground of the *Crimen falsi*, of imposture and forgery; but, on the contrary, that they lived at the time and in the country which they speak of as their own, and thus were, in the strictest legal sense, original and competent witnesses, whatever credit we may give to their testimony.

There is also much to show that they were not only competent in their means of information, but also the best witnesses which could be produced, that they delivered their testimony in the most natural manner, under the most solemn sanctions, and with striking marks of honesty and sincerity. They are also unimpeachable witnesses; not to be assailed, either by the contradiction of any positive external evidence, or on the matter furnished by cross-examination of themselves, and the collation of one part of their testimony with another; or of their account of any collateral or main facts, with the evidence relating thereto, which may be drawn from other quarters. These distinctions are worth keeping in mind, though it is not in all cases easy to sort out exactly the several circumstances which bear upon one or the other conclusion, since there are many facts of a mixed nature which have

some connexion with both, and may be variously applied according to the bearing of the objections which may be raised, or the plan on which the inquiry is conducted.

Nor is it easy to say with confidence, precisely how far the several uses of this species of evidence may reach. There are many points of it which can only be estimated fully by critics and scholars; others, the discovery of which must have required an intimate acquaintance with classical or Jewish learning, but which can now be stated, without losing any of their force, to the comprehension of any person of ordinary literary attainments; others again, which rest not upon the comparison of particulars, so much as on the more general effect of manner, upon the congruity of the relation, and on the obvious appearances of fairness and veracity. These last may be felt and understood by men of no uncommon degree of observation and acquaintance with human character and actions, without any share of learning whatever.

Taking it for granted that the reader is somewhat acquainted with the particulars composing this head of argument, which have been accurately collected and illustrated by many critics and scholars, and ably and perspicuously stated by Paley, and other popular writers, whose works are in every body's hands; let us confine our at-

tention to the general character of such evidence, endeavouring to trace the principles which govern it, and to ascertain its true force and value.

On the first view, it is evident to any one who has much attended to the manner of testimony, whether spoken or written, that circumstantial narration—digressive details—casual mention of such incidental and unessential particulars as, though closely connected with the principal events, are in no wise necessary to the understanding of them, bear much more of the character of original relations, than that recital which confines itself, as is common in second-hand narration, and in traditionary or compiled histories, to broad assertions or naked statements, to relations in which nothing but the prominent conclusion appears, where the writer relates or describes, as it were, merely intellectually, and not with the feelings of one whose memory recalls the living and moving scene, and acts it over before him, as he proceeds in his account of it. Then it appears, on the very first glance, probable, independently of all other proof, that the relater was personally present, or that he derived his information immediately from some eye-witness or actor in the scene; and, in this latter case, that he had himself such an acquaintance with the circumstances and localities, as enabled him to enter distinctly and vividly into the feelings, and

conceptions of his informant. This presumption springs directly from the fact of the story appearing to be governed or connected by those common laws of association which are usually found to prevail among men. We know, from the observation of our own thoughts, and from that of the conversation of others, that an important scene scarcely ever occurs to the memory of those who have themselves witnessed it, in a naked and insulated form. It is attended with the recollection of circumstances which struck the senses at the time. It is not until it has passed from mind to mind, that it becomes, as it were, abstracted from its accidental particularities, and assumes the form of history. To the original witness it presents itself with the place, the season, the bystanders, and a hundred other attendant circumstances accompanying or following its recollection. Where the narrative is merely historical, or where it is purely fictitious, something of this aspect may be given to it by the effort of a strong and lively imagination, aided by a minute historical acquaintance with facts; but in general, in all second-hand or false relations, there are far fewer and fainter appearances of those strong associations, which are rendered indissoluble in the memory, by the cotemporaneous impressions upon the senses.

On the other hand, this particularity is singularly distinguished from the laboured and

artificial minuteness which is very frequently exhibited in professed works of fiction. The particularity of truth, while it introduces so many associated circumstances, still dwells mainly upon prominent facts, mentioning other events chiefly as they are associated with those. It does not paint all that took place with a Chinese accuracy of detail, but sketches a bold outline, in which hundreds of points unessential to the general effect are omitted. The voyages of Anacharsis, or the Athenian Letters of Lord Hardwicke and his brother, are infinitely fuller of particular information relating to the private lives, manners and institutions of the Athenians, than the Memorabilia of Xenophon ; but what reader can be so dull as not to perceive the broad difference between the unaffected details of the ancient, and the laboured minuteness of the French and English scholars, elegant and accomplished as they were? Who cannot see that the ancients described such circumstances incidentally and collaterally ; the moderns by an effort of the mind expressly bent to that special purpose?

In this peculiarity, which, while it dwells naturally upon secondary and unimportant particulars, never assumes the manner of minute and elaborate description, very much consists that impressive expression of veracity, indescribable in words

to those who have had no experience on such subjects, but which every man who is called upon to attend to it, is soon trained, in the commerce of life, and even in the study of books, to feel and acknowledge. It may be partially imitated by a lively dramatic or inventive talent, or by fraud long practised in the ways of men ; but still it has a character of its own altogether striking and singular.

This is not all—there is in the very fact of this circumstantiality of relation, this entering into particulars which might have been as well avoided, when a man wishes to be believed, and does not describe solely for the purpose of amusement or impression, and especially when he relates circumstances which must necessarily be within the knowledge of others, a certain fearlessness of consequences, an aspect of frankness, which, though they may be, and occasionally are, mimicked by art and hypocrisy, yet constitute the natural and unaffected physiognomy of truth.

Without pretension or parade, without any indication of a secret consciousness of merited suspicion, it courts investigation, it invites inquiry, and defies doubts. He who in any matter of testimony touching the ordinary concerns of life and business, can confine his statements to broad and general assertions, avoids every thing that affords an opportunity for that collation of

testimony, which, in our common administration of justice, is obtained by a cross-examination. You have no room to detect falsehood or inaccuracy, by comparing one part of his evidence with another—you can bring nothing to refute it but direct and positive contradiction. The burden of proof is thrown upon him who doubts or denies; and that proof is the establishment of a negative, of all others the most difficult. The affirmative testimony, as long as it remains in generalities, can be met and rebutted only by other evidence, going directly to that same general assertion. It is far otherwise with the minute and circumstantial narrator. He voluntarily relinquishes this advantage. He exposes himself to encounter contradiction at every step. The truth or falsehood of the principal fact may be within the knowledge of but few; all other evidence on this subject may be distant, or inaccessible; but as he enters into details and circumstances—as he takes in a wider range of facts, opinions, and peculiarities, and as the means of inquiry into the truth or probability of these circumstances are attainable, the chances of detection, if he be an impostor, multiply upon him as he advances; and this not in proportion to the number of circumstances he mentions, but in a rapidly increasing, and, we may almost say, in a geometrical progression.

Wherever this is done, there is always a presumption that it is prompted or supported by the full confidence of honest intention and accurate statements. This presumption is, unquestionably, far from being absolutely conclusive; but if it remain uncontradicted, it is, in most cases, sufficient for our satisfaction. Half the evidence on which litigated causes are decided, is much of this complexion; nor can the historian or critic often give a better reason for his reliance upon the records and memoirs of past times. There is scarcely a book of higher authority, in its way, than Cæsar's Commentaries; yet this single circumstance is the main ground of its credibility, as to every thing beyond a few leading events, which are corroborated by other history, and one or two incidental circumstances, which may be confirmed from other quarters.

The New Testament, it is obvious, is full of minute circumstances, of all kinds, which, at the time of these books being given to the world, it must have been perfectly within the power of hundreds of friends and of foes to contradict, if they were false, or substantially incorrect; and such a refutation of any considerable, though secondary assertions, would go far to shake the authority of the whole composition. In the simple fact, that so many and such various chances

of contradiction were unnecessarily encountered, we have a strong presumption of the honesty and fidelity of the historians. This is, as has been allowed, but a presumptive or *primâ facie* proof, and is, accordingly, liable to be explained away, as well as directly refuted; but until that be done, it remains a legitimate and valid indication of veracity.

But the argument does not rest here. There are numerous direct references, and very many allusions to the history, laws, customs, manners, and opinions of the day. The style and language of the compositions are also peculiar, evidently professing to be the works of men of a particular education, nation, dialect, and age. Any attempt to forge such writings, would be exposed to great hazard of detection; and this hazard must increase, in proportion as the details were more minute, or the facts more numerous, and of a kind not embodied in the public history of the age, but connected with the peculiarities of religions, of sects, cities, smaller communities, or of individuals. In this instance, while the main narrative touches on hundreds of circumstances known only to the Jewish people, the scene is by no means confined to the native land or residence of the writers, but is transferred in turns to all the great cities of the Roman world, whilst Jewish priests, Roman Governors, religious and philosophical

sects and their teachers, with the common people of Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus and Athens, and other districts and cities of the east, are portrayed simply and naturally, and circumstances connected with their singularities of opinions, or with national or provincial character, with the systems of Jewish, Roman or Grecian polity, with the religious and superstitious rites of all; with their arts, with their laws, and the forms of civil and judicial procedure, are all in their several places incidentally noticed.

Now, if these writings had descended to us from a dark and distant antiquity, to the history and manners of which we had no other guide; this varied circumstantiality, however much it might exhibit of the moral expression of truth, could not well be brought to the test of any close and rigorous examination. In the present case, it is far otherwise. Since the revival of classical literature in Europe, every thing connected with the arts, the history, the literature, the philosophy, and the laws of Greece and Rome, have been the constant study of modern scholars, furnishing to many the main business of their lives, and to still more the amusement of their leisure hours. The materials for this knowledge are abundant on every side, in history, in literary compositions, in the monuments of the arts, in the antiquarian remains of all kinds which have

handed down to posterity the portrait and perfect image of the private life and the public character of the "Dominos terrarum, gentemque togatam," and of their subject conquerors, who yielding to their arms, ruled them by their arts, taste, philosophy and genius. By this means, a modern English or German scholar, a Porson or a Michaelis, is, or easily may be, more familiar with the laws, institutions, and customs of the Roman world, in the days of Tiberius, than (except he had actually resided or travelled in those countries) he could well be with those of Russia or South America in his own times.

Various circumstances have singularly conspired to this result, but the two most efficient are evidently these: The tendency of classical literature to dignify and give interest in the eyes of its votaries, to every thing connected with subjects which form the basis of a learned education, and are interwoven with the earliest and most vivid associations of youthful talent and emulation: and next, the wide spread and long continued sway of the civil jurisprudence of the "Eternal City," by which the public reason of Rome (as it has been proudly, but not undeservedly called) has been avowedly adopted, or gradually transfused into the legislation of the greater part of the civilized world, and has become the common law of distant and independent nations on all points on

which their positive municipal institutions are silent; so that the Institutes and Rescript of the Roman law, still command the respect of courts and senates, and are studied as a necessary part of professional education, by the lawyers and judges of the greater part of modern Europe; thus making familiar to their studies every thing which can even indirectly illustrate the meaning, explain the language, or point out the intention of the civil code.

The means of acquiring a minute acquaintance with Jewish history and antiquities are also very considerable. We have the Jewish scriptures themselves, with their several ancient versions and commentaries, all anterior to the Christian era. The use of these to substantiate the accuracy of the writers of the New Testament is not, as it may appear to a careless observer, arguing in a circle, or employing one part of the same authority to prove another. For it is very remarkable, that the external and historical authentication of the Jewish scriptures, is wholly distinct from that of the books peculiarly Christian. They are not only received by a people who reject the others, but the proof of them runs in a different literature and through different institutions. Besides, few nations can boast of a more accurate and minute historian than the Jewish annalist and apologist, Josephus; a statesman and a man of letters, who wrote while the opinions and events of

the times described by the apostles and evangelists, were still fresh; and, indeed, while some of the actors in those scenes must have been yet living. Moreover, the Rabbinical literature, singular as it is, and wholly uninviting to the general scholar, has presented a great field of curious inquiry and research to the labours of antiquarians and philologists. Scattered as the Jewish people have been to all the winds of heaven, they have, throughout every age, together with their religion, preserved their language and its learning; they have always had authors and scholars, and for many ages, colleges and a species of seminaries for theological instruction.

