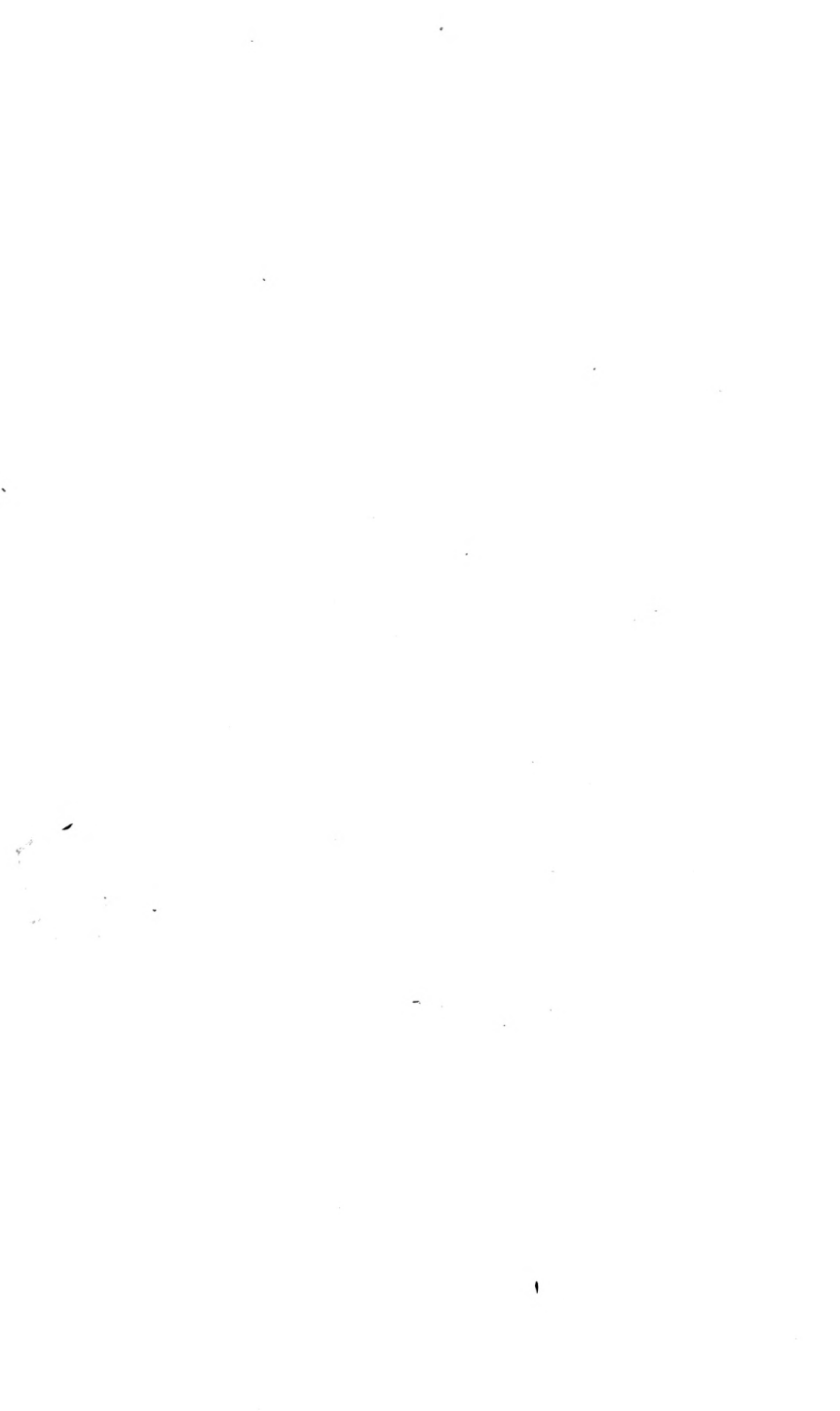




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THE
GROUND AND CREDIBILITY

James OF THE *Providence*

CHRISTIAN RELIGION:

IN *Lowestoft*

A COURSE OF

S E R M O N S

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT THE

L E C T U R E

FOUNDED BY THE REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M. A. LATE CANON
OF SALISBURY.

BY THE

REV. RICHARD SHEPHERD, D.D. F.R.S.

ARCHDEACON OF BEDFORD,

AND CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR LOCKYER DAVIS, IN HOLBORN; AND
DANIEL PRINCE, OXFORD.

M, DCC, LXXXVIII.

Extract from the last Will and Testament of the late Rev.
JOHN BAMPTON, *Canon of Salisbury.*

— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates
 “ to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the
 “ University of Oxford for ever, to have and to hold
 “ all and singular the said Lands or Estates upon
 “ trust, and to the intents and purposes hereafter
 “ mentioned; that is to say, I will and appoint, that
 “ the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford
 “ for the time being shall take and receive all the
 “ rents, issues, and profits thereof, and (after all
 “ taxes, reparations, and necessary deductions made)
 “ that he pay all the remainder to the endowment of
 “ eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be established
 “ for ever in the said University, and to be perform-
 “ ed in the manner following.

“ I direct and appoint, that upon the first Tuesday
 “ in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen by
 “ the Heads of Colleges only, and by no others, in
 “ the room adjoining to the Printing-House, between
 “ the hours of ten in the morning and two in the after-
 “ noon, to preach eight Divinity Lecture Sermons,
 “ the year following, at St. Mary’s in Oxford, be-
 “ tween the commencement of the last month in Lent
 “ Term, and the end of the third week in Act
 “ Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Divi-
 “ nity Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either
 “ of the following subjects—to confirm and establish
 “ the Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and
 “ schismatics—upon the divine authority of the Holy
 “ Scriptures—upon the authority of the writings of the
 “ „primi-

“ primitive Fathers, as to the faith and practice of
 “ the primitive Church—upon the Divinity of our
 “ Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity
 “ of the Holy Ghost—upon the Articles of the Chris-
 “ tian Faith, as comprehended in the Apostles’ and
 “ Nicene Creeds.

“ Also I direct that thirty copies of the eight Di-
 “ vinity Lecture Sermons shall be always printed,
 “ within two months after they are preached, and
 “ one copy shall be given to the Chancellor of the
 “ University, and one copy to the head of every Col-
 “ lege, and one copy to the Mayor of the city of
 “ Oxford, and one copy to be put into the Bodleian
 “ Library; and the expence of printing them shall
 “ be paid out of the Lands or Estates given for esta-
 “ blishing the Divinity Lecture Sermons; and the
 “ Preacher shall not be paid, nor be entitled to the
 “ revenue, before they are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall
 “ be qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Ser-
 “ mons, unless he hath taken the Degree of Master
 “ of Arts at least, in one of the two Universities of
 “ of Oxford or Cambridge; and the same person
 “ shall never preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons
 “ twice.”

T O

THE RIGHT REVEREND
THOMAS THURLOW, D. D.
LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

MY LORD,

THE appointment, which produced the following Discourses, will in some degree sanction my ambition to present them to the public under the protection of your Lordship's Name. It originated with the University of Oxford: and interested as your Lordship is in whatever may
b claim

claim the least relation to a place, where you passed many of your early years with a Propriety of Conduct, that hath marked your Character through life, you will I am sure accept with Condescension the efforts thus excited, to elucidate the Truth and Purity of that Religion, of which you have ever discovered yourself in Heart and Practice a warm and consistent Friend.

I am well aware, that I have ventured on ground already taken; and that many valuable Treatises have appeared on the subject of the following sheets. But there is a mode of writing peculiar to different periods:

riods : and the Folios of the last age are ill relished by the desultory readers of this. Hence it is, that some of those publications alluded to have fallen into disesteem ; as being too diffuse, and appearing tedious : digressing into extraneous matter on some points not very material, and treating with a degree of languor others of more importance. Those on the other hand, which are comprised in the narrow limits of one or two Sermons, I conceive to be in substance too compressed, to afford general satisfaction ; the Brevity requiring too many assumptions, to obviate the doubts of Sceptical enquirers. Others again, though recommending, and enforcing founded

Truths with Elegance and Perpicuity, seem rather calculated to impress the mind already persuaded; than to obviate the Exceptions of Cavil, and satisfy Scruple and Doubt.

These observations have long induced me to think something further wanting: something on the subject in form and matter clear, yet close and argumentative; such as adverting to Objections as they rose, and thus clearing the way to Truth, might command assent on the assured Ground of Conviction. Pursuant of such design, I have, in the subsequent investigation, taken nothing for granted: proceeding gradually from proof to proof, and
shun-

shunning, as I proceeded, the discussion of no disputable article that lay in the way of my plan.

In those metaphysical disquisitions, to which my subject occasionally led me, I have particularly aimed at Perspicuity: sensible, that whenever a writer involves his ideas in Obscurity, it will always remain a doubt whether he be satisfactory to himself, and is an absolute bar to the conviction of others. On subjects of that nature, it is not easy to write to the comprehension of every reader; but, as far as I was able, I have attempted to do it.

And as new Adversaries of a Religion, the Tenets of which are of a nature to excite none, but such as are Adversaries to human Happiness, are continually aiming at new Objections, or vamping old ones up in new stile and figure; I have, on every article, more particularly applied myself to the Exceptions of modern writers. Every futile objection, in the short form prescribed on the present occasion, it was not possible to notice: of those that have been proposed to the public with most Plausibility, and retailed with the greatest Success, I have not designedly passed by any; for indeed I have observed none, that in the fair field of argument might not safely be met.

The

The plan I proposed to pursue, and which in the early Process of the Lectures I communicated to your Lordship, you were pleased to regard in a favourable light: I have now to wish the Execution may merit your equal approbation. But this in whatever degree your judgment may withhold, I am easy in the persuasion, that your Lordship's known Zeal for the Interests of our common Religion will with Candour regard a well-intentioned endeavour: a zeal, my Lord, which you have displayed in every situation of life; particularly in that exalted one, which afforded you the more ample scope for exertion: not terminating there in cold and languid Wishes, but

c 4

expressed

expressed in a cordial Attention to indigent and deserving Ministers in your Diocese; who have often found themselves promoted without Application on their Part, and often against the Application of Greatness and Power.

There is Merit in supporting an inferior Station with Firmness and Resignation: but much greater, as it is a much more difficult part to sustain, in filling an exalted one with Propriety and Attention; in which the Claims of Duty are more numerous, and the Charge of greater Weight. Our Minds indeed are formed with different Aptitudes: and some there are, that only feel themselves in elevated Situations; where there is Scope for Exertion, and
Room

Room to expand. But it is your Lordship's peculiar Felicity, to appear formed, or more properly to form yourself, for every Situation in life, to which you have been occasionally called; from the literary ease of academic privacy, to the highest honours of your profession: to have in every situation, through which you passed, conciliated Esteem, and left it with the general Regret of those, with whom you have been respectively connected.

Those Inducements alone would have directed my pen to this Address, if more powerful ones were wanting: the Pleasure of acknowledging the Favours, I have from your Lordship myself received; and the Satisfaction

tisfaction of testifying to the world,
how much, and how truly, I have the
Honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's dutiful,

Most obliged,

And devoted servant,

R. SHEPHERD.

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REFERENCE having been made in the Course of the following Discourses to a Paradisiacal State, the Author has annexed to them a Latin Sermon on the Subject; though written on a different Occasion, and preached several Years ago.

C O N T E N T S.

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P R O V. iii. 13, &c.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: &c.

S E R M O N II.

The Existence of God demonstrated: His Omnipotence, in the Superfedure of Nature, vindicated: His Immateriality asserted.

R O M. i. 10, &c.

For the invisible Things of Him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made; even His eternal Power and Godhead.

S E R M O N III.

A Divine Super-intendence displayed in the natural and moral Government of the World: establishing the Doctrine of a particular, as well as general, Providence.

J O B. xxxi. 4.

Doth He not see my ways, and count all my steps?

S E R M O N IV.

The general Obligation of Religion: the Ground and Necessity of the Duty of Prayer: the Connection between Religion and the social Duties.

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O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker: for He is our God, and we are the People of His Pasture.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N V.

An Enquiry into the Competency of the Light of Nature, to ascertain the Duties of Religion; or whether a more express Revelation of the Will of God in those Particulars be necessary.

I S A I A H lix. 9.

We wait for Light; but behold Obscurity: for Brightness, but we walk in Darkness.

S E R M O N VI.

The Possibility of a Revelation; and the Characteristic marks necessary to illustrate it: with Considerations on the Pretensions of the Revelation made to the Jews.

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S E R M O N VII.

An Enquiry into the General Expectation of a Messiah: and Whether the Prophetic writings of the Jews represent Him to have been a temporal Prince and Conqueror, or something greater.

M A T T.

C O N T E N T S.

M A T T. xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

S E R M O N VIII.

An Enquiry into the general Scope and Tenor
of the Scriptures of the New Testament,
respecting the Nature and Character of
Christ.

M A T T. xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

C O N C I O L A T I N A.

De Statu Paradisiaco.

E C C L U S. vii. 30.

*Hoc tantum inveni; quod Deus homines perfectos
credidit, ipsi autem ratiocinia plurima invenerunt.*

T H E
Ground and Credibility
O F T H E
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.


S E R M O N I.

P R O V. iii. 13, &c.

*Happy is the man, that findeth wisdom,
and the man that getteth understanding:
for the merchandise of it is better than
the merchandise of silver, and the gain
thereof than fine gold. She is more pre-
cious than rubies, and all the things thou
canst desire, are not to be compared with
her. Length of days is in her right hand,
and in her left hand riches and honour.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and
all her paths are peace. She is a tree of
life to them, that lay hold on her.*

TH E original word חכמה, in this place rendered, wisdom, is, in the first chapter of this book of Proverbs, used in

S E R M O N
I.
A the

SERMON I.  the plural number : which, according to the Hebrew idiom, is sometimes substituted for a superlative degree. *Wisdom crieth without* ; or, literally translated, *wisdoms* : the word חכמות there denoting the highest and most excellent wisdom ; the wisdom of religion : which is indeed so far the highest point of wisdom ; that, though its roots be fixed on earth, its branches reach to heaven : it hath the promise both of this world, and that which is to come. 'Tis the same kind of wisdom, that is described in my text ; and in this sense the word is frequently used, both in this book of Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The description is highly luxuriant ; and were it as true, as it is rich and elegant, one might conceive it of such efficacy to captivate mankind ; that no attention would be withheld, no exertions spared, to conciliate an ample plenary possession of her : at least that no wishes would prevail, no endeavours be exerted, to banish such a religion from the earth.

But

SERMON

I.

But with what religion will this engaging imagery comport? Not with the religion of nature; for in different ages, and different countries, the religion of nature hath deviated into the grossest errors. It taught the Persian, to pay his adoration to the sun; and some parts of India, to worship the tremendous power of darkness and evil. It directed the Egyptian, to fall down and humble himself to the reptile, and the plant; and impelled mankind to superstitions, often as immoral, as the rites themselves were ridiculous and vain. Whether the Theology of Greece and Rome were founded in political artifice, or in the flights of poetical imagination, the description before us can not apply to that religion: for it boasted not a single character of wisdom, purity, or satisfaction. Nor doth it aptly suit the imperfect, incomplete religion of the Jews. Burthened with a yoke of ceremonies, which, says the apostle, *neither we, nor our fathers were able to bear*; by a rigid observance

SERMON
 I. of those ceremonies, exposed to innumerable and great hardships, and denied a variety of gratifications, did they tread the way of pleasantness : or cut off from the rest of the world, hating their neighbours, and in their turn despised and ridiculed by them, knew they the path of peace ? The tree of life they had forfeited, and it had been removed far from them ; nor did the institutions of their religion, nor even its promises, as understood by them, extend so far, as to enable them to lay hold on it.

The divine Encomiast looked farther, and higher. Rapt into future ages, he exhibits the picture of a perfect religion : and if we examine the traits of it, we shall find the animated description suit only the religion of Jesus Christ ; and suit it in every particular. What is *the merchandise of silver and gold, and precious stones*, with all that is desirable in life ; when set in competition with the gain, which that religion proposes,
 the

the acquisition of the Kingdom of Heaven? In enjoining temperance, the fountain of health, and parent of longevity, she holds out *length of days in her right hand*: and the general prohibition of sensual and worldly pleasures, *the lust of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life*, which Christianity pronounces, will, if complied with, in its natural consequences, and according to the ordinary dispensations of Providence, conduct us to, what *her left hand offers, riches and honour*. So *easy is her yoke, and light her burden*; that her ways may be justly stiled *ways of pleasantness*, and *her paths the path-way of peace*. Through a Redeemer's sufferings, we are re-instated in the possession of *the tree of life*: and it is in every Christian's power, to reach out his hand, and *lay hold on it*.

SERMON
I.

If nature incline men to wish for happiness, and with the rules of such a religion as this, a religion so happily calculated to promote it, they cannot be

SERMON
 I. } brought univerſally to comply; we have to lament the intemperance of youth, the worldly-mindedneſs of age, and perhaps above all to deplore the known depravity of human nature, which can beſt account for ſo inconſiſtent a conduct. But that numbers ſhould be found, uninfluenced, as it may ſeem, by any incentive, except the fiend-like motive of counteracting the happineſs of the human race, anxious to extirpate ſuch a religion from the world; now combating it with the force of arguments, ſuch as ſubtilty ſupplies, now employing the light weapons of irony and ridicule againſt it; haranguing diſcipular circles in every place of public reſort, retailing inſipid objections, which have been a hundred times refuted, compaſſing ſea and land to make profelytes to their opinions: this, did not experience incontroſtably prove the fact, would tranſcend our belief; as it almoſt baffles reaſon to account for ſuch exertions.

Some

Some motives however may be assigned, tending to excite those malevolent attacks: the affectation of singularity, the love of novelty, the repugnance to whatever checks the tide of present pleasures, the pride of seeming wise; the conscious meanness of acknowledging the charms of virtue, and at the same time stooping to the practice of vice, and, from thence derived, the audacity of justifying that practice by destroying or confounding all principles of religious truth. These, acting on different minds, may influence correspondent habits of thinking; and produce and explain the illiberal insults which religion sometimes sustains: while reason shudders at the desperate stake the rash adventurer risks in an unequal contest; where he can gain nothing, and may lose every thing.

But amidst the various engines, that have been set at work, to prejudice the interests of Christianity, none are more

SERMON

I.



mischievous than those; which have substituted some shew of religion in its room. For attacks upon a religion so pure in its precepts, so calculated to improve the mind in virtue, and raise it above mean, and selfish, and narrow pursuits, without the pretended introduction of some other religion in its place, can have no better effects with sober and serious men; than to convince them of secret designs, framed against virtue's self, and tending to set mankind loose from all restraints of conscience, and the shackles of moral duty.

Against such efforts the world is guarded: and treat them as desperate attempts to dissolve the bonds of society, and introduce barbarism, anarchy, and confusion. And that this must be the consequence of principles of Atheism, or of that kind of Theism, as detrimental to the morals of mankind as Atheism itself, which supposes God to have no regard of human actions, is a truth

truth generally affented to, and well understood. SERMON
I.

Of those adverfaries of Chriftianity, who advance with fchemes of religion in their hands, I will mention only two. The one is he, who difclaims all revelation ; and bows down to the fantaftic idol of moral fitnefs : an univerfal rule of action, as he represents it ; and in all instances a fufficient one, as he affects to believe it. Under the other character are underftood thofe, who beneath the mask of Chriftianity employ their fecret efforts againft it : who infiduoufly affume its name, and fcarcely that ;* who, while they fay, Lord ! Lord ! are feduloufly undermining that Lord's authority, dignity, and power. That advances againft it, with the air and port of an open and avowed enemy : this enlifts under its banner, only to

* In common with the Mahometans and Jews, the Socinians affect the appellation of UNITARIANS.

deceive ;

SERMON
I.
deceive ; thus employing against it the double powers of hostility and fraud : that bids bold defiance ; this, like the false disciple, betrays with a kiss. We will examine the general features of each : their particular pretensions will, in the course of the subsequent lectures, be with more minuteness investigated.

By those underminers of the Christian Faith, it will be obvious to my audience, that I have in my eye the spawn of the antient Ebionites, the revived sect of the Socinians ; whose principal aim is not the denial of the Trinity, nor of the Divinity, nor Pre-existence of Christ, nor of any other single article of Christianity : those may be steps ; but their masked design is an object of larger extent. Some dislike one gospel, and some another ; and of those, which they admit, they hold themselves at liberty to believe just as much as they please. They were first stiled Cerinthians, Ebionites, and Nazarenes : for those several sects,
though

though differing in appellation, sprung up much about the same time, and in their fundamental doctrines were nearly the same. They acknowledged Jesus to have been the Messiah; but acknowledged him, with that defective apprehension of his nature and dignity, characterised by our Lord himself; *seeing they saw, but did not perceive; and hearing, they heard, but did not understand.* The uniform tenor of the gospel evinces a requisition of faith greater than the bare acknowledgment, that Jesus was the Messiah: his true disciples were further required to believe him to be the Son of God. Thus when our Lord asked them, whom they conceived him to be; Peter answered, *thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* And at his trial the high priest in solemn terms adjured him to tell them, *whether he were Christ, the Son of God.* Hence we learn what was the true faith; and how far that of the Ebionites was defective. They admitted him to be the Messiah, but rejected the evangelical account of his

SERMON
I.
}

SERMON ^{I.} his Divinity : they pretended to believe
 him to have risen from the dead, but
 allowed him no more than human
 powers.

Those were the the tenets, on which modern Socinianism has been built : from its origin to the present day, a very contracted sect ; and in the long succession of seventeen hundred years continually dying away, and reviving. Paul of Samosate, bishop and patriarch of Antioch, was their great luminary : with all the influence of his station, he propagated his doctrines ; in which, finding himself resolutely opposed, he with all the meannesses of a temporalist abjured them. The storm a little over, the restless spirit of innovation induced in him a second attempt to revive them : when the neighbouring bishops assembled themselves at Antioch ; and, after a fair and candid discussion, unanimously condemned them : condemned those particular tenets, the denial of Christ's Divinity, and of his

his descent from Heaven. And the opinion, the whole Christian Church in that early age entertained of those tenets, forms a powerful argument against them.

SERMON

I.

But I intend not in this discourse a History of Socinianism; and therefore pass over Theodotus, Symmachus, Artemon, and others; even the great Socinus himself, a man of shrewd parts, but who wanted much the ballast of learning: only remarking, that the doctrines, to which those Heresiarchs objected, themselves plainly saw were founded on the express word of scripture; and therefore the scriptures, so asserting them, some rejected, and others endeavoured to explain away. But it is not the rejection of this, or that scripture doctrine, which will satisfy our modern Socinians: with affected regard for Christ, their brother, their teacher, and friend, they disown him as their Lord; and of his supremacy and original reject his own account:

SERMON account: with pretended zeal for Christianity, their incessant labours are directed to undermine the authority of those scriptures, on which Christianity is founded.

I.

Compared with modern Socinians, the more decent Mr. Toland pursues the same point with modesty and moderation. All that he contends for is, the right of *interpreting scripture figuratively, when occasion requires it.** We see, to what this will lead: for, every one judging for himself of the necessity of such figurative interpretation, both doctrines and precepts will be easily interpreted away. Toland however keeps up a shew of reverence for the authority of the scriptures. But what say our modern Socinians? Why truly, that the “*prodigious divine apparatus* of a particular inspiration of each sacred writer [of the Gospels] was wholly unneccessa-

* Christianity not mysterious.

“ ry.”* Of course it was not conferred, SERMON
I.
 or, in their own words, “ this high
 “ notion of the inspiration of the scrip-
 “ tures, of the Gospel in particular, is
 “ contrary to fact.” †

But though the gospels were not dictated by particular inspiration; “ yet,” says the author last quoted, “ they may be termed *in some degree* inspired writings, as they contain a faithful detail of the doctrine of Christ, which he received immediately from God.” Yes, admitting his representation of them, they are just in such degree inspired, as other true historical details are. For, according to the account of Christ, which those writers advance, where is the great difference between him and Socrates? They were both endowed by God with a greater degree of wisdom, than other men possessed; for all wisdom is from

* Priestley's Harmony of the Gospels.

† Lindsey's Address to the two Universities.

God:

SERMON I. God : neither of them left behind him any works of his own ; and the History of their Lives and Doctrines was each written by their respective disciples. The gospels therefore are just upon an equal footing of inspiration with the dialogues of Plato. And the religion, which instead of strict Christianity is under these refinements proposed, in its full extent amounts to these two points : the practice of the precepts of the gospel, as far as, considered in the light of a system of morals, we approve them ; and a belief of its doctrines, so far as we may judge, the Evangelists “ had been careful to put down, with fidelity and exactness, what they had seen and heard themselves, respecting their *divine* master Jesus,” (the denial of whose *divinity* by the bye is an especial tenet of the writer, I am now citing) “ as also what they had learned from other competent witnesses.”*

* Lindfey's Address, &c.

Here

Here we see the design fairly unfolded; which, as far as its influence may extend, must weaken the obligation of the gospel precepts, and effectually do its doctrines away: it fits those to every conscience, and invalidates the authority, that enforces these. Yet do the propagators of those tenets assume the title of Christians; open conventicles to the pretended honour of that Lord, whom they have thus degraded; and affect to form their religion on those scriptures, they have robbed of the strongest characteristic of truth.

SERMON
I.

Such is the unfixt, variable system of faith and morals, which the Socinian holds forth. The Deist, more candid, as more open, denies all revelation; and affects to own no other law, than that of nature. He pretends the foundation of his religion to be laid in reason; and its rule of conduct to consist in the direction of that reason, and the apparent aptitude and propriety of things. Mo-

B

ra

SERMON

I.



ral fitness, the object of his idolatry, beckons him to paths which she hath shaped; and which, she promises, the conduct she prescribes will strew with flowers. She tells him, the sole end of man's existence here is, like that of the Leviathan in the deep, *to sport and take his pastime therein*; she bids him pursue and enjoy his own temporal happiness; and, saving his own happiness, to consult for, and promote, the happiness of others. She addresses him in the reprobated words of the apostle; *eat and drink, for to morrow we die*. Enjoy the good things of this world, while they are in thy power; for this end were ye placed here, for this end were they given: and who knows what a day may bring forth.

Palatable reasoning this to the passions and appetites of human nature: and captivating the religion; which on such easy terms makes both worlds our own! For moral fitness, that measures duty by the line of reason, which again is regulated, or at least strongly influenced, by
 inclination,

inclination, will easily persuade her voracious; that by employing his superfluities on objects in need, by dealing out his bread to the hungry, and cloathing the naked wanderer, he purchases a licence to indulge himself in whatever practices his reason, thus biassed by appetite, may seem to sanction. He may laugh at superstition and indulgences: but were matters fairly and honestly explained; it would be difficult to determine, in favour of which the divine voice of wisdom may decide.