Such is the minute and accurate knowledge which a learned inquirer may call to his aid, in examining the authenticity of any work professing to have been written in that bright and clearly defined period of antiquity. On the other hand, there is scarcely a chapter in the New Testament which does not afford ample opportunity for this critical scrutiny. The antiquarian has found the materials for a strict and searching investigation and collation of collateral testimony, sometimes in those passages which speak of the public history of the age, sometimes in those which require to be illustrated by the principles, or by the technical and arbitrary rules of proce-

dure of the civil law ;* and sometimes in minute and wholly unessential circumstances, like the allusion to the restless curiosity, and fantastical superstitions of the Athenian populace, the chain, the cloak and parchments of St. Paul, and the slight and unimportant incidents of his navigation and shipwreck. Throughout the whole of these inquiries, all has been found congruous with history, law and antiquities, and every examination of this sort has uniformly gone to confirm the truth of the narrative.

Some few apparent difficulties have occurred, and these, when finally cleared up, have, in fact, afforded new and unexpected illustrations of the veracity and honesty of their writers, who, in the simplicity of unstudied truth, with their mind bent on their principal objects, did not stop to guard against the suspicion of deception or forgery, to clear up obscurities, or to obviate possible objections.

The style and language of these books, affords other, and still more decisive marks of their authenticity.

This is a very common method of ascertaining the genuineness of literary works ; and both

* Huber, one of the greatest authorities in continental and public law, is among those who have particularly examined this subject, and pointed out the agreement of the several incidental notices of civil and criminal proceedings with the forms of justice among the Romans.

classical and modern literary history, will afford numerous examples of the curious and minute accuracy of which such investigations are susceptible, either for the removal of doubt or the detection of forgery. The Greek of the New Testament is such as could only have been written by men of a certain education, nation, and age. Greek was then, as French is now in Europe, the universal language of business and literature; and, like the French of our own day, it was written and spoken even by many of those who used it fluently and habitually, with no small admixture of national or provincial idioms and dialects. Accordingly critics have shown, minutely and clearly, that the style of the Greek Testament is modified by various causes. Among these are the Hellenistic idiom, or the peculiar Hebrew-Greek language, in use among the Jews born and residing in those cities of the empire where the eastern tongues were not generally spoken, which often expresses Hebrew thoughts and phrases in Greek words, and takes the colour of its style from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, somewhat in the same manner as that of the old puritans did from our English Bible.—The influence of opinions prevalent among the Jews, affecting the language with phrases whose meaning is drawn from Rabbinical opinions.—The not unfrequent

use of Latinisms, especially in military terms, and titles of office; being a necessary consequence, from the supremacy of the Roman government, the establishment of Roman military posts, and the residence of Romans of dignity and authority in the provinces; and, in addition to these—The various dialects of their own country, or of other neighbouring eastern nations, which would naturally creep into use among those who spoke Greek as a language of business, and were not scrupulous of its elegance or purity—hence frequent Hebraisms, and occasional Chaldaisms, Syricisms, Arabisms, &c.

This accumulation of idiomatic peculiarities, fixes the age and country of the writers very decidedly. In the writings of St. Paul, ancient verbal criticism has gone yet further, and has observed that while his ordinary style, when arguing on the doctrines of his faith, has all the marked peculiarities of the Hebrew-Greeks, he sometimes falls into Cilicisms, or the local idioms of the province of Cilicia, in which he was born, intelligible enough, but not in common use in other parts of the empire. Besides, it is observable, that he gives evidence of a learned education, by the greater purity of his language when addressing a Roman tribunal, or an Athenian audience, on which occasions he speaks much such Greek as we find in Xenophon.

The reader, unskilled in the ancient languages, may gain some idea of the nature of the evidence which is thus afforded, if we were to suppose that some literary or political composition, or state paper, in the French language were now to appear anonymously, and it became a question of great public interest to ascertain the source from which it proceeded; that a competent critic, versed in the delicacies of the French language, and well acquainted with others, should point out numerous Anglicisms, which should show that it could not have been written by any one who was not in the habit of speaking English—phrases deriving their force or meaning from the local laws and civil institutions of the United States—idioms peculiar to Virginia or New-England—some traces of Spanish idioms, and finally other provincialisms less marked. It is quite obvious, that if the composition were of sufficient length, and the circumstances sufficiently numerous, we might come to the most undoubted conclusion, from such internal evidence, that the author was an American, born or educated in New-England, and who had learnt his French in New-Orleans.

The degree of certainty in any such case, depends of course upon the number, variety, and the delicacy, as well as distinctness of such marks; but when by these means the case is well made out, the true character of the composition may be

most decisively established in the minds of all competent judges.

In this case, no scholar who has studied the subject, whether he embraces the revelation or not, can well entertain any doubt that these books were written by persons of the age and nation ascribed to their reputed authors.

Consequently, they are original historians, and, in the language of the law, competent witnesses. Did they then recount only historical events, of no personal interest to us, however remarkable they might be, we should of course rest here, and believe these accounts, thus given by several cotemporary writers corroborating one another, just as we do the Annals of Tacitus, a writer whose authenticity is not more clearly shown by internal marks of style, while the external testimony to the genuineness of his works is, in comparison of their's, most slight and trivial. But the high import of their story, invites and compels to a more severe scrutiny.

If, then, in all this accurate sifting, this minute and critical examination, not only of the positive allegations, but of the assumptions, hints, and allusions of those historians—an examination in which the friends of their cause have been even more rigid than their enemies; and they have certainly never wanted enemies, learned, acute and deeply hostile—an examination in which every

word has been considered, every statement analyzed and collated with cotemporary authorities, and with other parts of their own writings; if, in all this, nothing like palpable falsehood is detected, what ought to be the legitimate conclusion with regard to the credibility of those writings, so amply attested to be genuine? Is it purely negative? Does it go no further than that nothing yet appears to contradict and refute this history? Is it not rather positive and affirmative, that these men spoke what they knew and testified to what they believed? If the story is thus confirmed in all its minor particularities, there is the strongest presumption that it could not have been fabricated, and the supposition of its entire truth, is the most reasonable solution of the fact of this agreement.

But it may be asked, could not some ingenious writer, accurately and extensively skilled in the antiquities, language, dialect and manners of those times and places have forged such a work, and setting an imaginary picture in a frame of real history, have made the whole consistent with all the information which we can gain from other sources concerning those matters? We know, for instance, the dramatic effect, and the momentary delusion, frequently produced by the great antiquarian novelist of our own days, who has so vividly portrayed the manners of England and Scotland. We all re-

collect, too, the air of artless honesty and matter-of-fact plainness which Defoe could give to his homely but picturesque and fascinating narratives, as displayed in his Robinson Crusoe, his relation of the plague of London, and his Memoirs of a Young Cavalier. Could not this be carried a little further, so that this delusion would be complete, and then the argument would fall at once to the ground?

In reply to this supposition, which, taken simply and without relation to the exterior historical testimony, is not without some plausibility, it may be remarked, first of all, that this particularity is not presumed or asserted to be in itself, and alone, a complete and unanswerable demonstration of veracity. It is but a part of our evidence. It is a mark of truth which we may expect to find, although it might be conceded, that it may not be such as wholly to defy imitation. But we must take this in conjunction with other and more positive evidence, as well that springing from the nature of the doctrines inculcated, as that which is strictly historical; and thus supposing this to amount to but a probability in itself, still, taken in conjunction with other probabilities, it swells into an irrefragable testimony. Besides, allowing the possibility of such a power of matchless imitation and forgery, it is still but a mere and very improbable possibility; and the

same argument may be urged against the most powerful complication of human testimony, or the authority of any history, or any books whatever. It is, therefore, an argument purely sceptical. It is a possibility of delusion against positive proof, insinuating a doubt, but deciding nothing.

But after these preliminary views, which will show that, giving the difficulty its fullest force, it is not very formidable, we may proceed to meet it still more decidedly.

So far as relates to the authentic character of any books, and the credit of their narrative in the main, (for we well know that a genuine and true narrative may colour and distort particular facts) all experience teaches us to deny the existence hitherto of any such power of fictitious narrative, so consistent throughout, so correct in so many points, and those so exceedingly minute. A hasty and careless perusal, such as we give to ordinary works of fiction, might lead us to suppose that with a little more of pains or skill, the deception could be carried to a pitch of excellence which would defy detection. But it is not so. Literary history has preserved the record of many forgeries, which have been attempted with no small ability and address, such as those of Chatterton, of the poems ascribed by him to Rowley, a Bristol priest of the fourteenth century, written

in an antiquated dialect of his own language, and laying the scene of them in and about his own venerable native city, with whose numerous antiquities he had been familiar from his childhood. Ireland's forgeries of the Shakspeare papers is another more recent example. In both of these instances the subject of imitation was exceedingly limited; all minute matters of fact, all particular historical and legal allusions were wholly avoided, and the attempt was confined to a successful imitation of the style, idioms and opinions of the ancient author. Yet, in both these cases, and in twenty similar ones which might be cited, many bearing upon English and French politics and history, some in classical literature, and not a few in early ecclesiastical writings, the forgery was not only detected, but unanswerably and openly exposed, to the satisfaction of every man of ordinary intelligence and competent information.

Judging from all past experience it seems to be wholly impossible that any author, however ingenious, however familiar with the manners of other times or places, should completely transport himself out of the circle of his habitual associations. These have become a part of his very mind; they enter into the substance of all his thoughts, and will inevitably communicate more or less of their own colouring to his assumed

character. Moreover, minor facts and small details will often escape his attention; nor can he always retain every circumstance which may be known to him, constantly present to his mind, nor keep the whole chain of his composition always in view, so as to make it throughout uniformly and naturally consistent with itself. Some oversight will infallibly occur to mark the stranger, to lift the mask and betray the impostor.

The circumstance may oftentimes be very trivial, but the more trivial in its nature, the more likely it is to escape the notice of the writer.

An example of this in one of our own authors occurs to me, which may seem frivolous, but it will illustrate my meaning better than an instance drawn from a more recondite source. In one of his late works,* Washington Irving has introduced a tale describing the peculiar manners and the appearance of the city and colony of New-York, about a hundred years ago. Now the great object of such a story is to keep up the exact ancient costume, and whether the aim of the author be deception, by passing off his fiction for a true narrative, or only to produce the momentary delusion of an interesting poem or romance, whatever tends to destroy this unity, is contrary to the plan of the author, and so far frustrates his

* Bracebridge Hall.

intention. In this tale, among other unintentional violations of costume, one of his personages is made to use an umbrella; but it happens that this invention of eastern luxury is well known not to have been introduced among our Dutch and English ancestors until sixty or seventy years ago, and was never seen in this colony until long after the date of Irving's story.

Little anachronisms of this sort, and similar incongruities of language, things trifling in themselves, but powerful in their evidence, crowd the works of every writer who attempts to portray the manners of different ages and countries, however little removed from his own, for any purpose of delusion, whether innocent and momentary, as in fictitious writing, or deliberate and fraudulent; and it is by these things that a sure clue to the detection of wilful and skilful impostures, like those of Chatterton and Ireland, has always been furnished.

The curious and critical discussions which have taken place respecting the authorship of Junius, may supply a strong analogical instance of the manner in which casual allusions, mistakes of carelessness or ignorance, and slight circumstances of style, language and opinion, furnish indications to the critic of the character of an author. These, if not always sufficient (as from want of satisfactory data, they may not be) to as-

certain the true author of any composition; yet, if diligently examined, will commonly be found strong enough to exclude erroneous claimants, and to detect imposition.*

The nearest approach to perfection in this close imitation of simple narrative, is, unquestionably, the Robinson Crusoe of Defoe; but then this is a narrative founded upon fact, the fictitious writer is of the same time, nation, and rank of life, as the real one, and the author has only filled up the outline of truth which he possessed, with the colours of an imagination fertile and picturesque beyond example, in the details of homely and ordinary particularities. The story is an insulated one, connected with nothing

* Many of these indicia, which literary curiosity, sharpened by political feeling, have hunted out, are very curious, and often prove conclusively who Junius was not. The whole inquiry is full of instruction, as to the nature and force of circumstantial and internal evidence. The celebrated Dunning was at one time justly regarded as the most probable author, but it has been shown, that Junius was probably not professionally a lawyer, from the inaccuracy of his incidental legal allusions, though when writing expressly on legal points, he discovers no small learning and ability. In his dedication he says: "The power of King, Lords and Commons is not an arbitrary power. They are the trustees, not the owners, of the estate. The fee-simple is in us." "Now," remarks Butler, the annotator on Coke, "in all trusts of the inheritance, the fee is in the trustees." Hence it may be reasonably inferred that this could not have been written by a man who had spent his life in Westminster Hall; though it might have been by some lawbred man not familiarly accustomed to the language of the law. Nor could this be the effect of art, for independently of the naturalness of the inaccuracy, Junius never avoided the direct discussion of legal topics when they came in his way.

and leading to no results. We therefore read it with little disposition to inquire into its exactness or probability.