SERMON
I.

The practice of a warm and diffusive benevolence is certainly a duty, highly incumbent on us to discharge: yet are we not to lay the whole stress of religion on it. Christianity represents it as only one part, and the interior part too, of *the law and the prophets*: and reason taught the heathen, that, apart from the social and relative duties, there is a duty and service owing only, and immediately, to God. The duty of benevolence claims

SERMON
 I. } our regard, even as an act of religion ;
 but not exclusively : it demands our
 observance ; but not to the neglect of
 equally, or perhaps more, important
 ones. It is among the *things, which*
ought to be done, but on account of which
others are not to be left undone.

There is however a brilliancy, it must be acknowledged, in this fashionable religion ; which is made to consist in a discrimination of moral rectitude, and a cultivation of the relative and social duties, particularly that of charity. It lays hold on our tenderest affections, it interests mankind in its favour, it *covers*, not compensates for, but conceals, or hides, *a multitude of sins.*

The passage just cited, men, whose religion sits easy on them, those good casuists, who would secure to themselves the next world, without giving up the pleasures of this, are very apt through ignorance to mistake, or misrepresent
 through

through design : from thence alledging the sanction of scriptural authority, to justify a kind of commutation for sin. Whereas the apostle's intention, in the use of the expression, being to inculcate the practice of brotherly love and charity, which our Lord and Master had particularly pressed upon his disciples, declaring it should be a badge of their discipleship, he makes use of that strong expression ; only as intimating, that it was a virtue of so bright and luminous a nature, as would attract the notice, and conciliate the good opinion of mankind, hiding by its lustre a multitude of little faults.

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I.

Take reason, or revelation for your guide ; and you will find both the one, and the other, inculcate our duty to God, as the first and great duty : yet doth this favourite religion of the Deist, with all the social virtues in its train, leave it entirely out of the question. “ Quod

“ supra nos, nihil ad nos ;” is an apho-

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I.

rism ever in the mouth of those, who own no other religion than that. And thus, under the affectation of honouring the Deity by a distant humility, they are led to regard Him with indifference and neglect. “He is too elevated,” reason they, “for us reptiles of a day even in thought to approach him. We are arguing in the dark, when we dispute about his nature and attributes: and without being acquainted with his nature and attributes, we cannot acceptably worship Him: but not to worship Him acceptably and in truth, is false religion: and false religion is worse than no religion at all.”

But this fluent train of argument is false in every article. In giving us reason to discover that there is such a Being as God, our Creator hath declared it a duty to employ our thoughts on Him: and however little He hath been pleased to discover of Himself; that little it is the highest prerogative of our nature

nature to look up to, and the most glorious exercise of the intellectual faculties to investigate. Nor are we on this subject so much in the dark, as scepticism may pretend: want of demonstration is no proof of falshood; nor ought it to be any discouragement to the pursuit of truth. Without that perfect comprehension of the divine nature, which human presumption may demand; it is asserted, that we may pay to our Creator a reasonable service: and it is denied, that a false religion is worse than no religion at all. It may be so; but not necessarily. Considered in itself, and apart from the accidental malignity of its tenets, even a false religion is as much more acceptable to God, than no religion whatever; as an imperfect endeavour to please, is preferable to non-exertion and neglect. In a word, the knowledge of God, which, imperfect as it is, He hath stamped upon the human mind, sufficiently evinces; that to contemplate Him, to acquaint ourselves with Him,

SERMON

I.

SERMON in order to investigate how in the most
 I. acceptable manner to serve Him, is not
 above us : it is a duty incumbent on us ;
 it produces in us a love of Him, and
 fulfils the first command.

If the excellent wisdom of that full and perfect religion, which in doctrine and precept the gospel exhibits, we contrast with the two substitutes of it above described ; we shall find it neither vague, nor defective. In respect of our duty to God, it teaches ; that to *love him with all our heart, and all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength* ; and agreeably to such an inflamed, enlarged affection, to serve Him ; is the first obligation of man. And for the regulation of our conduct to our neighbour, a proper discharge of the social and relative duties, it lays down the completest rules in the shortest compass. “ To love our neighbour, as ourselves ;” and “ to do “ to all men, as we would they should “ do unto us ;” are maxims, that form
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the ground work of the best and completest system of Ethics, moral philosophy ever framed.

SERMON
I.

Its doctrines are authoritative and express; its precepts clear and obligatory. However mens appetites, inclinations, humours, or caprice, may differ and vary; true religion will be always the same: a perfect unchangeable rule of action. And though its precepts and doctrines we may pervert and wrest; we must take heed, that in so doing, we wrest them not to our own destruction. Plain and simple in its institution, it seeks no adventitious colourings; free from defects, it eludes not scrutiny, nor shuns the light: but the more we see, and know, and are acquainted with it, the more desirable doth it appear to us.

Reason is the touchstone, on which the truth of religion is to be tried. Let the Mahometan say, BELIEVE: and guard the sacred Koran from the scrupulous

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I.

pulous eye of rational enquiry. Christ hath said, *search the scriptures; for they are they, which testify of me.* And never have books been more critically, and more enviously searched, than they: while from those trials they have acquired new strength; rising from the fiery ordeals with all the acquisition of lustre, trial and truth can give. The religion, which declines an appeal to the tribunal of reason, is always to be suspected. To her the Christian commits the guidance of his faith: her sacred principles will support its authority, when from the fastidious countenance of Deism the veil of prejudice shall drop; and the insidious schemes of modern refiners shall, like air-blown bubbles, float for their moment, amuse light minds, and die away: when unstable notions, and vain conceits, by wild imaginations suggested, and through love of novelty entertained, shall by sober judgment be weighed, and in the cool hour of reflection relinquished. Schemes of religion, such

such as these, may continue for a time ; but, for want of a solid foundation, at length the baseless fabric must fall. SERMON
I.

I. On these principles, in the discourses, which on the present occasion engage my attention, my design is, by a chain of arguments deduced from the foundation of all religion, the divine existence, summarily to evince the ground and credibility of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. In proof of that first great truth, the Being of a God, I shall have little occasion to dwell on arguments against the direct Atheist : the fool, who *says in his heart, there is no God*. I shall content myself therefore with advancing such only, as may be most satisfactory and convincing : and pass on 2dly to him, who, acknowledging the Being of a God, by a denial of miracles doth in effect limit his power ; a species of Anti-Theism scarcely less wicked, than direct Atheism itself. And I will 3dly advert to that more refined Atheist ;
whose

SERMON I. whose desperate principles of Materialism tend to degrade the Divine nature.

II. From the evidence of God's existence, we will proceed to the proofs of his superintending providence; a particular, as well as general, providence: that is, a providence, which not only directs and upholds the world in that ordinary course of nature, that succession of general causes and effects, which was in the first arrangement of things established; but such as with all-pervading eye observes, and guiding hand directs each lesser movement; every minute occurrence, as well as every extraordinary event.

III. And from these adduced proofs of God's existence and providence, I infer the duty of religion: that is, the proper acknowledgment of God's creative power, and upholding goodness, by acts of adoration and praise; obligatory
on

on all beings endowed with a degree of reason, equal to that of man.

SERMON
I.
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IV. But though reason be thus competent to point out the necessity of religion; facts and experience evince its insufficiency to direct us aright in its doctrines and precepts, and the purity of worship: from whence follows the necessity of a Revelation.

V. And on this subject I shall confine my thoughts to the nature and extent of the Revelation made to the Jews: the completion and perfection of which were destined in the Messiah.


VI. In examining the ancient prophecies of the Messiah, my principal object will be to note and illustrate those particulars, in which the Jews had mistaken and misinterpreted them: not only in referring to worldly conquests, pomp, and power, descriptions, which with no human character could comport;

SERMON

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port; but in their gross misapprehension of those prophecies also, which as plainly allude to his humiliated and suffering state. And as those contrasting prophecies never did meet in any other of their great characters, nor ever can, but in one, who lived the life, performed the miracles, and experienced the sufferings, which Jesus did: they will not only demonstrate, that he was the Messiah; but as assuredly prove, that he possessed powers more than human, and exercised an authority, that marked his origin, as his mission, divine.

VII. From the authorities of the Old Testament, respecting the nature and dignity of the Messiah, I propose to pursue my investigation of the subject through the Scriptures of the New; and therein to enquire, 1st, what is the general scope, and uniform tenour of those scriptures, respecting the Pre-existence and Divinity of Christ: and 2dly to meet the objections to those doctrines
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in the full force, in which the leaders SERMON
of a revived sect have pressed them. I
And in this inquiry may the spirit of 
truth direct me, through Jesus Christ
our Lord : &c. &c.

 S E R M O N I I .

R O M . i . 10 , &c .

For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made ; even his eternal power and Godhead.

S E R M O N

II .



THE existence of God is so clearly manifested, and his creative power so far understood, saith the apostle ; that even the Heathen are without excuse, in not paying Him that purity of worship, which his sublime nature and Godhead require. And indeed reason doth supply us with so cogent arguments of such a being, and those attributes of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, inseparable from Him, which St. Paul files

files “the invisible things of God”; as nothing but the most determined prejudices can withstand.

SERMON
II.

One would conceive that we need but open our eyes on the fair frame of things about us, and question our hearts how came they here: and our hearts would answer, *this hath God done; perceiving that it was his work.* The Atheist however hath discovered the way of making a world, without calling to his assistance the power and wisdom of God.

“Nullam rem e nihilo gigni divinitus unquam;”

is the principle, on which he proceeds to erect his specious building: how far it may be admitted, we will in the sequel examine.

I. If at the first, or from eternity, NOTHING existed; there never could have existed any thing: so far just and

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true

SERMON true is the position above assumed.
 II. SOMETHING therefore existed from all
 eternity.

That SOMETHING was either matter ; or a substance different from matter. Inertion being an essential property of matter, mere matter could never have produced itself ; for self-existence implies activity : it could not have produced itself even in a Chaotic, shapeless mass. Something therefore must from eternity have existed, possess of active and higher powers, than matter possesses. That SOMETHING we stile God.

But admitting for a moment the former supposition, and conceiving of matter, as an eternal existence ; from whence shall we suppose it to have derived those beautiful and varying shapes, which we now behold ? On the most favourable supposition of its origin, a rude, indigested mass ; from whence did it become possess of its power of diversifying its motions and operations in
 such

such a manner, as to produce the wonderful variety of beings, that are found scattered upon the face of the earth ?

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The atomists saw the defect of this scheme of Atheism : and therefore to self-existent matter they gave a power, which does not belong to it ; they conferred motion on it, and introduced a million of self-existent, dancing atoms : a system of heathen philosophy, which, however blazoned with the ornaments of verse, is much of a piece with that of their theology ; both highly poetic : and, notwithstanding the encomium, with which a modern historian of no small name hath distinguished the *pretty* theology of Julian,* both exceedingly absurd.

Necessary self-existence is the prime attribute of the Deity : something self-

* Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

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existent is God. A million therefore of self-existing, self-moving atoms, are a million of Gods. And when those millions of atoms had danced themselves into shapeable existences, seas, rivers, mountains, trees, and the like: it was natural enough for the plastic powers of poetic imagination, to personify those eternal existences; who, according to the scheme of Epicurean philosophy, were Deities ready made to their hand: and hence, their Oreades, Naiades, &c. their Gods and Goddeffes, of land, and of rivers, and even of the bowels of the earth.

But supposing for a moment the existence of motion, without admitting a mover: there is still wanting design. For a fortuitous dance of atoms is no more equal to the creation of a world, in which there are such marks of infinite wisdom, harmony, and design, as this of ours displays: than a fortuitous jumble of letters, to the composition of an
epic

epic poem; or of colours, to the delineation of a regular picture. For on the most advantageous idea of what matter is, and motion can do: that is no more than an inert, chaotic, mass; and this a blind impulse, eternally proceeding without destination.

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To make one concession further, and suppose, upon another system of Atheism, matter to have eternally existed in the beautiful variety of shape and form, in which we now behold it; without some external support, all those beautiful appearances of things must long ago have sunk into their original nothing. For matter, such as the world is composed of, being in itself liable to corruption, animate substances, as well as inanimate, having all their rise, their progress, and decay; their self-existence does not imply a greater degree of absurdity, than their self-support from all eternity in the same form and state.

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From this view of the incompetence of matter, considered in every light, to self-existence and eternity, we must admit some superior principle; and acknowledge an eternal self-existent cause: something of power to create matter, which in itself possesses no active powers, consequently not the power of self-existence: an existent cause, possessing also wisdom and design, equal to the diversification observable in this fair frame of things about us. And that being is God.

To this beauty, order, and regularity, so discernible in the universe, the apostle in my text particularly appeals; in proof of the existence and perfections of the Deity. And if this argument could be thought to want any corroborative; I might instance the universal consent of mankind, in all ages of the world, and in every region: which concurrence of assent must be a strong presumption of truth.

For

For it contradicts every principle of reason, to imagine that by the constitution of human nature false principles should have been generally and uniformly infused into our minds; and that we should be naturally inclined to error: that, in this great truth of God's existence, the whole world should be taught to err; except the few, whose interest it may be, to wish the doctrine false, that they may live to the full enjoyment of their appetites and inclinations, without the molestation of conscience, and the alarms of fear. Nor can any other certain and general cause be assigned for so general an opinion, except the nature of the human mind: which hath this notion of a Deity born with it; and, as we may thence conclude, stamped upon it by the author of nature, the Deity himself. But I forbear to pursue this argument; or to dwell longer on this part of my subject: hastening to the second proposition; which was to reconcile the supersedure

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SERMON of the general laws of nature, in the
 II. case of miracles, with the wisdom and
 goodness of that infinite being, who to
 the operation of nature assigned those
 laws.

II. To acknowledge a Deity, and yet tie Him down by suppositions, which, if pushed to their utmost length, would leave Him with limited powers; is to throw over Atheism so thin a veil, as hides nothing of it, but its name. This however is the tendency of an argument against the reality of miracles, which has been maintained with the greatest confidence; and is founded on the *impossibility* of them, consistent with the attributes of the Deity. A miracle being a superfedure or alteration of the established course of nature, it is contended; that if such alteration be for the better, the course of nature was not originally established with infinite wisdom; if for the worse, it is an alteration not consistent with infinite goodness.

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This argument, for it is a favourite one, hath been offered in another form, and with a happy change of words. “ God,” it is argued “ cannot supercede the course of things, he has established, without violating the laws of nature.” The word, *violate*, adds no new force to the argument : but it is aptly calculated to fling imputed censure on the opposite opinion : as maintaining the reality of those extraordinary operations, at the expence of violating the sacred laws of God and nature.

In form more full, and stronger terms, I offer the argument ; in the direct words of a celebrated essay, by zealous partizans still dealt out in detail, and held up in triumph. “ A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature : and as a firm and unalterable experience hath established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as intire, as any

“ argument


SERMON “ argument from experience can be
 II. “ possibly imagined.” *

The first part of the proposition, it is plain to observe, is an assertion without proof : unless the subsequent clause be intended to substantiate one, in the assumption, that *firm and unalterable experience hath established these laws*. But *firm and unalterable* experience constitutes such proof no longer, than till these laws are superseded ; and then *firm and unalterable* experience proves in particular cases and for special purposes, a deviation from those general laws. And such deviation is as strongly established by *firm and unalterable experience*, as the former regularity itself. Nor can it, being God's immediate operation, or at least an act under his permission, with more propriety be stiled a violation of the laws of nature ; than the mountainous waves of the sea, proudly overleap-

* See Hume's Essay on Miracles.

ing the bounds which He had fet them, deluging whole regions, and ingulphing cities, — or the dark spots, which astronomers obferve increafingly to incrust the bright orb of the fun, in poffible diminution both of its heat and light, — can be charged on his works, as violations of the general laws, He had afsigned to their operation.

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He, that had a power to direct nature according to certain general laws, muft alfo have a power to control, and alter her movements. And fuch alteration, or control, is as much the act, either mediately or immediately, of infinite power and wifdom, as the general law itfelf. It is a part of that general law; which was formed with fuch a fpecific deviation. Whatever weight therefore may be afcribed to this argument; it in reality poffeffes none. It ftands not in our way in proof, that fuch fupfedure of the general laws of nature is impoffible; as being incompatible either with infinite wifdom or power. The only
question

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question then is, whether human testimony be sufficient to prove it; which will fall under an article of future discussion; being a point of enquiry, with which in the present case we are not concerned. Nothing more is in this state of the subject contended for; than that God can supersede the general laws of nature, without incurring the rash imputation of violating them.

But the author was led into this argument, by narrow notions of the divine agency. He has adverted to the Deity, as an artist; and to the structure of this world, as a complicated machine, of his framing; consisting of a variety of mechanic powers, which he puts into motion, assigning general movements to every distinct part; turns the piece of finished mechanism out of his hands, and leaves it in its various parts to pursue its destined operations: which it will invariably perform, unless some derangement of the parts impede and interrupt

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interrupt its motions. Now were this representation of the Deity adequate and just ; the argument adduced must be admitted of no inconsiderable weight. For as the great machine must have come out of the hands of its Creator perfectly good, and was left without further attention to continue the course, He had prescribed to it ; every deviation from the order and course, He had so prescribed, would be a deterioration of his work.

But doth such an idea comport with the Creator of heaven and earth ? And indeed what human idea will ? Certainly however the idea of God, at first creating and giving movements to the world, and then leaving it to pursue those motions no longer under his inspection, without his farther regard, without support : — such idea doth surely ill suit the attributes of omniscience and omnipresence. In his operations he knows neither beginning, middle, nor end.

With

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With Him no distance distinguishes time or place : He looks neither backwards nor forwards ; the idea of FIRST, or LAST, notes not his actions : who is always, every where ; and at one comprehensive glance views every minute movement of every part of his innumerable works, in every period of their operations.

When at the first, if, in application to God, we may properly use such a term as FIRST, He made the element of water yield to the impresson of the human step ; He made it also on a particular occasion to resist it : and the one particular occasional power was as much the given power of God, and as early given, as the other. And this given power to that part of nature, which performs it, is his law. With the same almighty FIAT, which put the world in motion, He for a moment stopped the movements of some of its parts. At the same moment, He saw them perform their accustomed

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II.

tomed revolutions, and saw them halt : when, in scripture language, *the sun stood still on Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon.* At the same instant, and with the same glance, he sees the sun travelling in his strength, and the moon's reflected beams enlivening the gloom of night ; and also beholds, at the destined period of their dissolution, the one *turned into blood*, and the face of the *other darkened* : His hand alike directs both operations. Respecting Him, with whom time is not, when we speak of periods and of times ; we should keep ever in mind, that we use those terms, because we know not how to express our ideas of Him more suitably. But thus far our ideas of God may attain : that acting always, as He demonstratively does, and present every where, as He necessarily is, when the operations of nature are most eccentric, equally as when most regular, they perform the divine will : and the unerring rectitude, with which He rules, or stops,

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SERMON her motions, ever preserves the course,
 II. that nature may pursue, from the im-
 putation of VIOLATION.

III. The point, which under the article of God's existence I proposed in the third and last place to consider, was the general principle of Materialism: as of tendency to degrade the divine nature. For when we magnify matter above its just claim and pretensions, and ascribe to it perfections, which it doth not possess; when we attribute to it perception, memory, reflection, those intellectual faculties, a ray of divinity, if indeed the image of God be in any degree stamped upon us: we must take care we be not led step by step, at last to degrade the divine nature, and materialise even the Deity himself.

That such dangerous tendency in the principles of materialism is not matter of vain presumption, but of fact; the direct acknowledgment of one of the
 most

most determined materialists of this age evinces; who observes, that “the doctrine of the materiality of man has been charged with leading to Atheism.”* And then in the very same work, while he affects to remove, he proceeds to establish, the charge: employing two sections to prove, that “the nature of the Deity is material.” The ancient philosophy of Epicurus conferred motion on self-existent matter: the modern materialist, more bountiful, endows it with perceptive and intellectual powers. If that were Atheism; I fear this will rank little lower. Such principles, if they lead men to conceive of God, not as he is, but *turn the glory of God into a corruptible nature*, are equally derogatory from the sublime nature of the Deity, as direct Atheism itself. And the author’s candid acknowledgment of the existence of such a charge is, on the subject we are now investigating, sufficient to justify

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* Priestley’s Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit.

SERMON my endeavours to guard against princi-
 II. ples of so desperate tendency.

The chain of reasoning, on which the Materialist proceeds, supposes, that to enable one being to act upon another, they must each possess some common property: the mind therefore, if qualified to act upon the body, must have some common property of matter; and for the same reason so must the Deity himself. But what has the properties of matter, is matter. This is in brief the argument in support of the doctrine of materialism: and such is the desperate length, to which it goes.

Let us examine this train of reasoning, and argue on the fact in the extreme: let us suppose the truth of the conclusion, that the Deity possesses some property common to matter; and ask what known property it is. Not inaction, most assuredly: for every attribute of the Deity implies activity. Not solidity:

dity : for in Him, whether the Christian's God, or the heathen philosopher's anima mundi, *we live, and move, and have our being*. Not shape : for that has bounds. In short, not any property of matter, that can be ascertained. Every power of the mind, and every property observable in matter, are so essentially different ; that the idea of homogeneity in the two substances is too extravagant to be admitted on any other ground, than a direct proof of the impossibility of the action of spirit on matter, without the existence of some common property. Our incapacity to comprehend in what manner such action, so circumstanced, can be exerted, is not sufficient, against every appearance that it is so, to destroy the possibility of the fact.

Yet however bold the assertion is, that spirit *cannot* act upon matter without possessing some common property of it ; and however false it may be : it must with proper diffidence be acknowledged,

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ed, that it is difficult to conceive how thought can come into immediate contact with a substance so apparently opposite to it, as matter. But humbly considering how little we know of the laws, by which God governs the world; though ignorant of the cause, may we not, instructed by the effect, suppose some secret law of nature existing, some fine link between the two substances, by which the mind may receive its sensations and ideas; and through which it may exercise its operations, excite motions, and perform actions? We know, in the chain of material beings how nice the links of nature; we know, how nearly the quadruped approaches the feathered tribe; how nearly the inhabitant of the watery element him, that grazes on the plain; the vegetative the animal being. And I conceive it not improbable, much less impossible, which is sufficient to urge against a direct impossibility; that there may be some fine link between the material and the immaterial world,
some

some medium of action, which, if known, would satisfy the doubts of philosophic arrogance.

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II.

My design in this discourse has been, to establish the proof of God's existence, as the foundation of all religion: and with all humility so far to investigate the Divine nature, as forming an object of religious worship; of that pure form of worship especially, the truth of which in the sequel of these discourses I shall proceed to evince. And if the reflections on this subject, which I have now offered, have any weight; they will conduce to mould our minds to the study of ourselves. And when, convinced of our own weakness and imperfection, we raise our thoughts to the contemplation of the Deity; we shall, from what we are, from what we feel within, and behold without us, derive irrefragable and increasing proofs of his existence. We shall learn to think humbly of ourselves, and exaltedly of

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that infinitely perfect and adorable Being, who called us from nothing; and gave us all that we at present enjoy, or in reversion hope for. And when the enlarged mind expatiates on his power; we shall tremble at the idea of fixing any thing like a limit to it: when we endeavour to search into the inscrutable treasures of his wisdom; we shall exert every fertile power of imagination, to admire and revere it: and when we presume to employ our thoughts on his nature; we shall separate from it every idea, that suits not with the highest excellence we can attribute to the most sublime and exalted Being: and after all this stretch of heart, and soul, and strength, to think worthily of Him, we shall have to lament the weakness of our conception, and the imperfection of our ideas; satisfied that, high as the enraptured mind can raise them, they fall beneath, infinitely beneath, the elevated subject, on which they are employed.

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 S E R M O N I I I .

Job, xxxi. 4.

*Doth He not see my ways, and count all
my steps?*

FROM the evidence of God's existence, which was the subject of my last discourse; we will now proceed to the proofs, we have of his providence. It has been shewn, that the world is the production of a Being infinite in wisdom and power, whom we stile God: the point of doctrine next to be proved is, that this World, this whole system of created things, is super-intended, governed, and directed by that Almighty God, who made it. And indeed there is

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such a natural and necessary connection between the belief of God's existence, and superintendence; that he, who believes the one, would he think consistently, must believe the other likewise. If we believe there is a God, who made the world; we must likewise believe that the same God, who made the world, doth govern it too. For matter is as incompetent to support it's own existence, as to create itself; nor is chance better qualified to govern a world, than to make one: and we have already seen, how unapt matter is for the active office of creation; and how unequal chance is to the formation of a world, which displays such harmony, regularity, and consistence. But from appearances let us proceed to proofs.

The power of God, displayed in the government of the world, may be considered in a double view:

First,

First, in respect to the material world; in which He is acknowledged as ordering, and directing the changes and revolutions of nature: His will, and governing power, being the universal law, which it observes.

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And secondly we may consider the superintendence of God, as displayed in a moral and religious view; in His dispensations and government, respecting the rational world: including the general state, œconomy, and conduct of mankind. And under this head I propose a further enquiry into the reality of a particular, as well as general, providence: addressed to the consideration of those, who, under the affectation of enlarged ideas of the Divine nature, pretend to suppose it an opinion unworthy of Him, to ascribe to his immediate interposition occurrences, which are sometimes stiled providential; but which, though apparently extraordinary, fall within the common course prescribed to nature, however

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III.
however hidden from us, and secret may
be the immediate causes of them.

I. First, then, the general notion of providence is God's care of all the creatures He has made; which must consist in preserving and upholding their beings and natures, and in such acts of government, as the good order of the world, the arrangement of things, their secret dependencies, and correspondent effects require. And that there is such a manifest general ordination and adaptation of things in the natural world, that they exactly suit the purposes of each other, and contribute mutually to the universal good of the great whole; that the common necessities of mankind are graciously provided for, and supplied in the usual course of things, and according to the general laws of nature, which infinite wisdom and goodness originally established; that the heavenly bodies are constituted, and their movements directed, with exact proportion to one another in
their

their feveral ftations and circuits; are truths, that have with fuitable expreffions of admiration been obferved and acknowledged by thofe, who have penetrated fartheft into ftudies and enquiries of that kind.