Nothing depends on its being true or false; but if its reception, as true, involved any consequence whatever, (I will not say that of receiving the faith and obeying the precepts of a pure and self-denying religion, but even the support of a political party, or the adopting certain rules of taste or behaviour,) there can be little doubt that a close comparison of the story with other external facts, such as might be gathered from our knowledge of navigation, geography, and the natural history of the country where the scene is laid, would at once make the fictitious part palpable and prominent.

But let us turn to the New Testament, read it as a common book of memoirs, and observe how multiplied and complicated the chance of such errors would be, were it the work of imposture. Consider what a degree not merely of knowledge, but of intimate familiarity and universal acquaintance with the learning, laws, languages, arts, and history of Palestine, and the whole Roman world, you must ascribe to the authors of these compositions, unless they are true. Is this at all probable? May we not ask, is this possible? For if it be possible, it is but barely so, and, as we

have just seen, contradicts all past experience in similar and analogous cases.

Besides this strong probability of error in the work of an impostor, arising from ignorance or inattention, there is another striking characteristic of truth, which has been before slightly touched upon. It consists entirely in manner, and is rarely attained by the most skilful imitator. When a writer labours to give a semblance of truth, by filling up the particularities of the scene, by describing localities, interweaving cotemporary history or anecdote, or dressing out his fable in the costume of the times, no matter what his talent may be, no matter how great his familiarity with the history and manners he paints, if that familiarity be gathered from the study of the closet, or from any secondary source of information, he always, to a certain degree, fails in his effect. The mimicry may be most ingenious, and, as mimicry, perfectly successful, but it does not amount to deception. Like the learned stranger, who betrayed his being a foreigner, in the Athenian market, by his over scrupulous purity of the Attic idiom, he will certainly show the sources of his knowledge by his over minuteness, and the half antiquarian air which he gives to his performances. He describes rather than alludes, and labours many an accessary incident as faithfully as he does the most considerable.

It is not easy to give an idea of this without examples; but try the experiment of comparison, and nothing can be more obvious.

Take an instance from the antiquarian poems and novels of Walter Scott. Independently of their great merits in other regards, they are certainly very admirable for their vivid accuracy of descriptionin the details of chivalric pomp and costume. But observe critically the manner of these descriptions, the precise minuteness, and, (with all their truth,) their want of ease—compare them with the descriptions given by the same author of general nature, with his sketches of modern manners, with his fuller pictures of his own countrymen, or the still more glowing passages in which he portrays the workings of the passions common to the human race, or of opinions which have spread their control over sects and nations. Every man habituated to literary criticism may feel, that in the one case the author writes from his own intimate and immediate knowledge; that in the other, by a strong effort of the imagination, he artificially throws into a dramatic form the accurate and minute knowledge which he had compiled from books, pictures, traditions, ancient armour, ruins, and all those beautiful and interesting remains of the arts of the middle ages, which abound in Great-Britain.

The same laws which govern the composition of writings professedly fictitious, must prevail in others of a graver character. On these principles the scholar at once observes the contrast between an ancient author and his modern imitator or continuator, however eloquent or learned the latter may be, and though he may be equally correct as to his facts—between Livy and Fransheimius, for instance, or between Lucan and May.

It is this manner of truth, so indescribable, yet so vivid, this unstudied, confident, and natural familiarity of reference to so many circumstances, which gives a tenfold effect to the more positive corroborations of the truth of the scripture history which have been drawn from the inquiries of the learned.

All this will not prove the certainty of the facts related, but it is a sure evidence of the genuineness of the history. It gives to it the attestation of its being cotemporaneous and original authority; it shows that the writers had the very feelings and knowledge of the times, and therefore that the age and country which they claim are truly theirs.

These arguments are so far addressed mainly to critics and persons of reading, and they are not without something of that unsatisfactory coldness which generally accompanies purely critical in-

quiries, and can therefore bear no sort of comparison, either in power of impression or extent of usefulness, with plain and positive historical attestation, and still less, in my view, with the moral evidence; yet in their way they are quite conclusive.

Not one of the works of the ancient historians, nor in fact any of the remains of Grecian or Roman learning, has much other attestation of genuineness than such strong internal probabilities.

The books of the Christian Revelation are supported by the evidence of a whole library of unquestionably ancient writings, not only repeatedly citing passages from them, but wholly founded upon their narrative or doctrines; by translations of them into different ancient languages, scattered over the world; by the consent of contending sects and parties, who, neither in the earliest nor in the fiercest periods of religious discord, ever dared to reject their authority, but strove to explain them so as to suit their own opinions; above all, by the concessions of learned, and acute, and embittered adversaries like Celsus and Julian, who were compelled to allow their authenticity. Still higher is their evidence from the fact of these books being statedly read in the public assemblies, at least once a week, from the earliest times, and the further confirmation of the same kind, which

they gain from almost daily rites and usages, and from prevalent opinions, growing out of them, handed down from generation to generation; thus combining that living witness of oral tradition and usage, upon which unlettered communities always mainly rely, with that of written history.

But such works as the history of Josephus or that of Tacitus, have comparatively nothing of this external proof. The casual mention of the author's name, a transient criticism, or a brief quotation in some other ancient writings, and these by no means forming a regular and closely linked chain of testimony, is all that is to be gathered in their support from other quarters. But the critical evidence of language, sentiment, congruity with history and antiquity, of opinion, and, more than that, of manner in narration, is perfectly decisive. No man of sense expresses, or can ever transiently feel, any doubt as to their genuineness, and their general admissibility as good authorities for the history of their age.

Yet all these peculiarities, which are so convincing, are less numerous, and much less marked, than those of the same class, to be traced in the books of the New Testament.

Nor does this hold good only with regard to ancient history. It would be easy to give many still more striking instances from modern times. During the last thirty or forty years, it has re-

peatedly occurred that a manuscript, purporting to have been written by some distinguished person, was accidentally discovered, after having lain in obscurity ever since it was written. The indications of its authenticity from its language, style, and narrative, are frequently such as not only to procure its general reception, but to give to it at once the highest rank as historical testimony. Such has been the case with Evelyn's Memoirs; with those of Mrs. Hutchinson; with the life of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, by himself; and, in our own country, with the Journal of Governor Winthrop.

If these books have such evidence they must be authentic—they must have been written by persons of Jewish descent, living in the first age of Christianity, and in the countries in which it was first proclaimed, who were intimately acquainted with the scenes they narrated.

This position once established, a new inference opens clearly upon us, which it is very important to remark, as it distinguishes these histories from all others.

When we have ascertained the works of Herodotus or Livy to be genuine, it by no means follows, that all, or the principal events they narrate, are true. They speak often of incidents which were remote from their own times, or within the knowledge of a small circle only, or entirely unconnected with other history.

Or, allowing that they are entitled to all credit as history, we may fully rely upon Livy for his narrative of wars and political commotions; but when he tells us of marvels and prodigies, that an ox spoke, or that it rained a shower of stones, "locutus bos," or "lapidibus pluit," we have a right, without risking the imputation of inconsistency, or perverse scepticism, to look upon so much of his story as fabulous, or else to resolve his miracles, (as is more probable,) into exaggerated natural phenomena.

Not so with the gospels and epistles. Their whole story is so interwoven, the whole narrative turns so much throughout upon the one point of the miracles and resurrection of Jesus, that if the books were written by men of that day, and then given to the world, and received as true by the first believers, and uncontradicted in those facts necessarily open to the examination of every Christian of those times, the main facts must also be true. You cannot, as in other histories, reject the wonderful and receive the probable; but it all hangs together. If miracles were not performed, Paul and Peter would not have taught, and toiled, and suffered; churches would not have been gathered; persecutions would not have been endured. If the latter facts, as asserted in these books, did take place, they establish the character of the witnesses to the former. If

the high and rigid morality of this volume was published authoritatively at that time, it could not have been invented and proclaimed by knaves or fools. All the principles, all the motives embodied in the doctrines there set forth, are utterly inconsistent with imposture. If the facts immediately falling within the knowledge of those to whom these writings were originally addressed, were admitted by them, these are sufficient; for they can only be accounted for by the admission of the truth of the principal facts, which are referred to on all occasions, as the foundation of the whole.

The life of Benvenuto Cellini, the celebrated Florentine artist, in which that original and versatile genius has graphically depicted his own daring, restless, superstitious, dissolute, and energetic character, the history of his wild adventures, and his admirable labours, and of the manners and arts of the age, is filled with strong internal signs of authenticity; but this proves little, as to the probability of the marvellous incidents he relates, or the bold feats of which he boasts. Granting the book to have been written by Cellini himself, we have yet but his single authority for the fact, that it was he who killed the Constable Bourbon, in the assault upon Rome, or for the terrific story of his magical incantations amongst the ruins of the Colliseum.

The fact of the acknowledged genuineness of Cellini's book, does not make his countrymen and cotemporaries fellow-witnesses with him to his story. The facts were not within their knowledge, nor, if they had been, were they of such a nature as to give ground for the fair presumption, that every cotemporary reader who read the book as genuine, assented to its truth throughout.

Granting that the book was generally known and read at the time, yet no one was called upon to express any opinion as to its truth or falsehood; no one was induced to act upon the faith of any of its representations.

How different is it with the books of the New Testament. The proof of their authenticity and preservation involves the fact of their reception as true by the first societies of Christians. That reception was not, and could not be, cold, uninquiring, indifferent. It was not the barren and lifeless assent with which we now read a newspaper narrative of things that concern us not; but it was a reception changing their earliest and most deeply rooted opinions, repressing the strongest passions, exposing them certainly to privations, contempt and obloquy, not improbably to calamity, persecution or death. If the epistles of Paul are genuine, then it clearly follows that those to whom they were addressed, bear witness with him to many facts which must

have been within their own knowledge. The Christians of Corinth, Collosse and Thessalonica, rise up, as it were, from their tombs, to attest to the personal character of their apostle, his self-denial, his purity, perseverance, zeal, and courage; the hardships and poverty he endured, the labours he underwent, the dangers he braved—to the moral character of the doctrine which he proclaimed, and its efficient moral influence among themselves; and, finally, to the miraculous power which he exerted in attestation of his mission, and to which he appeals, in addressing the very persons before whom he alleges them to have been displayed.

Now these are not solitary and insulated incidents, for, throughout all of them, a clear testimony to the main facts of the gospel history is interwoven. From that one point they all begin, and thither they all tend. The proof of the veracity of Paul alone proves all the rest. The same argument holds good throughout. If these writings are authentic, then we have the testimony of eight original witnesses. Internal and external evidence, both of the strongest kind, combine to prove the fact of these writings being from several and distinct hands; and these several witnesses are not mere historians, but persons deeply interested in the transactions which they relate or allude to, and affording to their testi-

mony the highest sanctions, both direct and indirect, by voluntary privations, labours and sufferings, undergone to attest their firm belief in what they testified. These men, in the course of that testimony, refer to numerous other facts within the knowledge of multitudes of their cotemporaries, who believed their instruction and submitted to their guidance, and many of whom proved their firm belief in those facts, by undergoing the same hardships and dangers. Such a circumstance as the general reception by those competent judges to whom an appeal is made in the work itself, in any ordinary history, goes very far to establish the general character of the writer's veracity; but the remarkable fact which distinguishes these books from others, is, that so many of these secondary and derivative incidents mentioned in them, necessarily depend upon, and do alone decidedly prove, the main facts of the narrative, and the great foundation of the narration. Once admit that these writings are genuine, and that they were believed in the ages and places in which they were published, and the burden of proof as to their truth or falsehood is removed from the Christian to the sceptic. It is then for the objector to show how, under such circumstances, it was possible that these writings could have been false, and yet held sacred by congregations of Christians in the days of the apostles, or of their immediate successors.

This reception must not be confounded with the adoption of opinions, or of articles of faith, or with the belief of facts alleged to have taken place in other times or countries. All this proves nothing but the naked fact, that such opinions were thought probable. But the silent acknowledgment of the truth of events asserted to have occurred amongst themselves, and before their own eyes, is widely different. We know, from other sources of information, that there unquestionably did exist such bodies of men, and their reception of the books which criticism and ancient learning prove to have been written in that age, and in those countries, authenticates the facts related in them.

Such is one of the most important practical results to be deduced from the critical evidence, so far as it vindicates the authenticity of the scriptures by means of the aids furnished by the knowledge of language, history and antiquities, and the scrutiny of refined and practised taste, and enlightened criticism.

If these ancient writings told us of events and transactions similar to those of common history, however remarkable or romantic they might be, we should look upon their evidence as alone conclusive. Scholars would be satisfied with it, and the mass of readers, on their authority, would receive them without a question. Now add to this

the direct and the corroborative, historical and literary testimony, and the proof becomes wonderfully strong. Whether we consider it as positive and direct, or as multiplied and complicated, or as inartificial and circumstantial, it is alike powerful.

To the whole of this, it can only be replied by those, who, after any kind of examination, reject the revelation, that the facts related are so much against the course of nature and uniform experience, as to be utterly incredible. Allow this to be true, and yet the difficulty is not solved, nor any sufficient answer given to the argument.

If the facts related are contrary to all experience, it is also against long and uniform experience, that such, and so much, and so independent evidence should be false; that such and so many signs of authenticity, and marks of truth, should be erroneous; that such and so many singular results should have been produced in the world by unaccountable delusion. It must still remain a violent contest of opposite improbabilities. If miracles are disbelieved solely because they are miraculous, we must then, on the other hand, yet assent to what, if not a miracle, is so contrary to the uniform experience of mankind, as fully to deserve the name of a prodigy.

But, in truth, the apparent incredibility of the miraculous parts of Christian history, arises (so

far as the intellect alone is concerned) from the same cause with much other error of all kinds —the careless or the wilful consideration of the subject in one narrow point of view without regard to the connection in which it stands with others. If these events are considered only as naked and quite insulated facts, the mind, unquestionably, finds a difficulty in receiving them, upon any, even the strongest, evidence. So strong is our natural confidence in the permanence and regularity of the ordinary laws of nature, under ordinary circumstances, that I am not certain, that many thinking men would not feel something of the same difficulty, in trusting to the authority of their own memory for the belief of such wonderful events.

But if these interruptions or suspensions of the customary laws of nature, are not regarded as unmeaning and unaccountable marvels and prodigies, but are ascribed to an adequate cause; if that cause be the will of the Author and Founder of these laws, exerting his power over them for an end which we ourselves may see to be adequate, this difficulty ceases at once, and testimony resumes its full and legitimate power. No ingenuity of argument can convince a man of plain and sound understanding, that it is impossible for the Creator to interfere with, or suspend, or wholly change, the ordinary laws

of his creation, for any purpose which is worthy of him.

But, that the purpose of revelation was worthy of him, we may learn from the examination of the religion itself. Thus again, from whatever point we may commence our inquiries, it is to the character and objects of the religion itself, that we must at last turn, to be fully satisfied of its just authority.

In the above brief view of the nature of this evidence, it has been considered wholly with reference to its application to the books of the New Testament. Those of the Old Testament contain abundant evidence of the same sort. The materials of that inquiry are less generally accessible, being drawn from a more recondite learning, from languages which are less critically understood, and from a more distant antiquity, whose manners, usages, and habits of thinking differed widely from ours; but the principles upon which that examination should be made, and the inferences to be deduced, are, throughout, similar to those above stated.

ESSAY VI.

The Internal Evidence arising from Congruity of Narrative and Character—from Style and Manner. Remarks upon the Connection of the partial Obscurities of Scripture, with its probable Uses and Intentions.

The argument of which it has been attempted to state the outline and bearing in the preceding Essay, draws most of its materials, directly or indirectly, from familiarity with books, and from learning in ancient languages and history. There is, besides this, another species of criticism, which is founded upon a learning of a widely different kind; a learning not drawn from books, but acquired in the commerce of the world by the observation of mankind, and the habitual exercise of natural sagacity and good sense.

In these investigations, common sense and patient attention, united with some sensibility to the plain and unaffected expression of sincerity, earnestness, good faith, and warm feeling, are the only guides required to enable us to ascertain truth and honesty. For such criticism the books of the Christian Revelation, and especially the gospels and epistles, furnish abundant

employment. Among various other points of inquiry to which this may be directed, it may be employed upon the comparison of the history with itself, and may trace out the natural and undesigned coincidences, and the unstudied harmony of all its particulars; or it may mark the development and the consistency of the characters described or alluded to, and may compare the accounts given of the alleged authors, with the indications or manifestations of their dispositions, turns of mind, and habits of thought, which appear in their writings; or it may lead us to study, as it were, the moral physiognomy of the whole volume, that indescribable manner which assures us of truth and sincerity, or, on the other hand, cautions us to stand on our guard against craft, art, and hypocrisy.

The comparison of a story with itself, by collating one relation or part of a relation with another, constitutes a test of truth which is every day had recourse to in our courts of justice, and not unfrequently in our political discussions.

It is a test which the suborned and perjured witness, whose fallacies, like those of the unfair and sophistical logician, are most safe from detection, while shrouded in vague and broad, or in unconnected desultory statements, if he has any skill or discretion, always, if possible, avoids. This investigation, so far as it relates to

the matters of fact touching the life and character of St. Paul, has been pursued by Dr. Paley, in his Horæ Paulinæ, in a most original vein of thought, with a truly lawyer-like sagacity of observation, and a most logical collation of remote and delicate circumstantial evidence. He has followed out this thread of probability in such a way as to show, that if the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of Paul, were now to be discovered in manuscript, in some old library, and to come to us without any extrinsic or collateral testimony, that "this circumstantial agreement would afford good reason to believe the persons and transactions to have been real, the letters authentic, and the narrative in the main to be true." From this examination and close comparison, he shows conclusively, that whilst these several writings are distinct and independent documents, they harmonize in the same history, not only in substance, but in allusions, references, hints, and indistinct notices, often requiring the collation of three or four separate passages in different works for their comprehension, all dropping casually from the pen of the writer, without any appearance of plan or studied consistency, nor yet possibly to be accounted for by accident, unless they were founded in truth.

It is not the plain and direct agreement of the several narrations with each other, which con-

stitutes the force and justness of this argument, but it lies in those which are clearly natural and unintentional coincidences, where the consistency of facts, and the coherence of the whole story, could never have entered into the mind of the writer, nor would be likely to be distinctly perceived, except in occasional instances, by one reader in ten thousand, unless pointed out. It is in very slight, circuitous, and indirect correspondences that the strength of the proof consists; and the more indirect and even intricate that proof is, the more numerous the unessential and secondary circumstances required to be brought side by side, in order to make it out, the more certain is the conclusion, that in all this there was nothing artificial and fabricated; and that these lesser incidents were the congruous parts of one perfectly consistent, because simply true story. In the consideration of such coincidences it should be remembered, as Dr. Paley has justly remarked, that "it is one thing to be minute and another to be precarious; one thing to be unobserved and another to be obscure; one thing to be circuitous and oblique, and another to be forced, dubious or fanciful." Of such coincidences, relating to the labours, travels, and preachings of Paul and his friends alone, Paley has pointed out perhaps an hundred, and he has by no means exhausted the sub-

ject. These, taken singly, amount to little, and their agreement would often escape the eye of any but a most diligent, as well as acute observer; but when compared together, they ascertain, by their natural coincidence, the genuineness of the several passages in which they are mentioned, and, by inference, that of the writings which contain them. "It is like comparing the two parts of a cloven tally. Coincidence proves the authenticity of both."

The hunting out and bringing together such numerous and minute particulars, in themselves of little interest or prominence, the unravelling this delicate and complicated web of probabilities, demands an acute and practised sagacity, aided by no common diligence and patience. But yet, when this has been done, it amounts to nothing more than the furnishing a more comprehensive and satisfactory development, or a complete and logical analysis, of what must have frequently passed silently through the minds of a multitude of less curious readers, who, without ever thinking of any collation of facts, or comparison of dates, and names, and circumstances, could not avoid being struck with the absence of all contradiction, incoherence, or incongruity of relation, and the general air of truth and reality arising from the great frequency and perfect naturalness of all the allusions, and cir-

cumstances, and particulars. Many a one may perceive the correspondence of the whole, without being able to place his finger on the several points of agreement.

Indeed, it is among the most curious, as well as one of the best ascertained phenomena of the human mind, that it seems in many things to be capable of seizing at once upon general results in reasoning, in taste, and in invention or observation, whilst the steps of the argument, or the component parts and causes of the effect, almost elude its grasp. It frequently happens that the truth of a proposition, or the propriety of a measure, may be nearly self-evident, whilst the proof of the same theory, or the vindication of the policy, may require, and may call forth, the best talents of the philosopher or the orator.

The man of taste thus perceives the beauty or propriety of a building, or the truth of a picture, without being able to account for the pleasure he receives: or, in a still more analogous case, the intelligent juryman thus anticipates at once the deductions, and leaps to the conclusions which the ablest and most skilful advocate must labour to develop, explain and defend, step by step. In this inquiry, Paley and similar writers and commentators are but the advocates, who point out the grounds and reasons of that opinion, and the details of that argument, which are perhaps scarce-

ly less convincing to many a man in that grosser and less distinct form in which they were suggested of themselves to his mind, in a shape wholly unfitted for the purposes of logical reasoning or argumentative disputation.

A similar characteristic of the manner in which most persons form their judgments upon the grand subjects of moral inquiry, comprising some of the most abstract and the most efficient truths of ethics and religion, has been noticed in a former Essay. In all of this, there appears to me to be a remarkable and very beautiful correspondence between our intellectual powers and our personal and social duties. There are numerous subjects upon which, whenever they are presented, we cannot, without danger to ourselves, or injury to others, refuse to form some judgment. In fact, the very refusal to do so, implies a pre-conceived judgment. However indefinite and general these judgments may be, they are sufficient to give a character to our most efficient opinions, and to regulate our conduct on the most momentous occasions. But the power of logical exposition, or of the eloquent enforcement of these views, is a talent useful and admirable, indeed, but which most men may pass safely through life without exerting, and its cultivation is sufficiently secured, for all the purposes of human society, by the stimulus of personal interest, of oc-

casional necessity, of curiosity, of the love of distinction, and, indeed, by the very gratifica ion afforded by its successful exercise.

The study of the harmony of the gospels affords another singular and continual illustration of the same indications of truth.

Biblical students, and learned commentators, are more apt to dwell upon the small points of difficulty, which they meet with in this examination, than in the evidence arising from the agreement. But in fact the difficulties are mainly those arising from omission, and from general, and therefore to a certain degree imperfect, narrative; while the agreement is upon that very account more natural and convincing.

It has been often well observed, that it is in itself no inconsiderable proof of the honesty and fidelity of the writers of the gospel history, that it has been given to us in the very manner in which it is. Impostors, or falsifiers of history, would have avoided the dangers of self-contradiction—would have shrunk from the dangers of a rigorous and minute examination—at the same time that they would naturally have expected to give greater interest and dignity to their history, by one continued, regular, solemn, formal and authoritative narration. They would not have volunteered the labour; or if they had, they could not have done it without their work

bearing the marks of that very labour, of artifice, arrangement, and design.—But there is no probability at all that they would have volunteered the labour of thus carrying on their relation, through four distinct and independent books of memoirs, sometimes running together in the same channel, or drawing their materials from one common source—then again diverging from each other, or supplying each other's deficiencies, and that in such a manner, sometimes, as to seem, at the first glance, contradictory—all this being subject to be collated and compared with other compositions, containing indirect or allusive references to the same set of facts, and these compositions sometimes of a business character, sometimes argumentative, and sometimes hortatory and impassioned. Such is not the usual manner of falsehood. It has none of the prudence, art and caution which falsehood always requires, to attain any semblance of plausibility; and its execution would have demanded a skill, an acuteness, a laborious and unremitting minuteness of attention, and a dramatic and descriptive talent, all of the very highest order, and all exerted without any very obvious motive.