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When we proceed to a more particular investigation of this interefting doctrine of a divine providence, the mind is ftruck with the obferved fubfiftence of things in the fame ftructure; and with the fame progreflion, through the feveral ages of their being. In this confideration is involved a two-fold circumftance; their ftability, and their arrangement: the one inconceivable without active intelligence, and the other without fupport.

Though neither matter, nor motion, nor both united, have been found in themfelves competent to the creation of the world: there can be no doubt, but, under the direction of the Divine architect,

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teſt, they conſtitute the compoſition of the viſible univerſe. It was not therefore wonderful, that ſome philoſophers ſhould have conferred on them the principle of ſelf-exiſtence: and it was conſiſtent with ſuch opinion, to attribute to them the powers of conſervation and ſupport. But from the idea of matter, attenuate and modify it as you will, inactivity, it has been already obſerved, is inſeparable. If therefore eſſentially paſſive, and conſequently not ſelf-exiſtent, but created; impotent to produce, it muſt be equally impotent to preſerve itſelf. For in reality how doth production differ from preſervation, except as an act exerted from its continuance? One moment of active being implies, in an inert maſs, as conſiderable a difficulty as another. It requires the ſame power to confirm a ſecond moment of action, as to aſſign a firſt; a third, as a ſecond: and ſo on through all the parts of duration. And if ſo, from the ſame principle muſt be derived the continuance
of

of the world's existence, as the origin of it.

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In the same manner with regard to motion ; we cannot conceive of it, without admitting a cause. From a blind and senseless cause can proceed only a blind and indefinite effect : that is, in the present instance a tendency every way ; which is plainly equivalent to a tendency no way, or to rest. A tendency, in any given or definite way, denotes selection and direction ; and these again, immediately or ultimately, an external intelligent mover. How then can that, which could neither begin, nor guide, continue itself ? There is besides in every impulse a diminution of motion : so that whatever momentum is communicated to the body impelled, re-action is known to take from the impellent. What then can repair this continual loss ; or, in other words, support a constant motion, like the revolutions of the globe in one regular tenor ; except an incessant

SERMON
 III.  cessant action : which brings us at once to the incessant intervention of a superintending Deity ?

Let us next advert to the additional circumstance of arrangement. Survey, and it is a delightful entertainment to survey, the productions and provisions of nature : you will perceive on the first observation variety, curiosity, co-operation, and mutual subservience ; successions without failure, greatness without disproportion, complication without confusion. Observe particularly the nice disposition of the universe, of which this orb of ours forms a part ; the distribution of the larger planets in wider and remoter orbits, that their gravity may not interfere with the safety or velocity of the smaller ; the measured distance of the earth from the sun, whose approach or recedure with any sensible variation might endanger its being, or all its comforts.

Then

Then let us bring our reflections SERMON
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nearer home ; and observe this globe of earth that we inhabit, and its productions. What an elegant and beneficial assemblage do we behold springing from mere mould, a cold, lumpish, crumbling substance ; not grateful to any sense, nor possessed in appearance of any prolific virtue ! With what exquisite art, accommodating structure to character and exertion, are particular creatures organised ; severally destined to form and fill up a compact, regular, and complete system : a system, the composition of which consisting of materials infinitely numerous, infinitely diversified, hath stood for near six thousand years one and the same ; uninjured in its form, unimpaired in its parts, unobstructed in its movements ! Consider this complex wonder ; and who can hesitate to conclude, that every thing is sustained, guided, and uniformly reinstated, by a vigilant providence, “ great in council, and mighty in work.”

For

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For in short wherever there is an effect, it must have a cause answerable; a determinate effect; a determining cause; a perpetual or periodical effect, a permanent one. Thus order implies design, symmetry contrivance, beauty workmanship, regularity guidance, unerring regularity wisdom, limitation influence, utility forecast. And these, existing in infinite circumstances, declare an infinite mind, operating in the appointment of them with infinite discernment, and in the preservation of them with infinite attention; which is in other words, a presiding providence. On this subject engaged, one cannot help giving scope to imagination, and reflecting on the infinite pleasure it will give the enlarged mind, when admitted to a nearer view of things, than our converse in this world admits, to explore the curiosities and exhaustless wonders of nature: to view, with what art and contrivance each particular creature is made; and how the several parts of this

great

great machine are fitted to each other, and continue on from generation to generation a regular and uniform world. Mutually connected and dependent, each is fitted to the uses and purposes of their several natures, all serviceable and assistant to one another, and every individual necessary to the whole.

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On such a survey, to matter and motion, to every cause a fertile imagination can suggest, analogy will force us to add design. For by a fortuitous concurrence of things we see nothing regular effected in works of art: by what rule of reasoning then are we to expect it in the operations of nature? And with design, we must admit of a designer: that is, a Being of wisdom, to plan; and of power, the extent of which we measure by the execution of the plan. In nature's works consider the design, and examine the execution of it; and impute them, who can, to less than infinite wisdom and power. Such were the reflections,

E doubts

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doubts respecting a superintending providence: the description is elegant, and the reasoning just; with that description, the elegance of the passage, and the propriety of sentiment it conveys, will I trust plead my excuse for concluding the argument drawn from observations on the material world.

- “ Sæpe * nihi dubiam traxit sententia mentem,
 “ Curarent superi terras, an nullus inesset
 “ Rector, & incerto fluerent mortalia casu.
 “ Ast cum dispositi quæsissem fœdera mundi,
 “ Præscriptosque mari fines, annisque meatus,
 “ Et lucis noctisque vices; tunc omnia rebar
 “ Consilio firmata Dei, qui lege moveri
 “ Sidera, qui fruges diverso tempore nasci,
 “ Qui variam Phœben alieno jufferit igne
 “ Compleri, Solemque suo; porrexerit undis
 “ Littora; tellurem medio libraverit axe.”

CLAUD. in Ruf. lib. iii.

II. I proceed 2dly to consider the superintendence of God as displayed in a moral

* Oft have I doubted, whether power divine
 Direct this world with wisdom and design;

moral and religious view, in his dispensations and government, respecting the rational world; including the general state, œconomy, and conduct of mankind.

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And in this discussion the first great argument, that offers, is the general administration of the world in favour of virtue. Vice is not always punished here, nor virtue always rewarded; nor indeed ought it to be so: for then this world would be a state of rewards and punishments; and not, as it is, a state

Or all things rise, decay, recede, advance,
Cause and effect the random work of chance.
But when the frame of nature meets my mind,
It's various links harmoniously combined;
The bounds, that check the ocean's wild career,
The destined periods of the measured year;
The brightly-beaming day, the scowling night,
Succeeding darkness, and returning light:
My doubts are banish'd, 'gainst each vain surmise,
God stands reveal'd, all-mighty, and all-wise.
By Him the bounties of the earth are given,
He framed the laws, that rule the orbs of heaven:
He bade the ocean, keep its channell'd place,
He hung the well-poised world in empty space.

SERMON of trial and probation : and thus
III. would one of the clearest and strongest arguments in proof of a future state be taken away. But though there be wise reasons, why some virtuous men should be unhappy in this life, and some vicious men prosperous ; for this world not being a place of judgment, but a state of preparation, divine justice does not require, that every good or bad man should, according to his works, be respectively recompensed here : yet the wisdom, and goodness, and justice of God do require, that in general virtue should be rewarded, and sin punished ; and that in such degrees, and in such a manner, as shall lay all reasonable restraints on the lusts and passions of men, and proportionably promote and encourage the exertion of their virtues. How far the face of things about us tends to confirm this opinion, let us next inquire ; contenting ourselves, where demonstration cannot be had, with the highest degree of probability.

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It is impossible to parcel out by weight or admeasurement the quantity of good and evil, that falls out in this life to respective individuals ; so as demonstratively to ascertain the fact, that even in this world there is a considerable preponderation of happiness in favour of virtue : but as the truth of this opinion forms a very powerful argument, in proof of a wise and good presiding power ; I submit the following reflections in support of it. When we observe mankind in general, the wicked as well as the religious, *him that feareth God, and him that feareth Him not*, so anxious as they appear to be, that their children should pursue virtuous courses ; we must conclude such a general desire to have as general a motive : which is their happiness and prosperity in life. And though this motive, which to the temporalist is a leading one, be to the good and virtuous only secondary : its effect is in both instances the same ; forming an argument from universal consent, that accord-

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ing to the present dispensations of providence, or, if this mode of expression appear an assumption of the point in doubt, according to the present course of things, success even in this world is the consequence of a virtuous conduct.

In proof of this truth, permit me to refer the argument, in another shape, to the discrimination of every man's own judgment. Let us revolve in our minds a certain number of our friends and acquaintances, whom we know to be men of virtue; and an equal number, whom we know, or have great reason to believe, to be vicious characters: then let us reflect, whether the virtuous or vicious characters appear to enjoy the most happiness in themselves and their connections; and from such reflection concurrent opinion, I am persuaded, will confirm the truth of the assertion "that
" happiness, in the ordinary and general course of things, is even in this
" life the handmaid and attendant on
" virtue."

“ virtue.” And such general dispensation of things, in favour of virtue, is a demonstration of a super-intending providence, equally and infinitely wise and good.

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There was a sect of ancient philosophers, who carried this opinion so far; that, to obviate the argument against a wise and good presiding power, deduced from the permission and sufferance of evil, as happening indiscriminately to all men, they denied the reality of it. This caused them to adopt some extraordinary tenets, which led to wild and whimsical inferences. But both the tenets and inferences were less pernicious, and much nearer to truth, than those opposite doctrines; that, to exculpate providence from the apparent irregularities and inequalities in moral dispensations, excluded Him from having any concern in the government of the world: referring it to the management of an imaginary principle, which they

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stiled chance, and thought better calculated to preside in such a mixt and inexplicable state of things. For though it must be acknowledged, that there are evils in life, and that they occasionally happen to the virtuous, as well as the wicked: yet would it on nice examination be found, that those evils are less in degree, and in number fewer, than is generally supposed; and more frequently the consequences of human imprudence, than the querulous disposition of human nature will readily admit.

Scarcely indeed is there a more common subject of declamation and complaint, than the inequality observable in the temporal dispensations of providence. But giving something to self-love, which in our own eyes is apt to magnify our deservings above their real value; something to disappointment, which often sits heavier on our minds, than reason will justify; and something to that depravity of heart, which inclines us to
make

make a false estimate of our own happiness, from comparison with the apparent happiness and prosperity of others; we must acknowledge, there is a preponderation of happiness in this world, sufficient to prove the government of a wise and good providence: involving at the same time such a mixture of evil, in the various course of events, as clearly instructs us to look beyond this scene of things for an exact adjustment of rewards and punishments

In short from a fair and candid view of things about us, however discontent may magnify present dissatisfactions, intricacies into irregularities, trials into hardships, impunity into prosperity; it appears inconceivable, without admitting a secret restraint on actions or their effects by the immediate interposition of a Divine providence, but that the good would be far greater sufferers, than they are; and that society, if not dissolved, would be far more deranged and disquieted,

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quieted, than we experience it : considering the prevalence of corruption, the eagerness of rapine, the turbulence of ambition, the unruliness of passion, and the malignity of disappointment.

From the consideration of a general, let us next extend our enquiries to the doctrine of a particular, providence : in the admission of which the chief difficulty seems to lie in a narrow mode of conceiving of God, and inadequate terms of expression. We are apt to consider the care and management of the world, agreeably to our ideas of care and management, as a laborious operation : and the mode of expression, we use, contributes to inculcate such ideas. We speak of God's taking charge of the affairs of the world, of His administration of them, of His adjustment of causes and effects, and the like : terms, which we are forced to employ, for want of such as would better suit that infinite and incomprehensible mind ; which at once
glances

glances through time and nature, and with omnipotence of will directs, governs, and controls.

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Such opinion of the government of the universe, as a work of pains and labour, was I conceive an argument of additional weight to that already suggested; in inducing the Epicureans, a sect of philosophers considerable both for their learning and numbers, to imagine the government of the universe too troublesome, to engage the attention of the Deity. They considered Him, as by nature necessarily and perfectly happy, and therefore above investing himself with a charge; which to conduct with uniform and consistent regularity, they supposed, must occasion care and consideration, and of course detract from His felicity. The idea is elegantly described by the Latin poet; himself a zealous advocate for the doctrine, and the sect.

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Omnis * enim per se divùm natura necesse † 'st
 Immortali ævo summâ cum pace fruatur,
 Semota ab nostris rebus, sejunctaque longe ;
 Nam privata dolore omni, privata periclis,
 Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri,
 Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangitur Ira.

LUCRETIUS, lib. 1.

On this opinion, I have only to observe a narrowness of mind ; which could suppose the direction and management of so small a part of the unbounded works of creation, a care and trouble to its omnipotent Creator. Far be it however from man's presumption, to affect to

* The gods by fate and nature must enjoy
 Immortal life, and bliss without alloy ;
 Sequester'd far from earth, and earthly things,
 The threats of danger, and of pain the stings :
 In the perfection of their own high powers
 Supremely happy, they require not ours ;
 Our actions all indifferently regard,
 Hold up no scourge, and tender no reward.

† The word *necesse*, in this passage, seems to allude to FATE : a necessarian principle, which in the Epicurean system, controls even the gods themselves.

point

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point out in what manner, He directs and governs His innumerable works; of which this universe of ours is but a point: certainly not by toil and labour; nor by any means detracting from supreme felicity. He governs; as He created: and the sublime * description, given by Moses, of His creation of the world, will perhaps best suit his government of it too; effected by the influence of an energetic volition, unimpeded by difficulties, unincumbered by distraction.