It is remarkable, that this mode of narration, which, in any profane historian, would not have failed to impress the reader with the conviction of the perfect credit due to such a history, is the very

point which has afforded the most numerous occasions of petty cavilling, *(objectiones minorum gentium,* as Bacon contemptuously calls such attacks,) from the variances in the order of relation, and the slight apparent contradictions among the evangelists, as to unessential particulars.* These writers, however, no where profess to write chronologically, any more than Plutarch or Xenophon. They were writing memoirs, either from their own knowledge, or from that of their immediate informants, and not formal and elaborate annals, compiled from official documents, records, and public histories. Their transitions are made, and the facts are connected in their minds, precisely in the manner natural to men who stand in the capacity of original witnesses; who had either been themselves actors in the affair, or derived their knowledge directly and orally from those who were; that is to say, the transitions and connections take place according to other associations than that of the exact order of time—of all orders the last which any person who had been deeply engaged in any transaction, would pursue rigidly in recounting it, except so far as that order might be necessary to the understanding the narrative. In one writer's mind, the order of his story is

* As by Paine, in this country, and in the Wolfenbuttle Fragments, an anonymous work, which in its day excited much attention in Germany.

governed mainly by the connection of the subject—in another's, by the part which he, or his friends, had borne in the dialogue or action, or by some secret chain of his personal feelings or reasoning at the moment; while another may follow his story more according to the associations of place, or, not improbably, in the regular order of time, except so far as peculiar circumstances interrupt that connection. Now it is certain, that all this is precisely and peculiarly the character of original evidence, just as it appears in genuine cotemporary history; and still more, as we every day see it in actual business, and, accordingly, it forms no ground whatever to presume contradiction or mis-statement, any more than it does when, in relating a speech, an argument, or an exhortation, one author gives the very words, in his own translation more or less literal, from the language originally used, a second gives a more diffuse or explanatory version, retaining the same sense, and a third abridges it into the naked heads, or sums it into one emphatic conclusion. Every minuter incident or circumstance is not noticed by each, but one adverts to some of these, another to others. Nor is perfect accuracy, as to what is positively asserted, at all inconsistent with imperfect knowledge of secondary particulars, so that many circumstances known to one might very well be unknown to another.

Seeming discrepances of this sort always occur in accounts which are true and particular, but of course, in some respects imperfect; and most of these contradictions instantly vanish, whenever the story becomes known in all its details, and in the precise order of its time and place.

There is no event of our own times more amply attested, and more minutely described, than the pathetic and interesting occurrences of the last days of Louis XVI, his trial, the scenes of his prison, and his death. They have been narrated by friend and foe, at that time, and since; among these are some who had the nearest access to his person, and treasured up every word with affectionate and reverent attention. Yet it has been recently observed, that it is not very easy to reconcile perfectly into one constant relation, all the details given by Cleri, Abbé Edgeworth, by his daughter and others; although, as no one of these cotemporaries has expressly censured or corrected the other, it is highly probable that they are all correct, and that the mention of one or two unimportant circumstances known to all would at once clear up the difficulty.*

In short, the highest characteristic of truth, in complicated testimony, is that which results from

* Of course this is given merely in the way of illustration. Not having the several narratives at hand, I cannot say whether the fact be literally so, or whether the contradictions are irreconcileable, though unessential.

perfect uniformity as to essential and striking incidents and a real agreement, combined with an apparent variance, in minor particulars ; and this, any one who studies the books of the New Testament historically, with an eye solely to facts, will perceive to be there most strikingly exhibited. A literal coincidence, which would never occasion a moment's hesitation or inquiry, would have entirely destroyed that weight which arises from the clear appearance of the several testimonies being collateral and independent. The narratives might have been equally correct, but they would have been less natural, less impressive, and, what is not the least in importance, less engaging and interesting, and much less fitted for the use of the unlearned reader.

Respecting the precise chronological order and perfect harmonizing of the gospels, in the very order in which the events actually took place, it is to be doubted whether we have now the means of coming to any conclusive opinion, or to any other result than a reasonable and probable arrangement. More than this is not useful for any purpose of instruction, argument, or evidence.

Warburton, speaking of harmonies, calls them a sort of book, of which he read none, and consulted few. This is in Warburton's habitual manner of extravagant and dogmatic assertion,

always aiming at the effect of paradox, and never failing to attain it by his manner alone, where the sobriety of his matter would not yield it. Yet this criticism is not without some foundation in good sense.

Wherever exact notes of time are not given, it is impossible to do more than to show how the several narratives may reasonably be reconciled; and that, in some cases, can very well be done, in more ways than one, and, so far as it now appears, with equal probability.

This as relates to the gospels has been sufficiently well done by Newcome, Doddridge, Professor White, and many others; and though they differ more or less in arrangement and explanation, any one of these harmonies affords a competent solution of all difficulties, so far as regards their bearing upon the truth of the gospel history. Whether or not the certain and unimpeachable veracity of these writers extends, also, to perfect accuracy in all minor details, (excepting always the apparent inaccuracy arising from omission,) is another question, which is certainly of great interest as to the degree of authority to be ascribed to these books; but as regards their genuineness, and the credit due to their history, it is wholly unessential.

Without wishing to enter at all upon that discussion, I can only say, that the result of as dili-

gent and fair an examination as I could give this subject, and that repeatedly, and after long intervals, is, to deny the existence of any real, though unessential contradictions, such as exist in most other authentic histories, and which, as they do not at all affect the substantial credit of the narratives, many able and learned advocates of Christianity, seem willing to admit as probable. On the contrary, I fully assent to Newcome's conclusions.* "The result of my thoughts and inquiries," says that careful, patient, and acute inquirer, "is, that every proposition in scripture contains a truth, when rightly understood; that the evangelists conceived alike of the facts related by them, but sometimes place them in different lights, and make a selection of different circumstances attending them; and that the seeming variations would instantly vanish, were the history known to us in its precise order, and in all its circumstances. Strong presumptions of their inspiration arise from an accurate comparison of the gospels; from their being so wonderfully supplemental to each other, in passages reconcileable only by the suggestion of a seemingly indifferent circumstance; and from their real agreement, in the midst of a seeming disagreement. 'Truth,' says Mr. West,

* Newcome's Preface to his Greek Harmony.

like honesty, often neglects appearances—hypocrisy and imposture are always guarded.'"

If others, after due investigation, cannot acquiesce in these conclusions, let them, however, cautiously beware of confounding the decision of this topic with the more essential preliminary question touching the character of the writers, their perfect means of information, their candour, singleness of intention, and serious, earnest veracity.

I have before observed, (what philosophers and reasoners, in the pride of intellect, are much inclined to overlook,) that, in relation to the highest, noblest and most universal of all evidences, that which results from the majesty and excellence of principle or precept, man's purely intellectual faculties, and the logical exercise of them, are not his only guides to truth. Full often do his natural sympathies, emotions, sensibilities, and affections, speak to his reason in that language in which nature acknowledges the presence of its Author, and the authority of his commandments. Thus it is too with regard to much of this evidence. There is a natural sentiment of truth in testimony, and honesty in character, as well as a rational perception of them.

This power of interpreting the language of nature, is not learnt from any rules of criticism, but springs up of itself, and requires only use

and exercise for its development. This is the great principle that constitutes the true foundation of good taste and sound criticism. It mingles with our daily thoughts, guides us in the ways of mankind, regulates or influences our judgments of character, and dictates to us the faith which we may give to the assertions of others, and the reliance which we may place upon their truth or honour.

We ought not, therefore, to confine our inquiries to matters of fact, and to the external peculiarities and mannerisms of phrase and idiom, whilst we can also refer to—what I know not whether critics and rhetoricians have ever given a name to, but which we may justly denominate—the Moral Qualities of Style. I mean, by this phrase, those characteristics of principle, of earnestness, of pure sentiment, and that exhibition of the habitual cast of thought, which must be felt rather than discussed or argued about, and together afford the surest light by which the critic in literature can direct his course, when he decides upon the authenticity of works of genius or originality, or by which the critic of character can be guided in his estimate of moral worth.

It requires but very little skill or practice to be enabled, in reading any historical narrative, or any accounts of recent or cotemporary events, (provided we are sufficiently aloof from the im-

mediate interest of the scene to view it with calmness and an unbiassed judgment,) to perceive whether or no the writer relates what he believes, and relates them as plain facts; or whether he tells them with a tone of exaggeration, as aiming to interest or surprise the reader; or whether he does not give himself up to some spirit of party, and half wilfully, half insensibly, colour the incidents with his own feelings of partial zeal, or prejudiced animosity.

There is a simplicity and directness accompanying strict truth, which, like the frank and open aspect of unsuspicious honesty, at once conciliates the confidence of all whose imaginations are not filled with dark suspicions and universal distrust, or whose aversion to the subject of the evidence does not prejudice them against the character of the witness. On the other hand, there is a partisan tone, and there is also a manner of romance and embellishment, which are as surely calculated to weaken confidence, and to suggest distrust to all who do not participate in the feelings of the writer.

But the historic portions of the New Testament, above all other narrative writings of any particularity whatever, are remarkable for their perfect artlessness, and their grave and solemn composure; for the absence of all efforts to animate or embellish the story, to increase its inte-

rest, or to fill the reader with admiration for the character, and still less for the prodigies of him whose acts they record. They narrate his actions, and record parts of his instruction, and no more. So far are they from showing any desire to enforce the truth of their story by argument, authority, or rhetoric, that the bare possibility of being charged with falsehood seems never to suggest itself to them. They manifest nothing of the feeling of party—not a word of eulogy, or of vituperation, or even of censure escapes them. The deeds and the words of the tyrant, or the traitor, of the malignant and the hypocritical, are spoken of as they occurred, but without epithet or comment. There is never any climax of prodigies—no gradual preparation for surprise and wonder. Of themselves they think not. They speak transiently of their own errors and gross ignorance, and of those of their friends and companions, without affectation of humility, but with no attempt to conceal or excuse them. Filled with the grand truth of their subject, their own little feelings are forgotten, or rather totally absorbed. In them, the natural passions of human nature, which mingle with the thoughts of the wisest and best, seem, for a time, to have sunk down, and become hushed into a hallowed calm.

They profess to be, and they are, witnesses and historians, and nothing else.

Every transient and unaffected indication which can be given in such compositions, of the temper and moral disposition of the writer, in the exercise of candour, of humility, of liberal and tolerant judgment of others, in the suppression of all personal bitterness, singularly agrees with the precepts and moral tendency of the religion itself.

This last circumstance at once affords an evidence of veracity, resembling that arising from the circumstantial agreement of incidental particulars, as touched upon above, and, at the same time, commends the testimony of these men to our belief, by all that just authority which arises from excellence of moral character.

That person must have observed but little, or else have seen by far too much of human nature—must have either lived wholly aloof from the observation of life, or have been so much conversant with the worst part of society as to have hardened and blunted his perceptions towards the genuine and unstudied expression of honesty and goodness, who cannot see in the writings ascribed to the apostle John the unerring signs of an ingenuous, amiable, humble and benevolent spirit. We may take it for granted, if we will, that he was a dreamer, an enthusiast, a visionary, or a lunatic—still, without any other indications of his character, than those gi-

ven in the few pages of his composition which have come down to us, every candid man must confess, that he was a benevolent, virtuous, honest, and most amiable man, who fully and undoubtingly believed that which he was anxious to enforce to the acceptance of others.

The writings of Paul afford different and much more varied grounds for the same kind of argument; not, certainly, clearer or more strong, (for that is not possible,) but, perhaps, more susceptible of critical inquiry and development.

We may, so far as it is possible to divest one's self of all interest in the question, and of sympathy for the natural and fervid eloquence of sincerity and zeal, and devoted earnestness, throw out of view all consideration of the truth or power of the doctrines which Paul teaches, and consider the question purely critically; not indeed by any means in the spirit of verbal criticism, but in that of natural taste. We may endeavour to look upon the question, somewhat as we would do the contested classical point, whether the beautiful and instructive fragment of the Dialogue De Oratoribus be the work of Tacitus or not; examining whether the style, the sentiment, the train and cast of thought, the manner of transition and arrangement, be such as we have a right to expect from the alleged author, and in correspondence with his history.

Paul is portrayed as a man of learning and talent, of a profound theological education, and of an active mind, and his Epistles are confessedly remarkable for containing many things hard to understand. Why are they so? Is it from the enthusiasm, the mysticism, or the affected and oracular obscurity of the writer? Or are not the subjects themselves hard to be understood? Many of them are things which the human understanding can never completely grasp—of which we can have but partial and wholly inadequate conceptions, glimpses, not distinct views. Are not, in fact, all subjects connected with, or arising out of, the overwhelming truths of eternity, omnipotence and spiritual being—of the mysterious questions of the origin and existence of evil, and especially of moral evil—of the permission of sin, and the creation, by a benevolent and omniscient Creator, of accountable beings, with strong tendencies towards error and vice—of foreknowledge and free will, together with the innumerable practical or theoretical doubts and opinions which grow out of these—are not all these subjects necessarily very hard to be understood by the human mind?

But, in considering the internal signs of authenticity and veracity, I refer chiefly to the manner of his unfolding these opinions, and of arguing upon these subjects. It is a manner whol-

ly original, and bearing the deepest impress of truth and nature. The writer professes himself to be one who has heard, and seen, and been taught unutterable things—who has been brought to the knowledge and confession of that truth, which engrosses all his thoughts, and swallows up every other interest, not through the slow processes of reason, or by the observation of miraculous facts visible to the senses, or in the ordinary operation of moral illumination through the conscience and affections, but in a manner not only supernatural but wholly peculiar; whose knowledge of the doctrines, which he authoritatively declares to his disciples, he tells them, came not of man nor through man, but immediately from the Father of lights, in a way which he himself does not and could not describe or explain—whether in the body or out of the body, he is wholly uncertain.