To suppose every distribution of good and evil, of happiness and misery, by certain general laws to have been irreversibly ordained to take place in this life, when nature was first put in motion, is in effect to limit the operations of Him, who imposed those laws on na-

* The passage alluded to is noticed by Longinus, as an uncommon instance of the true sublime.

ture ;

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ture ; and by such restrictions in a degree to exclude Him from His own works : it is taking from Him every other, than a sustaining power. Whereas by referring such general succession of events to a concatenation of causes decreed at the formation of all things, the wisdom and goodness of God in particular instances, and as occasions present themselves, applying the established laws of nature to the benefit, comfort, and correction of individuals ; we learn to reconcile the particular dispensations of providence with the general course of nature. Thus we know, certain causes will produce certain effects : yet we see in the moral world varying effects often derived from an apparent similarity of causes. Infinite wisdom sees what effects in particular circumstances, and for particular, and wise, and good reasons ought to follow ; and those He directs to follow : and on this ground is founded the poet's reflection, which has been abused to false
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and pernicious inferences, that “ what-
 “ ever is, is right.” That is, whatever
 event takes place, it is the result of cer-
 tain secret causes; wisely modified and
 directed by the Almighty Governor of
 the world, so as to be the best result
 that could happen from the causes that
 produced it.

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Our eyes discover to us nothing, and
 from reflection we know little, of the se-
 cret springs, by which the occurrences
 of this life are moved. In asserting the
 particular dispensations of providence;
 we do not preclude their aspect to other
 objects and effects, than the simple one
 we particularly note. On the contrary,
 we may with good reason conclude, that
 all the dispensations of providence are
 so conducted, as to have a further influ-
 ence; than in any particular instance, and
 on the single individual, to which they
 may appear to us to be principally direct-
 ed. We may suppose each, like a link in
 the vast chain of nature's moral course,
 to

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to have respect to the great whole. For who can say, that the Author of nature cannot so manage both the natural, and moral course of things ; as to make the blessings and corrections, He shall will to individuals, harmonise with His general laws. And if no good reason can be produced in proof that He cannot do it, that is, if such act imply no contradiction ; we may justly conclude He does it : because such operation enlarges our ideas of His power, wisdom, and goodness ; of which the utmost reach of imagination will not enable us to think sufficiently high. Every day's experience informs us of escapes from dangers, deliverances from distress, the detection of secret sins so unexpected, so unassignable to any known cause, that we attribute them to the immediate interposition and interference of God : who must see and observe them, because He is always every where ; and whose energetic power, unsustained by which the course of nature would fail, what He sees

fees and observes, must direct and govern too.

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When men speak of the general laws of nature; they can only understand those general causes and effects, with which they are acquainted. Those, we are not to suppose, God will upon every light occasion suspend, or alter. But are there not, may there not be, hidden causes, which we cannot see; by which providence acts in his particular dispensations? Such in the moral world there must be. For the progress and direction of the passions are in different men combined with such a variety of adventitious circumstances; as seem to require from providence different degrees of encouragement, assistance, and correction: such different degrees, as cannot depend upon any general system, or course of things predetermined by God; and therefore infer the necessity of particular dispensations. And the moral course of things, so disposed and attempered, pro-

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duces that general harmony, which is experienced, and easily reconciled, by the admission of an interfering and interposing providence; every where and always present as He is, noting all things as He does, and universally energetic as our best conceptions of His nature represent Him.

In short to discard the belief of a particular providence, is the next step to throwing aside the belief of any providence whatever: for it must be almost immaterial to individuals, whether there be any providence, or not; if every thing be governed by predetermined laws. On such a supposition, where is the assistance, to which patient merit may apply? If one uniform tenor, without respect to particular persons, and particular cases, prevail in the operations of nature; distress has no where to look for comfort, the workings of the pious heart in prayer are inefficacious and vain.

Hence

Hence then it appears, that the denial of such a power to providence, in itself the height of presumption, leads to the lowest depths of desperation. For how must it mortify a thinking mind, for a moment to imagine ; that the Almighty, after having created the universe, and ordained laws for its general government, satisfied with having furnished it with inhabitants, and provided for their common support, sent them to succeed each other on this great stage ; exposed to innumerable evils, which it is not in their power to shun ; and deprived of the protection of that Being, who alone is able to shield us from them, or, what is more desirable, to convert them to our advantage. At that moment we cease to be encouraged with the lively hopes, that in our endeavours, if we deserve the Divine assistance, we shall enjoy it ; in our dangers, if we merit deliverance, it will be providentially vouchsafed us ; in distress, if virtue arm us, God will make the angry shaft of adversity, “ Telum
 F 2 “ imbelle

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 III.
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SERMON "imbelle sine ictu," fall harmless at
 III. our feet.

What hath been offered, establishing, as I have endeavoured to do, the doctrine of a Providence, particular as well as general, inculcates by practical consequence the Christian fortitude of trust. If the world be of God's creation, what He created with power, He must govern with exactness: and therefore we may rest assured, there must be a meaning in the permission, a propriety in the tendency of every event. On this persuasion let us repose with submissive and patient trust, that whatever incidents of affliction or surprize occur; they are founded in design, and their end is expedient. An unerring super-intendant ordains, an all-pervading eye observes, and omni-present power directs them. To that adorable power let us look up; assured, that though in this mixt state of things evil be unavoidable, that evil, God can and does attemper with appen-
 dages

dages of good, supplied by ſecret means ;
thoſe means conducted, with infinite
wiſdom and deſign, with every poſſible
attention to the deſerving.

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Pfalm xciv. 6.

O come let us worship and bow down ; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker : for He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture.

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IN evidence, that the world was originally made by a Being infinite in wisdom and power ; and that a power, no less perfect than that which made the world, directs, governs and upholds it in that harmony and regularity, which is so conspicuous through the whole range of created beings ; the arguments adduced have, I trust, been found to approach very near to demonstration : as a truth deducible from these doctrines,
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my next subject of enquiry is the obligation of religious worship.

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And in this investigation my design is first to consider at large the general proposition.

Secondly, to examine the principle, that lifts up the pious heart to Heaven in prayer.

And in the third and last place to evince the close connection, that God Almighty hath ordained between religion and the social duties: so close, that without the former, civil society could not subsist.

I. First, then as to the general obligation of religion. A capacity to discover that there is a God, who made and preserves us: and that we are not able to do the one or the other of ourselves, indispensably requires us to love, honour, and serve that Maker and Preserver in every instance

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and action of our lives. For as long as we regard existence as a blessing ; so long do we acknowledge ourselves indebted to the giver and preserver of life. Now as we are able to infer an obligation for a benefit received ; such sufficiency of knowledge in us, in regard to the benefits, we have from our great Creator received, is of itself a true and proper foundation for religious worship : and every creature capable of making such an inference, as every reasonable creature is, becomes therefore subjected to the duty of gratitude ; and from a conscious sense of gratitude to God flow the duties of religion. Thus conclusive is natural reason, in proving the necessity of religious worship among all beings, who possess a degree of intelligence equal to that of man.

And experience confirms that in fact, the propriety of which reason evidences to us in theory. For among all nations, be their notions more or less refined, religious

religious worship prevails. The most barbarous and uncivilised nations, as well antient as modern, if their state be thoroughly enquired into, we shall find had a religion, though sometimes a very depraved one; and offered up prayers, and made adorations, though the object of them has been a serpent, or a calf. Even the wretched barbarians, in the South Seas, whom the late discoveries of modern travellers have made known to us, though some of them almost without clothes, or houses, were none of them observed to be without their God.

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From a practice so universal it appears, that God has stamped an image of Himself on the human mind so deeply, that the greatest corruption of mankind has not been able entirely to erase it; that He has naturally inculcated the method of acknowledging Him the supreme cause of all things by prayer and adoration so strongly, as the lowest deprava-
tion

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tion of manners cannot absolutely abolish. And hence we may infer, that religion is a reasonable service, and a duty absolutely required of us : or why did God, who made us, and never acts in vain, imprint such a notion on the human mind ; if it be a matter of no consequence, and calculated for no use. But is it a matter of no consequence, to offer up our tribute of praise to that great fountain of goodness, from whom all our blessings flow ? Is it a matter of no consequence, to ascribe to Him the honour due unto His name : to pay just homage to Almighty God, the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings ? Or, is it not rather natural to conceive, that the infinitely great Creator of all things, when in such manifestation of His adorable perfections He designed the general happiness, also involved in it a display of his own glory : willing that they should be acknowledged and revered, loved and praised by intelligent creatures ? And such acknowledgment accordingly becomes

becomes a natural duty, and has the first moral claim to universal observance. For as honour in general is the homage paid to conspicuous excellencies, and especially to beneficent virtues : so religion, which is the highest honour, is appropriately due to God ; the most absolute Being in all perfections, and our sovereign Benefactor.

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Our homage can not indeed add to the greatness of the Almighty : it can contribute nothing to His glory. He also knows our necessities without our information ; He knows what we have need of, before we ask ; and how to impart to us good things, better than we to ask them : so great are our ideas of the majesty of an all-wise Almighty God. Yet to refuse that homage, would be a sinful omission in us : as it is a constant acknowledgment of the existence of a God, a continual memorial to us of our own littleness and dependence, and of His transcendent greatness and superintending

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superintending providence. We offer praises and thanksgiving to God for His mercies daily and hourly reached out to us; not that He can receive any additional honour from the praises, that dust and ashes can bestow; but to make such display of His honour and glory, as rational creatures are enabled to proclaim; to testify a grateful sense of His mercies reached out to us, and our own inability to render more: as a proof that we feel those mercies, and exercise the faculties, He hath conferred on us, in a becoming manner, and according to their proper use. We implore His protection in dangers, His deliverance out of afflictions, and His support against the force of temptations, not that we suppose Him ignorant of our weaknesses or our wants: but in pious attestation of our entire dependence on Him for every evil we avoid, and for every good we in this life enjoy; as a pledge of our belief in His omnipotence, of our reliance on His mercies, our resignation to the dispensations
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of His providence : and in testimony of a full assurance of His provident concern for His whole creation. SERMON
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Thus general is the sense of religion : and so universal the observance of it. And thus clearly doth it press on us, as an indispensable duty. The object of religious worship, it is acknowledged, is not always the same ; nor even the principle of it : some worship the sun, and some a crocodile ; some a good being, and some a bad one ; some through love, and some through fear. Yet such variety proves nothing against the general truth of religion, and the consequent obligation to observe it. On the contrary, like counterfeit coins, it tends to prove one of real value ; of value to be counterfeited. And if there be one religion, which shines with more extraordinary characters of truth, than the rest ; it forms a subject, of every thing on this side the grave most worthy of serious investigation :

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IV. } vestigation: for without religion we are
not men.

Reason indeed is generally supposed to be the distinguishing mark or characteristic of human nature: but perhaps religion is a much better. Reason, brutes have in common with mankind, and some brutes a considerable degree of it: or at least they possess something so much like reason, that it is difficult to draw the line of distinction between them. But no traits of religion do we discover in any of them. Religion, the knowledge and service of God, is the prerogative of man: it is the most reasonable and honourable employment, of which human nature is capable: it leads to an intercourse with God himself; which, while mankind acknowledge a God supreme, if they would acknowledge Him to any good purpose, the voice of reason and the impulse of nature, excite them to cultivate by acts of adoration and prayer.

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II. This subject of prayer hath exercised the pens both of poets and philosophers in the the heathen world. And amongst the inspired writers the prince and poet of Israel is most frequent in his exhortations to it : and his expressions always mark the fervour of an interested heart. “ O Thou, that hearest prayer, ‘ says he’ ; to thee shall all flesh come.” It is indeed a duty so universal ; that all mankind with an unforced assent agree in the observance of it. Let us then, as was proposed in the second place, with some minuteness enter into the principle of a duty, that in every age and country hath obtained so universal observance.

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In the common intercourse of life between man and man, between superiours and inferiours, it will often happen that favours are conferred ; which those, on whom they are conferred, have not ability to repay. Yet some return the common principles of justice require, and prompt the person who receives them

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them to make. What return then shall extreme impotence render ; and the benefactor's knowledge of that impotence demand ? What, but the tribute of a grateful mind. The same reasoning will apply to the Deity ; only in an infinitely higher degree : as infinitely higher, as the blessings of creation and preservation are above those accidental enjoyments, that depend on them. And such affection of the mind, as mankind feels for those inestimable blessings, naturally produces that glow of gratitude ; which the enraptured heart pours out in the effusions of pious praise. Hence is deducible the duty of prayer : which resting on the doctrine of a particular providence, that doctrine in my last discourse I particularly applied myself to establish : intending, under the present article of enquiry, a more particular discussion of the duty resulting from it.