This statement, the objector will say, is the work either of delusion or imposture; but let us compare the account given us of Paul's history and his state of mind with his writings, and mark how wonderful is the congruity which we may observe between them.

His style, forcible, flexible, and copious as it is, is not perspicuous; but its obscurity is like that effulgence which the great English epic poet has described, as being "dark with excess of light."

His mind is evidently crowded with ideas struggling for utterance, with thoughts and emotions for which he finds language to be wholly inadequate, to which he feels that the habitual conceptions, the reason, the knowledge, the experience, of those to whom he addresses himself, present no sufficient counterpart. He labours with the magnitude of a revelation, with the vastness and certainty of a knowledge, which his mind can with difficulty contain, and which he feels that he can but partially unfold to others.

His intense and immediate conviction of truth, is accompanied with an equal intensity of feeling. He is filled with devotion, fervid gratitude, prostrate humility, unquenchable zeal. From these causes, naturally arise his sudden transitions, his rapid accumulations of thought upon thought. —Hence his peculiar mode of unexpectedly rising from the argument in which the errors, or the controversies of the times happened to engage him, to loftier themes, and holier contemplations; connecting with the business and controversies of this world, which were soon to pass away, considerations of eternal and universal importance, of whose reality he had a still more intimate and present conviction.

It is true, that to him who has made no approach to this knowledge, and more especially to him who has no answering sympathies to his

kindling sentiment, much of this is, and must ever be, strangely and wildly obscure—his transitions must appear abrupt, his raptures extravagant or enthusiastic, and his reasonings incoherent or inconclusive.

Yet, if we grant that he taught the truth, and remember the manner in which this truth is asserted to have been poured into his mind, and the extent and distinctness of the revelation so vouchsafed to him, then we can easily trace a most perfect coincidence between the style and character of thought, argument, and language, and that state of feeling which we may judge to have been habitual to the writer whenever his mind was turned, either in direct meditation, or by some casual association, to the recollection of the "deep things of God."

The mention of the difficulties of certain passages of the writings of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, naturally leads to some inquiries which have no very distant connexion with the subject of the former part of this Essay. Every one knows, that there are scattered throughout the whole of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, passages of much obscurity, of doubtful interpretation, and capable of diverse expositions. Now, what inference ought to be drawn from this fact? Was such a circumstance to be expected in an inspired volume? Does this not afford positive

proof, that a composition in any manner deficient in perspicuity, could not have come from an omniscient author? In short, whilst the positive internal evidence of style and language, show and mark the genuineness of the books, and the good intentions of their writers, do not these difficulties, on the other side, furnish quite as positive internal evidence to the critic, that these books come wholly from man, partaking of all his imperfections and his ignorance, and proceeded not from the fountain of Light and Truth?

This is an objection or difficulty which has been sometimes directly urged, and is very often insinuated. Such a conclusion, however, would be probable only upon the supposition, that the whole, or the greater part of these books, was one inexplicable mass of confusion and obscurity to those to whom it was addressed. If that were the case, it would present a most serious, it may be, an unanswerable objection. But if, so far from this being the fact, amidst much, that each and all of us can comprehend and profit by, there are interspersed parts which present difficulties, perplexities, and materials for controversy, which have yet certainly been understood in former days, or which probably may be understood whenever the necessary explanation is given, this strikes my mind as being precisely what from analogy, and the reason of the thing, previously to any experience on the subject, we might argue

would be the character of such compositions as these.

If this revelation be divine, then these writings are not like the writings of human systems or of human controversy, intended for any one temporary object, or class of objects, and limited to one circle of readers; but whatever may have been the immediate design of the writer, they must have been meant for varied, and successive, and long continued—we may almost say—for infinite uses; for guarding against the errors, and anticipating the wants, of innumerable multitudes of individuals of the most dissimilar intellectual powers and habits, for the guidance of the Indian and African, of the slave and the peasant, of the philosopher and the scholar; for the instruction of the church in every stage through which she was, and still is, to pass in the long train of ages, midst countless varieties of heresies, opinions, factions and superstitions. Now, to anticipate all these uses, to follow out the full meaning of every passage, and to comprehend all the views of such a work, (if it really be what it professes to be,) the mind of the reader must partake in no small degree of that measureless wisdom and pervading forethought which dictated or directed its composition.

If the mind, in contemplating this vast and magnificent prospect, feels its own littleness and

weakness, it must also confess its own inadequacy to judge and to comprehend fully and precisely every part of that history, or of that instruction, which is capable of such boundless application.

We do not pretend to understand the meaning or to canvass the policy, of the legislative provisions, or the political institutions of other times and countries, or even of those of our own civil or criminal code, without being in some degree informed of the precise design and object of the law, of the evil it is intended to remedy, or of that intention which it is meant by the legislator, it should ultimately effect. How much less, then, must any individual be able to comprehend the whole and entire meaning of that revelation, which, if it be true, cannot but be pregnant with myriads of uses, and have in itself "infinite springs and streams of doctrine?"*

Consider the subject independently of any theory or prepossession, and see if it is not probable, from the nature of things, that the books of a revelation, intended alike for the general use of the church, and the particular instruction of so many millions of private persons and public teachers in all ages of the world, would not have some of the peculiar difficulties which mark our scriptures? Whether it is probable that any

* Lord Bacon.

one intellect could embrace the scope and entire design of what was intended for so many and such dissimilar understandings and circumstances? And this, too, when that intention is not mere theoretical instruction, but practical influence, impression, edification, or consolation for many millions of individuals, each one of whom, in some circumstance of character or situation, is probably a peculiar and solitary being.

Is it not therefore very probable, that more or less of such a work would be dark to the reader in those parts not originally intended for his use, or that of his age or nation—that its digressions might seem unaccountable, perhaps its arguments unintelligible, until that use occurred for which it was so far designed—until the facts whether springing from the moral idiosyncrasies, the mental peculiarities of the individual, or from external situation and public opinion, from the political or religious state of the world, upon which these passages were meant to shed their light, be made known?

We may single out one prominent and extensive example, or, rather, large class of examples of this leading and pervading truth. To us, whose minds have been wholly formed under the influence of the laws, science, education and habits of reasoning which prevail in the modern civilized world, when the general cultivation of the ex-

acter sciences, the strictness of legal and commercial transactions, and, not improbably, too, something in the primitive, mental or physical constitution of the northern European race, have trained to a certain business-like directness and perspicuity of style and argument, to a methodical, and often technical arrangement, to a more cultivated, copious and precise, but less flexible or impressive language, and a taste regulated and disciplined to a critical and fastidious correctness, no inconsiderable portion of the more ancient scriptures is clouded with some obscurity from the boldness of metaphors, the abruptness and unexpectedness of transitions, the pregnant fullness of various senses, conveyed in few and simple words, and the singularities of allegorical or typical instruction, so little in accordance with our studies and manners.

To account for and explain such passages has constituted in effect the chief labour of commentators and theologians, who have learnedly shown that these are all in conformity to the taste and genius of the eastern countries in which the books were originally published, and for whose use they were primarily and immediately intended.

But we may safely push this argument much further. This oriental character and genius still remain the same, unchanged and unchangeable, bearing the same indelible form which they did

ages ago. Is it then unreasonable to suppose, that in the future progress of our religion, and in the wide dispersion of its sacred books in all the tongues of Asia and Africa, which is even now going on, that much of what to us is strange or dark, or at least until the mind has become familiarized and imbued with its images and language, quite useless or unedifying, may be that very portion the most calculated to excite the attention, to touch the feelings, or even to enlighten the understandings, of thousands of Christians in the wide and populous regions of the east?

The turn of language, the choice of topics of argument and of illustration, the adaptation of thoughts and imagery to the tastes and opinions of a people whose customs and language differ so widely from those of modern cultivation, have altogether the appearance of being expressly designed for the future use of communities, such as those which we know to fill at present the greatest and the fairest part of the habitable globe, and who, in many points of character, strongly resemble those to whom this revelation, in its earlier stages, was immediately communicated.

The ancient oriental mode of teaching by metaphor, parable, and similitude, that dim shadowing of type and figure, which frequently most vividly suggest an interior meaning, which yet

will not bear a strict logical comparison with the imagery that conveys it; that peculiar method of intimating moral and abstract ideas, instructions, and promises, by the medium of physical and sensible images, are some of the most frequent sources of difficulty and doubt to the learned and speculative commentator. Yet, all this is strictly conformable to the intellectual habits of those, whose language is not enriched with those words produced by a high state of mental culture, and fitted for the conveyance of abstract and purely intellectual notions. To a large class of mankind, such ideas are communicated, it may be less accurately, but it is certain, much more vividly, by illustrations and similitudes, and emblems drawn from external nature, or from the domestic affections, than by the precise language which has passed from the books and schools of philosophy to more common usage. For the same cause, that kind of illustration and of phraseology which is most suited for the instruction of all such or simpler nations, is (there is the best ground for believing, both from actual observation, and the reason of the thing) that which is most impressive, and even most intelligible to a great proportion of the body of unlearned Christians in all times and countries.

Thus, by arguing from final causes, from the probable intent and uses of revelation, we may

arrive at the same conclusion which Origen* long ago drew from the direct analogy with the constitution of nature, "that he who believes the scriptures to have proceeded from him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find in them the same sort of difficulties that are to be found in the natural creation."

Neither in the study of God's material laws, nor in that of the revelation of his Son, can any limited being expect to comprehend the whole; it is sufficient for him that what is most fitted for his own use, is placed within the reach of his own mind.

* As quoted by Butler in his Introduction to his Analogy.

APPENDIX.

Note A. p. 5.

It is a curious piece of literary history, that this argumentative tract, precisely the same in substance, and very similar in form, is to be found in English as Leslie's, and in French, printed as an original work among the collection of the complete works of the Abbé St. Réal, the author of the half historical, half romantic narrative of the conspiracy of Venice. It is ascribed to St. Réal by Priestley, and other English writers. Leslie and St. Réal were cotemporaries, and it increases the uncertainty of the question, that the Frenchman spent some time in England, and the Englishman many years in France. But the internal evidence is strongly in favour of Leslie. The illustration drawn from Stonehenge, and the allusions to some of the popular sceptical writers of the day are much more English than French. The course of argument, and the points insisted upon, are more in the manner of a Protestant than of a Catholic writer, though not so decidedly so as to settle the question. The vigorous and close logic, and homely clearness, are more certain marks of Leslie's hand, being much in the style of his other multifarious polemical and political writings, and altogether unlike that of St. Réal, whose few theological writings, though favourites of his own, are considered as failures in point of ability, while his reputation rests chiefly upon the grace and facility of his style, and that exuberant and flowery imagination which so often tempted him (in the gentle phrase of his eulogist) to use its fertility as a remedy for the barrenness of history; "chercher dans la fécondité de son imagination, des ressources contre la stérilité de l'histoire."

An additional presumption against the claim of St. Réal to this work, arises from the allowed fact, that the popularity of St. Réal's name occasioned various forgeries of the booksellers, who, after his death, published as his, several works of historic fiction, which are now known to have been written by obscure authors of that day. A list of these is given in the preface to a late edition of his works, and though the title of the Method with the Deists is not among them, there seems the highest probability that this was translated from the English, and ascribed to him in the same manner, either as a trick of the trade, or, it may be, as a sort of pious fraud, to give currency to a valuable work, by lending it the attraction of a popular name.

NOTE B. p. 15.

Whether or no the prophetic language can justly bear any other than one precise meaning; or whether it may not have been originally intended to apply primarily to temporal events, and afterwards, in a manner analogous to the whole system of the Jewish law and ritual, to bear a further and moral or Christian meaning?—Whether certain passages of the Old Testament quoted in the New, are there cited as predictions really fulfilled, or simply in illustration, as a modern divine may quote scripture history in allusion to the political events of his own times, while, in fact, he neither believes, nor means to have it understood that he believes, that there is any thing like the actual fulfilment of a prediction?—These are, it is well known, subjects upon which learned and judicious men have differed. They are, on many accounts, questions of great interest, but not, in my opinion, necessarily involving that of the validity of the prophetic evidence.

The principle which I have suggested in the preceding pages, is of a more general application. It is in brief this. Allowing that there is nothing of a typical or secondary sense in the Psalms, the Prophecies, or the poetry of the Old Testament, is it not still very remarkable that so much of its contents should be singu-

larly adapted to suggest ideas analogous to the events, the rites, and the blessings of the Christian dispensation, and should bear so often a beautiful and happy allusive application to so many of them? How happens it, that so much of these compositions, which are directly applicable only to past events and usages, should be capable of being employed with such slight and natural adaptations to animate the devotions of Christian assemblies, or to illustrate and enrich the eloquence or the instruction of Christian teachers?

If, in reading a poet or satirist, where we could see no mark of any continued allegory, we should yet be struck with a multitude of passages, bearing the happiest and clearest application to one set of events or characters within the probable knowledge of the author, we should naturally believe that such an application, if not immediately intended, was at least among the designs of the writer.

Now, on this same principle, supported by a much larger induction of particular allusions and applications than any poet is like to furnish, we may deduce the strongest reasons for believing that all this system was foreseen and intended, that the correspondence and application was not accidental, but designed.

If any one doubts this inference, and supposes that the obscurities of these ancient writers are such as to enable any one to make what he fancies from them, let him choose some obscure Greek or Latin author, one of those who have most exercised the patience and ingenuity of commentators, and try the same experiment upon them. Let him take Pindar or Persius, both confessedly among the most obscure of the remains of antient literature; both of them full of unexpected and rapid transitions, of allusions to manners and institutions which are now lost, and to opinions now to be hunted out only by laborious study. Let him see if he can apply passage after passage of such a writer in a predictive or even in a probably allusive sense, to the doctrines and history of Mahomet, or of any modern sect, or to the public events of any connected portion of the history of modern Europe or America.

From this applicability, this fitness for other uses than were originally in view, arises an evidence, if not of prediction in the strict sense, yet of fore-knowledge, of intention, of preparation, of uniformity in the whole plan of revelation.

NOTE D. p. 79.

This anticipated testimony of Socrates or Plato (no matter which) to the future revelation of man's duties, and his relation to his Creator, is peculiarly valuable on several accounts. Whilst it strikingly shows the unsatisfactoriness of all the conclusions to which reason, alone, can ever attain upon these subjects, and affords the confessions of the wisest and best men of antiquity, to the need and worth of a revelation; it also seems to me to furnish an implied practical refutation of Hume's famous though unsubstantial and purely verbal argument against miracles. This argument, which, though it has puzzled many, has, I believe, never convinced any who were not anxious to be so convinced, denies (as is well known) the possibility of any sufficient proof of miracles, because they are against uniform past experience, on which alone our belief in testimony is founded. But a revelation, such as had never been made, and to which, as Plato and Socrates believed, nothing similar had ever taken place, is equally against the uniform course of nature, with any physical miracle. Yet, these philosophers were not only ready to receive it when it should be granted, but were even led by reason to expect it with some confidence—so little contradiction is there, in fact, in any sound mind, between our belief in the continuance and regularity of the laws of nature and the acknowledgment of the power of their author to suspend or change them.

ΣΩ. Αναγκαῖον οὖν ἐστι περιμένειν ἕως ἂν τις μάθῃ ὡς δεῖ πρὸς θεοὺς καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους διακεῖσθαι. ΑΛ. Πότε οὖν παρέσται ὁ χρόνος οὗτος, ὦ Σωκρατές; καὶ τίς ὁ παιδεύσων: ἥδιστα γὰρ ἂν μοι δοκῶ ἰδεῖν τοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον τίς ἐστιν. ΣΩ. Οὗτός ἐστιν ᾧ μέλει περὶ σοῦ. ἀλλά δοκεῖ μοι, ὥσπερ τῷ Διομήδει φησὶ τὸν Ἀθη-

νῶν Ὅμηρος ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀφελεῖν τὴν ἀχλύν, Θέρ' οὖ γιγνώσκοι ἠμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα, οὕτω καὶ σοῦ δεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς πρῶτον ἀφελόντα τὴν ἀχλύν, ἣ νῦν παρόν σε τυγχάνει, τοτὲ νικᾶν τ' ἤδη παρέφερεν δι' ὧν μέλλεις γνάσεσθαι ἠμὲν κακὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλόν. νῦν μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν μοι δοκῇς δυνηθῆναι. ΑΛ. Ἀφαιρείτω, εἴτε βούλεται, τὴν ἀχλύν, εἴτε ἄλλό τι. ὡς ἐγω παρεσκεύασμαι μηδὲν ἀν φεύγειν τῶν ὑπ' ἐκείνου προσταττομένων, ὅστις ποτ' ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος· εἴγε μέλλοιμι βελτίων γε ἔσεσθαι. ΣΩ. Ἀλλὰ μὴν κἀκεῖνος θαυμασίην ὅσην περί σε προθυμίαν ἔχει. ΑΛ. Εἰς τότε τοίνυν καὶ τὴν θυσίαν ἀναβαλλεσθαι κρᾶτιστον εἶναι μοι δοκεῖ. ΣΩ. Καὶ ὀρθῶς γε σοὶ δοκεῖ. ἀσφαλέστερον γὰρ ἐστιν ἢ παρακινδυνεύειν τοσοῦτον κίνδυνον. ΑΛ. Ἀλλὰ πῶς, ὦ Σώκρατες; καὶ μὴν τοιοῦτόν τον σέφανον, ἐπειδή μοι δοκεῖς καλῶς συμβεβουλευκέναι, σοὶ περιθήσω· τοῖς θεοῖς δὲ καὶ σεφάνους καὶ τἆλλα πάντα τἀντα τὰ νομιζόμενα ὁπότε δώσομεν, ὅταν ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν ἐλθοῦσαν ἴδω. ἥξει δ' οὐ διὰ μακροῦ, τοῦτον θελόντων.

"Socrates. You must therefore remain content until some one instruct you in your duties to Heaven and to men. Alcibiades. When will that day arrive, my Socrates, and who will that instructor be? Right gladly would I welcome him. Soc. He it is, whose care ever watches over you. Yet it seems to me that, as Homer relates, the divinity of Wisdom dispelled the cloud which hung before the eyes of Diomed,

> And purg'd his sight, so as to distinguish God
> From mortals, clearly;————

So you, too, stand in need that this power should disperse the mist from off your mind, and then place within your reach that which will enable you to distinguish good from evil; for now, indeed, you seem to me to be quite incapable of discerning them aright. Alcib. Let it be as He wills. Let him take away that cloud, or any thing else, for I am resolved to submit to all his injunctions, provided only I may become better. Soc. You may rely upon his care of you being wonderful indeed. Alcib. It is best, then, to postpone this sacrifice. Soc. You say right. It is much safer to do so, than to expose yourself to peril by an unworthy offering. Alcib. It is so. Let me, then, present this garland to you, my wise teacher. We will duly fulfil all the sacred rites, as soon as I perceive the approach of that promised day. Heaven grant that it may not be long first."

NOTE E. p. 90.

"Avant donc que d'écrire, apprenez à penser.
Selon que notre idée est plus ou moins obscure,
L'expression la suit, ou moins nette, ou plus pure.
Ce que l'on conçoit bien, s'enonce clairement,
Et les mots pour le dire arrivent aisément,

says Boileau, and a thousand mouths and pens have repeated, that clearness of expression will always follow clearness of thought.

In spite of the high authority of this poet of good taste and common sense, and of the still higher authority of common opinion, I must think that this rule, if true, must be taken with multitudes of exceptions. The converse is always true—that without distinctness of thought, there can be no perspicuity of language. But we every day meet with men who understand their own meaning perfectly, and are yet often incompetent to convey that meaning to others. This arises from various causes—most commonly from a want of facility in translating the short hand of thought, which most men are accustomed to employ in their own minds, to the more formal and filled up language of speaking or writing. The ideas, though intuitively clear to the speaker, are not sufficiently developed to be made distinct to others. The mind is not suffered to dwell sufficiently long enough upon each thought, which is rapidly and imperfectly presented to its examination, or else the thought is expressed in words which have no ambiguity to him who uses them, but to others, suggest innumerable meanings besides those intended to be conveyed.

No power of thinking, without some natural or acquired accuracy and facility of expression will supply these deficiencies.

The celebrated John Hunter, the great anatomist and physiologist, was a remarkable instance of an inventive and vigorous mind, whose perfect command of his subject was never able to supply him with the *facundia* and *lucidus ordo*, that copiousness

and distinct arrangement which are so boldly promised by the closet critic to the laborious and successful student.

Bishop Butler is, though by no means to the same extent, another example of the same truth. I do not say that Butler ever leaves the attentive reader at a loss for his meaning. But his habits of abstract and metaphysical inquiry withdrew his attention very much from external nature, and the business concerns of life, and he, accordingly, deals too much in generals—he wants vividness and variety of illustration, and a more obvious, distinct, and natural arrangement of argument. I have never met with an intelligent reader of Butler, who did not enter into the general scope of his reasoning and feel its force; nor yet with one who did not complain of great obscurity and perplexity in his management of it.

It would be rendering no small service to the cause of religion and science, if the Analogy could be re-written by some one endowed with Paley's faculty of clear and perspicuous reasoning, and happy copiousness of striking and alluring illustration.

Another memorable proof that no necessary connection exists between clear thought and popular or perspicuous manner, may be found in the works of a writer, whose speculations will, I venture to pronounce, exercise a far more marked influence over the public concerns and opinions of the remainder of this century, so far as relates to the great principles of political economy, and their most important applications, than those of any other man of our day—I mean the late Mr. Ricardo.

Mr. Ricardo's education and course of life led him from particular facts and practical details up to general speculation; and it is, on that account, the more singular that he has presented his great and original views of political economy in the most naked and repulsive form, giving to the laws which govern the creation of exchangeable value, the incidence of taxation, and the nature of currency and credit, all the harsh abstractness of mathematical propositions. He is not obscure from confusion of thought, nor from ambiguity of language, but from want of deve-

lopment, and from taking too much for granted in the acuteness and attention of his readers. Even most of those who enter perfectly into his sense, must read him and meditate him again and again, before his system becomes familiar to them, and perfectly at their command.

Compare him with such a writer as Say—a writer, too, of no common ability— how much clearer is the one—but how much deeper the other!

The necessary imperfections of language, form another and very efficient cause of partial obscurity: this is most operative in the most original and profound writers and thinkers, when they discuss subjects and ideas of pure intellect, or of deep and (if the phrase may be used) interior sentiment, far removed from the ordinary thoughts and occupations of society, and having little connection with the common pursuits of business or pleasure, or much resemblance to that material nature which surrounds us. The more profound, the more comprehensive the views which may be given of these internal and transcendental truths of our mind, or of the universal laws of intellect, or duty, or being, the more inadequate is that language which has been formed for the ordinary purposes of life, to express such thoughts to others, and the farther are they from the common notions of most readers. Truth will always at last become visible by its own light; yet the difficulties arising from imperfect language, and from want of sympathy on our part, will often cloud its brightness. To be understood, it must be long meditated. Many of the difficulties occurring in the epistles of Paul, and in some other parts of the sacred writings, where there is no obscurity arising from want of critical or historical knowledge, are, I think, mainly to be ascribed to this cause.

NOTE F. p. 93.

I feel a reluctance to censure any thing from the pen of so wise and worthy a man as Dr. Paley. Indeed, these plain old

English adjectives, wise and worthy, are, I think, singularly expressive of his character as a man and an author. But his scheme of morals, founded on a peculiar modification of the theory of utility, combining the two doctrines of self love as the motive, and universal good as the rule of all moral action, and rejecting all consideration of the nature of right and wrong, founded in the immutable character of the Deity, and perceived more or less clearly by reason, as well as all regard to the sentiment of moral beauty, is a very imperfect, though not wholly erroneous view of the ground and sanctions of moral obligation; and it leads him towards conclusions full of danger. From these he is in the main preserved, when he comes to apply his theory to the actual business and conduct of life, by his sound good sense, and his sincere respect for revelation." Still the tendency has been to lower the tone of his morality, both in dignity of motive, and in simplicity and consistency of action. When I read his chapters on Lies, Oaths, and Subscriptions, in the first part of his Moral Philosophy, and then turn to the chapters on Sincerity and Truth, in Godwin's Political Justice, I blush to compare the too flexible ethics of the Christian divine with the nobler and more bracing morality of the eloquent sceptic.

These same defects, though more prominent in his Moral Philosophy, may be occasionally traced in his chapter on the Morality of the Gospel, in his work on the Evidences, mixed with much that is every way excellent.