Man feels a thousand wants, which he cannot of himself supply ; he foresees dangers,

dangers, which he knows not how to shun; he finds himself involved in difficulties, from which he perceives all human art and power incompetent to relieve him. In this emergency, nature, that in indelible characters hath graven the existence of God on the human heart, teaches him likewise the use of that innate knowledge, by secret admonitions to invoke his Creator's aid. If the former notion be natural to the human mind, and what is universal must be so; the latter, which is only the application of the former, must be so too. Those prayers, suggested by the impulse of nature in short ejaculations, the exercise of reason afterward matured into form, with length and expressive solemnity: and, from the use of private votaries, they became extended to public assemblies. And such public celebration of divine worship, more or less simple; as the respective people are more or less civilised, or rude, hath extended as far as the empire of reason prevails,

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Now this duty of prayer, so natural to the human mind, and by communities so universally practised, is supported on the reality of a particular providence. For if at the time, the world was made, the laws of nature were given; general, invariable laws, which nature was bound to pursue; the Deity enthroned in majesty sublime, aloof as it were from his own works, or at most an unactive spectator of them, never interposing his power through second causes, to divert evil, to inflict correction, to save and to destroy; on what ground should we address the throne of heaven, for protection in time of danger, for support amidst temptations, or in times of distress for deliverance out of trouble: subjects, which, while we live in the world, must form a part of our daily prayers? The world under such circumstances of general government, where would be the use of prayer? And without the use, how shall we account for the apparent universality of it? On supposition that every

every distribution of good and evil, of happiness and misery, is irreversibly ordained to take place in this life, according to certain general laws imposed on nature, which in no instance whatever admit of any alteration in our favour: what futility, what weakness, I had almost said what folly were it, to throw up any particular petition to the Almighty for any occasional blessing, we may stand most in need of; which, to our prayers, though ever so ardent and importunate, on the supposed exclusion of a particular providence, we know will not, cannot be granted.

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Such uncomfortable consequences as these, the admission of a providence acting every where, and, if it act any where, it must act every where, pervading every minutest particle in nature, ever noting and directing every movement of the moral world, effectually precludes. This important, exhilarating truth communicates encouragement to virtuous pursuits,

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adds vigour to good endeavours, beams comfort to distress; and awes the front of profligacy with a control superior to the menace of racks and tortures, or the check of worldly shame.

And apart from the immediate blessings, prayer draws down on the relying votary, the practice of it is calculated to improve the mind in virtue; exalting human nature by communications with the Divine. It habituates us to look up to God, as the author of all good, infuses the love of Him in our hearts, and imprints the consciousness of his perpetual presence on our minds: which is the most efficacious preservative against the admittance of impure thoughts, and the perpetration of flagitious actions. Thus to contemplate the Deity, and hold communion with him in the manner reason directs, is using our intellectual faculties, as to the highest reach, so to the truest purpose of them. It would be difficult to assign any other good, pointedly

tedly and essentially good, use of them; and it is impossible to assign a better.

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III. To support the arguments already offered in proof of the obligation of religion on all beings possess of intellectual powers equal to those of man; I proceed in the third and last place to observe the connection, that God Almighty hath ordained between the acknowledgment of Him, expressed in the duties of religion; and the good order of society, and comforts of life from thence resulting, the practice of the social and relative duties.

Of this truth the proof must rest chiefly on historical representation: and to this we may appeal in evidence, that where there has been found little sense of God and religion, or where the notions of religion have been greatly debased and corrupted; there the manners of the people have been most savage and brutish. On the contrary, where the justest and most lively sense of a Deity

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and providence prevailed ; there the social and relative virtues have most flourished, the most worthy and generous actions have been performed, and the manners have been ever the most humane and civilised. This is so clear and acknowledged a truth, and so forcibly struck a great Heathen, that “ if piety towards God were removed, he declares it his opinion, that there would be an end of all fidelity, of the bonds of all human society, and even of justice itself, the sum and comprehension of all moral virtues.”* The reflection is worthy of a Christian philosopher : and, the question properly stated, the soundest divinity would with the great Roman decide on it.

The question is not, whether a particular thoughtful speculatist may not see

* *Atque haud scio an, pietate adversus Deos sublata, fides etiam, et societas humani generis, et una excellentissima virtus justitia, tollatur.*

Cic. de Nat. Deor. Lib. 1.

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the fitness of many moral actions, and perform them accordingly; without regard to any other consideration, without reflecting on a presiding, governing, remunerating, chastising power: though even on this restricted statement of the case, an impartial observer of human nature would not hesitate to declare in the negative. But the subject of enquiry is; whether, uninfluenced by the apprehension, of something distinct from this principle of mere fitness or congruity of actions to the nature of things, of some being, on whom the existence of things themselves, and consequently their natures, and the congruity of one to another, depend, the generality of men could ever possess such firm notions of good and evil, as would constitute a sufficient principle of restraint from the one, and impulse to the other. And this question is no sooner asked, than the answer follows: that most assuredly the love and dread of that SOMETHING, by whose power the things themselves exist, and

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by whose will the congruity of them to one another was fixed, is that principle ; which acting uniformly, and universally, forcibly and clearly too, influences the bulk of mankind by the powerful motives of hope and fear.

And the knowledge we have of the human mind, derived from lessons of experience, instructs us ; that without such belief of a supreme intelligent Being, on whom the nature of things depends, who has a power of exacting from all free agents a conformity of conduct to that law of nature, which He has established, and will some way or other take cognizance of them ; or, in a shorter form of words, without religion, such a law, as is supposed to arise merely from the fitness of things, would have but very little influence. It would be as insufficient and unimpressive to the greatest part of mankind ; as a human law, without a sanction annexed to it,

or

or the apprehension of a magistrate to put it in execution.

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It is possible that some men may possess such social benevolence, and such generous sentiments of public good, as to be a law to themselves; and at the same time be endowed with such distinguishing judgment and acuteness of mind, as may enable them clearly to see, and voluntarily to act, as the best human laws would direct them. But what is this to the bulk of mankind? We are in the present argument to take human nature as it generally is, and to consider what sort of belief or persuasion has the most prevalent and universal influence over it: and if we do so, we shall find that the rejection of religion, and its leading principles, is inconsistent with a perfect morality on two accounts.

First, if there be no belief of a God, and His presiding power, nor any expectation from that invisible Being of
future

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future rewards and punishments, there cannot be in the conception of common sense, any sufficient bond of morality between man and man. And secondly, if there be really a God, that has any concern with us, or for us; a complete morality must necessarily respect Him, as well as our intercourse with one another.

First, if indeed the actions of men were directed by instinct, and by instinct only, like the actions of brutes; and had no dependence on any invisible principle in the mind; morality would in that case be nothing else than living according to that natural instinct: nor would any kind of faith or belief be necessary. But this is not the morality of beings endued with understanding, and freedom of will; nor is it what gives them such consciousness of the merit or demerit of their own actions, as is capable of raising pleasure or dissatisfaction within themselves, on account of them. It is
a circum-

a circumstance or consideration of a much higher nature, that acts thus: requiring reason and reflection, and some attention to things past and future, as well as the present; and supposing consequently a belief of something invisible, by which we are moved to a rational course of acting. And such consideration further implies a comparison of actions with some antecedent rule or law, for the observance or transgression of which we inwardly judge ourselves rewardable by, or accountable to, that superiour Being; who is, by some means we cannot comprehend, as conscious of what we do, as we are ourselves. It is this principle; which, as in one point of view we have found it move on stronger hinges, than moral fitness and the congruity of things, is in another that, which distinguishes reason from mere instinct, ranks mankind above the brute creation, and renders them accountable beings.

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Consider

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Consider secondly, the force of self-love: and that alone will be found of tendency sufficient to subvert the rectitude of moral actions; did they not depend on the acknowledgment of principles remote from sensation, and more powerful than mutual convenience. It is the secret sense we feel of an obligation to the steady performance of certain actions, founded on the belief of an intelligent legislator, who is also an inspector of our behaviour; which gives efficacious impulse to them. For define virtue in what manner we please; let it be the love of order, harmony, or proportion of mind; let it be a habit or temper of living agreeably to the perfection of nature, or of acting for the good of the whole human race, of which we are but a part; call it as we may, by whatever specious name: yet the question still recurs; who constituted this order of things: who first effected this harmony or proportion: or, who is the author of this course of things, which we

we call the course of nature? for He must be the ultimate legislator: and this law of nature, this rule of morality, which we are taught to observe, must be His will; directed by His supreme authority; and must therefore in the first instance respect Him.

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Under such persuasion, it is his influential power, that actuates us in our determinations, and the execution of them: and not the order, fitness, and propriety of the things themselves. Without the powerful co-operation of this principle, how weak would be the influence of moral considerations! If, by an act of private injury, we could indulge a present gratification; easily would the plea of self-indulgence break through the cobweb texture of exact propriety: and weak would be the voice of mutual convenience; whenever self-interest interfered. It is conscience alone, that can combat temptations; and triumph over the strong principle of self-love, in whatever shape it may assault us. And conscience is solely
founded.

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founded on a conscioufness of a supreme intelligent Being, the framer of those laws of morality ; and of our accountableness to Him for the breach of them. And naturally and closely united with our belief of such a divine existence is the opinion or persuasion, that this supreme Being is a witness of what we do even in our most secret recesses ; and considers our actions with favour or displeasure : for without this consideration, it would be difficult to conceive, how our own consciences should be affected with shame or satisfaction, not dependent on the estimation of the world, but entirely our own : a shame, though men applaud us, when we do ill ; and a satisfaction, though men censure us for worthy actions.

These effects of conscience imply a belief of the intimate and constant presence of one, whose favour or displeasure is more to be regarded, than any outward consideration. And it hence follows,

lows, that whatever opinion sets us loose from the restraint of conscience, will render our justice, fidelity, gratitude, and all other virtues respecting our fellow creatures very precarious: and that therefore an avowed disregard of religion, and its influence, must be necessarily destructive of that morality, which regards our intercourse with one another; and subversive of civil society.

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Such is the natural relation of religion to morality; of such importance to this is that, in force and use. What therefore God hath connected and joined together, not all the casuistry and device of man can put asunder. Morality cannot be compleat and perfect, without a discharge of what is due to, without a regulation of behaviour, suiting and becoming, every relation, in which we stand to every being; the duty we owe, rising in exigence proportionate to the excellence of the being, to whom we owe it. The first, the most distinguished, part of
relative

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relative duty therefore must be in proper acts of devout homage to that first and supreme Being; from whom we derive all that we possess, even the principle, that teaches us this duty, the power of reason itself: and those acts of homage constitute religion.

With such irresistible light doth reason illustrate the general obligation of religious duties. *Though heaven and earth pass away*; religion, whatever the weak and the vain may affect to think of it, is a service, that will continue for ever. It is the employment of superior beings; and will continue, when this perishable globe of ours shall be no more. There may be those, their time devoted to pleasure, or engaged by business, who affect surprise; that any should be found so weak, as to trouble themselves about its doctrines, or take a serious part in its pretensions. But if there be a God; religion is a serious thing. And if its pretensions be examined with becoming seriousness,

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serioufness, and its merits without prejudice decided on; we shall find, that to believe its doctrines, and to practice its precepts aright, is the wisest thing, that can engage a wise man's attention; and the noblest principle, that can influence his conduct. Gratitude enjoins the observance of it as a duty; and the object renders it the first and great duty. Hope warmly interests good men in its favour: and just apprehension should teach all men with reverence to regard it. The wit and ingenuity of man may have been employed against this, and that, and every mode of religion; which tends to restrain the appetites and inclinations of mankind. But we may defy the wit, and ingenuity, and malice of human nature, to produce a single argument; in disproof of the obligation of religion on all beings, possess of a degree of intelligence equal to that of man.

Knaves may detest, and fools deride,
the wise man will always revere, it. Cre-

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ating satisfaction, it sanctifies the enjoyments of life : inspiring fortitude, it renders the evils of life supportable ; and opens the amplest prospect of fair and reasonable hopes. Let us hold it fast : to the fastidious sneer, and the calumnious cavil, let no false respect for politeness, or even greatness itself, deter us from *giving an answer*. And that we may at all times, and on all occasions, be ready with our best exertions to defend its sacred truths, and to evince them in our lives ; May God of His infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Isaiah lix. 9.

*We wait for light ; but behold obscurity :
for brightness, but we walk in dark-
ness.*

THE prophet, in the beginning of SERMON
V. this chapter, exclaims against the vices of his people ; and laments their deplorable depravation of manners, immersed as they were in the darkness of ignorance and sin. Thence stretching forward his anxious eye to the expected coming of the Messiah, destined to remove the cloud that veiled their understanding, *we wait*, says he, *for light, but still behold obscurity* ; expectant of brightness, we continue to walk in the devious

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path of error and sin. At length, his mind as it were exulting in a full prospect of that day, when *the sun of righteousness shall arise, and the redeemer appear in Zion*; in the spirit of prophecy he pronounces, that the extended world from east to west shall acknowledge his sway. *So shall they fear, says he, the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun: when the enemy shall come up like a flood; the spirit of the Lord shall set up a standard against him. And the redeemer shall come to Sion; and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob.*

Something, similar to this reflection of the prophet, strikes us in the second Alcibiades of Plato: in which Socrates informs his disciple, that they were to wait for a teacher, who would instruct them more perfectly in the duties of religion. This remarkable passage has by an elegant writer * of our own nation

* Mr. Addison.

been made the subject of criticism : and other commentators have concurred with him, in supposing it to bear some allusion to that *life and immortality*, which Jesus Christ afterwards *brought to light through his gospel*. Be that as it may ; considering the obscurity and perplexity, with which the philosopher expresses himself on the subject of prayer, I think it clearly inferrible from thence, that he conceived the light of nature, or the bare apprehension of reason, insufficient to direct mankind fully and satisfactorily in that great important duty : so great and important in that wise heathen's opinion, as to require more information than the world at that time possessed.