There is in his argument upon this point, an indistinctness and confusion very rare in any thing from Dr. Paley's pen. In the main, however, regarding all virtue as a matter of calculation, in which good sense balances the amount of personal or general good to be attained by any given course of action, he is naturally led to underrate the originality of the revealed morality; and the main conclusion which he draws from its excellence as confirming the revelation which contains it, is, that it is such as to repel the idea of its being the tradition of a barbarons age,

or of an ignorant people, of the religion being founded in folly or in craft, or being the effusion of enthusiasm; but on the contrary, that it proves the good sense of those to whom it owes its origin, and that some regard is due to the testimony of such men, when they declare their knowledge that the religion proceeded from God, and when they appeal for the truth of that assertion, to miracles which they wrought or had witnessed. In the course of this discussion, higher views of the internal evidence of the Christian ethics, seem to have forced themselves upon his notice, but being less in harmony with his imperfect theory of morals, he has not unfolded them, nor insisted upon them, with his usual perspicuity and talent.

In another respect this chapter is, I think, still more faulty. The extensive popularity of the work will be a sufficient apology for a few remarks upon a subject which is intimately connected with the consideration of the Evidences of Christianity.

I cannot conceive how so acute and distinguishing a reasoner, could have adopted, without a much more distinct qualification, Soame Jenyns' peculiar views of the Christian morality, although they may be made to harmonize sufficiently well with his own scheme of general utility.

He states from Jenyns, in rather stronger and more unqualified terms than Jenyns had himself used, the following propositions: "That the gospel omits some qualities which have naturally engaged the praises and admiration of mankind, but which, in reality, and in their general effect, have been prejudicial to human happiness." And then exemplifies this general proposition by the instances of "Friendship, Patriotism, and active Courage, in the sense in which these qualities are usually understood, and the conduct which they often produce."

There is certainly, to most minds, something very startling and paradoxical in this position, and not a little revolting to our natural and instinctive impressions of character and conduct.

It is, I grant, very true, that these qualities, especially those of patriotism and courage, do frequently produce, and have produced conduct not consonant to Christian ethics.

These were, doubtless, the inspiring principles of action of many an old Roman senator, as the elder Cato, for example, constantly exciting him to build up the power of the

——— populum late regem, belloque superbum ;

and to trample down by force, fraud, and unconquerable perseverance, the liberties of the rest of the world.

Let us suppose, however, that the courage and patriotism of Cato had been otherwise directed. Let us suppose it exerted to preserve the peace of Italy—to diffuse the arts of civilization—to put an end to the ferocious amusements and grosser vices of his countrymen—to correct, to soften, to purify their morals—that all this had been the animating principle and great object of his life—that in this cause he had braved danger, and endured obloquy—would these qualities be then "prejudicial to human happiness?" Or would they not rather have been such as "Paul himself would approve and own?"

To me it is quite clear, that the gospel morality agrees with the common and natural notions of mankind, in representing friendship and patriotism not precisely as virtues, but, as natural and laudable affections, congenial to the true nature, and capable of developing the best qualities of man; and active courage as being an admirable and valuable gift of heaven, whether it be of the physical kind, inwrought in the constitution, or of a moral nature, created by the energies of a strong mind and powerful emotions. They may, of course, all be ill directed, turned to vile uses, mixed with baser passions; but so far from being omitted in the gospel, they are there exhibited in their noblest attitudes and most vivid colours.

What shall we say of the strong breathings of St. Paul's friendship to his youthful colleague and companion?—what of his ardent aspirations of personal affection towards his erring Corinthian converts? When he reminds them of his labours and hardships in his Master's cause, what higher examples can we have of *active courage*, than are found in his animated recital of his past life, of his labours, of his dangers, of his daring?

"In journeyings often; in perils of water; in perils of robbers; in perils by mine own countrymen; in perils by the heathen; in perils in the city; in perils in the wilderness; in perils in the sea; in perils among false brethren," &c.

The calmness with which the Apostle contemplates these dangers, and the resolution with which he endures them, are not to be considered as mere passive courage; they are something more than patience, and resignation, and cheerful submission under unavoidable calamity. If the resolutely, and firmly, and voluntarily encountering known danger for the sake of a worthy object, the exercise of all the powers of the mind and the body, to subdue or avoid the evil, so far as it may be right and expedient, the meeting and facing the evil whenever duty bids, instead of waiting for it; if this be not active courage then we must confine that appellation to the brute valour of the ferocious combatant, who plunges into danger from mere animal impulse.

The exclusion of patriotism from the list of Christian virtues, is still more in contradiction to the exhibition of character, manifested by the great Apostle. Where is there in the eloquence of classical antiquity, or of modern liberty, so glorious and intense a burst of patriotic feeling as that in the Epistle to the Romans, when he mourns over the incredulity and punishment of his beloved, apostate, rejected, yet, still, favoured countrymen, pouring forth his great heaviness and continual sorrow of the heart for his "kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises," &c.

The supposed opposition of patriotism to the Christian precepts of expanded and universal benevolence, arises wholly from false views of the nature and objects of love of country—from notions of it which are as unsound in reference to political wisdom, as they are hostile to the mild spirit of Christian morality. It arises from considering patriotism as necessarily impelling us

(to use the words of Soame Jenyns) "to oppress all other countries to advance the imaginary interest of our own." It may indeed do so, and we know that it has often done so. But this was because that it was as blind to the true interests and happiness of its own country, as regardless of those of others.

Parental affection, or filial duty, may lead to the same results, and we know that they frequently do so. They too, in blind endeavours to promote the supposed welfare of those whom it is our duty to love or honour, have led many to invade the rights of their neighbours, by fraud or violence. But the true interest of every country, and its lasting happiness and real glory, have no connection with tyrranny or conquest, any more than the real welfare of a family has with the means of gratifying ostentatious pride, acquired by fraud and rapine.

This attempt to thrust patriotism from that seat by the throne of true virtue, which the common consent of mankind has always assigned to it, is not peculiar to a few modern Christian writers, (for it should be remarked that it is a refinement of which Christian antiquity never dreamt,) but really comes from a very different school. It has been a favourite doctrine of not a few sceptical and licentious moralists, who have designed to shake our faith in all moral excellence, by showing some necessary contradictions between our most palpable duties.

"To be a good patriot, says Voltaire, one must often become the enemy of all the rest of mankind. To be a good citizen, is to wish your city to be enriched by commerce, or to become powerful by arms. But it is clear that no country can gain without some other loses, and that it is impossible to make conquests without making many wretched. Such is the conditton of hnmanity; to wish for greatness for ourselves is to wish evil to our neighbours. He who wishes that his own country should never be greater, smaller, richer or poorer than it now is, is alone the true citizen of the world."*

* Il est triste que souvent pour être bon patriote on soit l'ennemi du reste des hommes. L'ancien Caton, ce bon citoyen, disait toujours en opinant au

How perfect and how beautiful is the harmony of all truth! How intimately connected are the duties of man with his best and most immediate interests! Wherever the ingenuity of a licentious morality or a sceptical or paradoxical philosophy attempts to array our duties against each other, or in opposition to the pure and warm sentiments which approve themselves as right to the untaught consciences of all thinking men, whatever logical plausibility may at the first view appear in the argument, we may rely upon it, that this contradiction is not, and cannot be, real. In this particular instance, the refutation is furnished not less by the lessons of a sound political sagacity, than it is by the quicker suggestions of the spirit of real Christian benevolence.

An enlightened philosophy sees in the honourable and regular profits of Commerce, not the pickpocket gains of the gambler or swindler, who (as Voltaire says of the commercial nation) can never gain except some other person loses; but the communication and interchange between districts or nations, of that which in the lavish abundance of some particular gift of nature is superfluous to each, for that which increases its comforts or pleasures; an exchange in which the increased wealth and happiness of each nation adds to the wealth of all, by augmenting their means of enjoyment, by opening new markets for their productions, and by affording an additional stimulus to their industry.

An enlightened patriotism contemplates the power of the country of our affections, not as the instrument of tyranny and ag-

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Senat; tel est mon avis, et qu'on ruine Carthage. Etre bon patriote, c'est souhaiter que sa ville s'enrichisse par le commerce, et soit puissante par les armes. Il est clair qu'un pays ne peut gagner sans qu'une autre perde, et qu'elle ne peut vaincre sans faire des malheureux.

Tel est donc la condition humaine, que souhaiter la grandeur, c'est souhaiter du mal à ses voisins. Celui qui voudrait que sa patrie ne fût jamais ni plus grande, ni plus petite, ni plus riche, ni plus pauvre, serait le citoyen de l'univers.

Voltaire, Dict. Phil. Mot *Patrie.*

gression, but as bestowing the ability to stretch out the strong arm of protection over the heads of each of its citizens, shielding his rights, his home and his happiness, from injury or insult. Far from wishing that such a country should never become greater, the patriot will rightly mourn over every imperfection in her civil government or external relations which dwarfs her growth and cramps her energies. He will look with an exultation unmixed with any selfish feeling upon the peaceful triumphs of her arts and her industry, and will joy to see liberty, and enterprise, and education subduing the wilderness or the ocean, and spreading over the waste places of the earth, a more glorious and more lasting empire than military ambition ever grasped in its wildest dreams.

The good man and the wise man joys in all this, because he knows well that true and lasting national greatness is never purchased at the expense of others, but that it is built up by that well-directed talent and enterprise, by that freedom and virtue, which, while they cover his own land with lustre, must at length send forth the rays of their mild and cheering warmth to the remote ends of the earth.

Knowing and feeling this, he whose heart beats truly and warmly for his native land, needs not the lessons of Smith, Say, or Ricardo, to teach him, that whenever the love of country arrays itself against the expanded philanthropy which Christianity enjoins, it then becomes blind, and doting, and false to its own real interests,

Note G. p. 135.

In the phrase "the Idols of our secret worship," an indirect allusion has been made to the well-known philosophical metaphor, or rather Allegory of Lord Bacon, who, in summing up the causes of error in judgment, thus symbolically represents those prejudices and intellectual defects of individuals, tending to darken the perceptions or distort the judgment in important inquiries, which are a species of moral idiosyncrasies, belonging on-

ly to the individual, and arising from personal peculiarities of temperament and constitution, of education, of external or accidental circumstances, of custom, pleasures, habits of society, or of long pursued and favourite studies. These he represents as the tutelary idols to which each individual offers his solitary worship in his own dark cavern, and sometimes sacrifices truth and sometimes virtue upon their shrine.

"Idola Specus sunt idola hominis individui. Habet enim unus quisque (præter aberrationes naturæ humanæ in genere) specum sive cavernam quandam individuam, quæ lumen naturæ, frangit et corrumpit; vel propter naturam cujusque propriam et singularem, vel propter educationem et conversationem cum aliis vel propter lectionem librorum, et auctoritates eorum quos quisque colit et miratur, vel propter differentias impressionum prout occurrunt in animo occupato et prædisposito, aut in animo equo et sedato, vel ejusmodi; ut plane Spiritus humanus (prout disponitur in hominibus singulis) sit res varia, et omnino perturbata et quasi fortuita." *Novum Organon*, 1. 42.

These secret singularities afford the clue to many of those strange anomalies of character, and stranger circumstances of conduct, which a man must live with little observation of others or of himself, to fail to remark.

Could these be made fully known to us, we should no longer be surprised at the "fears of the brave and the follies of the wise." But they can so little be reduced to rule, and must be so imperfectly understood by others, that in moral and religious instruction it is hazardous to depart from those grand generalities, that embrace all interests and involve motives of unbounded application.

But, whilst in forming our practical opinions, we are thus liable to be swayed by our peculiar and invisible propensities; speculative men, when they undertake to instruct others, are as much under the dominion of that spirit of system which aims at reducing all truth to rules, definitions, and uniform, and precise

arrangement. In doing this, they insensibly blend it with their own theories, or else omit that portion of it not congenial to their own characters. Thus, in those speculative minds, who have been the leaders of sects, the lights of science, the instructors of the people, moral peculiarities have influenced their most purely intellectual operations. The most dangerous and extravagant theories may be connected by a strong and close link unknown to the man himself, with some secret vice or favourite folly in which the mind is wont to indulge, when it retires to its recesses, and disports itself in what Johnson has happily called "its invincible riots, the secret prodigality of being, secure from detection and fearless of reproach."

ERRATA.

Page 9, line 2, for *confirming*, read *confirm*.

29, line 4, dele marks of quotation from the word *literally*.

52, line 8 from bottom, for *its*, read *theirs*.

93, line 6 from bottom, for *objection*, read *obligation*.

137, for rectamandi, read reclamandi.

188, line 15, for *their* read *these*.

225, line 3 from bottom, for *historian* read *historians*.