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In accommodation to minds of a certain complection, on which the authority of an eminent heathen, I know not by what kind of perverseness, has more weight than that of writers, whom we justly stile DIVINE ; of the passage, to which I have above alluded, I will

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take occasion to enter into a more minute discussion. *Αναγκασιον ουν εστι περιμανειν, εως αν τις μαθη ως δει προς Θεου και προς ανθρωπου; διαχεισθαι.* * Socrates must from hence either mean to insinuate; that we were to wait for the future appearance of a person, to instruct mankind in the duty of religion, of more general knowledge, higher natural abilities, and greater reach of understanding, than himself, or any one, who had appeared before him, possessed: or, that we must wait for some person, who should for that purpose be by God particularly delegated.

In respect to his own natural abilities, and reach of understanding; it is pretty clear, our philosopher did not think very meanly of himself. Many of his contemporaries objected to him the charge of vanity: and one in particular termed him, “ of the few good men, the best;

* Wherefore we must be forced to wait till some one shall instruct us, how we ought to conduct ourselves towards the Gods and men.

“ and

“ and of many vain ones, the vain-
 “ est.” * Notwithstanding the affected
 humility of that celebrated acknowledg-
 ment, “ that all he knew, was, that he
 “ knew nothing :” confident as he ever
 appeared in the rectitude of his own opi-
 nions, and obstinate in maintaining them,
 he certainly entertained no contemptible
 notion of his own superiour wisdom.
 And the ignorance he confessed, seems
 only to have been a trap to gain ap-
 plause : or at most it was no other than
 an ignorance of particular subjects, of
 that physical knowledge, of which the
 philosophers used to boast themselves ;
 such as the nature of the Gods, the
 principles of things, &c. And accord-
 ingly the consequence, that the sophists,
 or philosophers, assumed from their af-
 fected science in those studies, he deriso-
 rily contrasted by an avowed ignorance
 of them : quitted those vain, unsatisfac-

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* Σωκρατες ανδρων βελτιστ' ολιγων, πολλων δε
 ματαιοταθ'—

SERMON V. tory subjects of investigation, and confined
 his philosophical disquisitions to ethics.

Competent as he was to judge of the powers of the human mind, and reasoning from analogy, he could have little ground to expect, or even hope; that the bare strength of unassisted reason would in any individual ever reach that perfection of knowledge, which should be able to investigate the nature of God, and to ascertain the duties of man from such investigation resulting. He saw, what human reason from such researches had effected; and from thence judged, what it could do. We must therefore conclude, that he did not expect a man of that very superiour reach of understanding; which should be able, from the natural powers of human reason, to set mankind aright in their knowledge of God, and the immediate duties that relate to Him.

What then did he expect, what did he teach his disciple to look for? Plainly
 ly

ly for a person endowed with powers of mind, enlarged beyond the ordinary stretch of human capacity; and delegated to the office of instructing mankind in their immediate duty to God. And as such qualification of course involved a more perfect knowledge of the Deity, than philosophy had ever taught; so likewise did it imply a more perfect practice of the duties immediately flowing from our relation to Him, than mankind had before been accustomed to observe. And such designation, and such knowledge, characterized a person charged with a divine revelation.

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I do not call to my assistance in this argument the foreknowledge of events, to which this philosopher occasionally made pretensions; and suppose his observation, on the reasonable expectation of a future instructor, a prophecy. I press it no further than in proof, that the wise heathen was convinced of the necessity of a revelation: and we may
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be bold to fet the opinion of the man, whom antiquity proclaimed the wifeft of mankind, againft all that the philofophic pride of this, or any other age, hath faid or written againft it. And fuch the opinion of Socrates, is very reconcilable with the general notions of prophecies, miracles, and myfteries; to which all nations have occasionally pretended, and attributed them to the operation of their Gods: and therefore is liable to no objection, on account of the fupposed fingularity of it.

From this eminent character of antiquity, let us defcend to one of more modern date: from whom I have to offer an argument, though of a different nature, in point and purpofe the fame: I mean the learned and able author of the “Religion of Nature delineated.” It is an argument, his own labours fupply; and his own acknowledgment fupports it. “Here, ‘fays that able writer, fpeaking of the immortality of the foul,’ I begin
“ gin

“ gin to be very sensible, how much I SERMON
 “ want a guide. But as the religion of V.
 “ nature is my theme, I must at pre-
 “ sent content myself with that light,
 “ which nature affords.”* And in-
 deed the necessity of such a guide, as he
 alludes to, his laborious investigation of
 the subject, on which he writes, abun-
 dantly evinces. For if a knowledge of
 the divine nature, and man’s duty to God
 from thence resulting, were necessary to
 human happiness; and such a course of
 argument, as he pursues, were the only
 means natural reason pointed out for at-
 taining to it: so few are capable of be-
 ing instructed by so abstruse a method,
 as renders evident the further want of
 some more compendious, clear, and rea-
 dy means of communicating it; and
 demonstrates, that a revelation was ne-
 cessary for the general instruction of
 mankind.

* Wollaston’s Relig. of Nat. sect. 9.

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On the nature of the Deity, the present state of man, and the duties incumbent on him, as deduced from the principles of cultivated reason, perhaps no writer ever thought so well, or so satisfactorily addressed himself to the understanding, as Wollaston. But why hath he, or many other moderns that might be cited, thought and written of the religion of nature so much better, than the antients have done : except that they had a light, which those wanted ; the light, that christianity hath holden out to them : with which many have emblazed their idol, reason ; overlooking, like the votaries of the moon, the great source from whence all its light is derived ? Look into the writings of the antients, and see how far their abilities in every branch of literature, that doth not depend on experiments, mock the feeble efforts of later ages to excel, or rival them ; and then let those, who can, produce a reason, why the moderns have written so
much

much better on the subjects of morality and religion, than the antients have done, except the reason I have assigned. SERMON
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In my former discourses, I endeavoured to evince the creative, and preserving power of God; and to deduce from thence, the obligation of religion on all beings possessing intellectual faculties in a degree equal to that of man. The short question now before us is, whether the light of natural reason be sufficient to instruct us in the duties of religion; or a more express revelation of God's will in those particulars be necessary.

And in this discussion, our first object of enquiry will be, how far, on a full and fair investigation of the powers of reason, uncultivated by science, and common to mankind, they are calculated to lead us to that perfect knowledge of God; which is necessary to produce a corresponding knowledge of the duties
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we owe Him ; such a firm undoubting knowledge, as shall have a proper influence on our practice.

I propose in the second place, to confirm the result of such enquiry ; by evincing from facts and experience, how far unassisted reason hath gone in promoting divine knowledge, and religious practice, among the characters most reputed for wisdom in the heathen world.

And in conclusion, we shall thirdly find it, from those enquiries, follow ; that the best and purest system of religion, which unassisted reason can frame, will be defective in perspicuity, efficacy, and universality.

I. For the more clear elucidation of the argument I am now pursuing, it may be necessary to explain the terms. By the religion attainable by the powers of reason, is understood natural religion : a term used in distinction from
 revelation.

revelation. And by NATURAL RELIGION I consequently understand, not a sense of religious duty stamped upon the human mind, and judging with innate discrimination of right and wrong: for, in this acceptation of the terms, the sense of religious duty would be general and uniform, however the practice was. But the terms, in my conception of them, denote an obligation of duty, arising from our relation to our Creator, to which the mind is supposed to give an unerring assent; thereto induced by a natural aptitude, and congruity of our ideas to the divine nature and attributes. And thus considered, the mind must perfectly comprehend the nature of the object, and ground of that relation, from whence those duties flow.

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In what degree of perfection the mind might originally have come out of the hands of its Creator, how clear in its decisions of right and wrong, how competent to judge of moral relations, to
fway

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 fway, and direct, our actions ; while conscience assisted as a faithful monitor, unbiaſſed by prejudice, not warped by bad example ; is a matter of too much diſputation, thereon to build an argument. With whatever readineſs of mind I may aſſent to the doctrine of primæval perfection ; * I mean not to argue from it, as a fact. We are to conſider the powers of the human mind as we now find them, and as known experience from hiſtory repreſents them.

From the creative and preſerving power of God, it has been already proved, that all religious duties flow : the mind therefore muſt be perfectly clear in its conception of thoſe truths, in order perfectly to aſcertain the duties that reſult from them. How far competent natural reaſon, that is, reaſon in its uncultivated, unimproved ſtate, reaſon operating

* Vid. Concio de Statu Paradifiaco.

on the mind in the mass of mankind, is to the discovery and comprehension of those two great and fundamental truths, on which hinge all the duties of religion; the train of reasoning already used on those subjects will clearly evince. And while it is demonstrable, that without a full, and clear, and comprehensive knowledge of those fundamental doctrines, it is impossible to know the duties that result from them: it will follow, that a shorter, and easier method of inculcating the knowledge of those doctrines, is necessary to a general comprehension of the duties so resulting; as a clear comprehension of the duties, is necessary to the practice of them.

With regard to the existence of the Deity, I would not have it understood, as from hence collected; that this momentous doctrine, the foundation of all religion, is absolutely undiscoverable by human reason: conscious as I am of the rational evidence, by which it may be

I demonstrated

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demonstrated. But the general prevalence of assent to this great truth, in all ages of the world, hath, I conceive, been rather owing to an innate idea of such an existence, than a conviction of it by reason and argument. It may with certainty be affirmed, that the common capacity of mankind, is not capable of making this discovery by the mere force of reason: because it is only to be made in the use of such abstracted ideas, and such abstruse reasoning and manner of deduction, as is far beyond the reach and powers of mind, observable in the generality of men. And it would be unnecessary to repeat the arguments, that have been already produced in proof of that doctrine; or to offer such others, as might be proposed; to evince, that the plainest arguments of conviction, of which the nature of the subject is capable, it is above the level of an ordinary capacity, to frame, or even to comprehend the process and force of them.

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The same conclusion is equally in proof, respecting the governing and presiding power of the Deity. Yet it must also, in regard to this doctrine, be acknowledged; that there are topics in great variety, which, if properly attended to, and by the inquisitive and cultivated mind pursued, afford ample conviction of the reality of a divine providence. And the evidence, which such arguments carry with them, has obtained the assent of the wisest, the most learned, and the best men; among those, who possessed not the advantages of revelation. But they are not arguments, that can be pursued by the generality of mankind: they are not so obvious, so short, and clear; as to stamp that conviction on the rude, unlettered, vulgar mind; which vulgar minds require. The difficulties of reducing the proof of this great truth to any demonstrative and scientific evidence are such, as not only exceed the utmost reach of capacity in the illiterate multitude; but such, as

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 lie not very level to those even of penetration and learning, who may not have accustomed themselves to investigations and studies of that kind.

Under such disadvantages, well might the gross of mankind, whole countries, run into wild idolatries and vain conceits : trembling under ideal apprehensions of evil, and mistaking the fountain of all good. Hence prostrations that degraded, and pollutions that depraved human nature : hence the libidinous rites instituted in honour of the Gods, whose nature and whose pleasures their grovling votaries held of a piece with their own : and hence the practisers of every vice were taught to justify their conduct by the example of some of their Gods : hence the blind dread of offended powers, and altars stained with human blood, to avert the effects of divine displeasure : and hence, in fine, the veriest works of Hell, done under a blind pretence of pleasing Heaven.

Indeed

Indeed what better effect could mere, SERMON
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 unassisted, human reason have been expected to produce in the world : indecisive and unsatisfactory as its powers have, on the most accurate investigation of them, been found ; when employed on those elevated subjects, the nature of the Deity, and the duties of man resulting from his relation to Him ? Nor is such light incompetent to direct the mass of mankind only, the ignorant and vulgar, in their duty to the Deity ; but even the wise and learned, who had no better guide, those who had made the acquisition of knowledge the business of their lives ; even those men we shall find confirming the result of the preceding enquiry : as I proposed in the second place to exemplify, and from facts and experience to evince, how far they in their respective ages went, in promoting divine knowledge, and religious practice.

II. The first great authority I will cite, was Anaxagoras ; who appears to

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have been the first materialist on record in the world. He supposed matter to have been self-existent, a rude chaotic mass: from whence he raises a sublimated principle, which he stiles Intelligence, who fought this stubborn mass; and the issue of the conflict was the fair frame and order of things, which we behold. From such an idea of the Supreme Being, we may expect a consistent notion of the duties of religion. And so it was: as may be collected from his answer to a very important question, and much to the purpose of our present investigation. The question was, “for what purpose man was created?” and our wise man’s answer was, “to contemplate the Sun, Moon, and Heavens.” Vain, futile philosopher! And is this the vast extent, to which reason will soar? Ask the poor unlettered disciple of Christ the question; and he will return a very different answer. He will tell thee, man was made, to proclaim his great Creator’s praise; with

with heart-felt raptures to adore that power and goodness, which called him into existence ; to endeavour in his proper station, by an interested discharge of the social and relative duties, to contribute to the general happiness of the creation, to watch and to subdue each irregular start of passion, to purify and fit the soul for a state of higher bliss.

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Examine the notions of Aristippus, and the Cyrenaic sect, concerning the Deity : and what do they tend to inculcate ; but principles of Atheism, and polytheistic practice : an accommodating creed, without any influence on our life and actions : no conception of benefits received from God, nor of duties on the part of man exacted in acknowledgment of them. They had no general line of conduct : but each was ready with quaint apothegms * to defend

* Habeo Laida ; non habeor a Laide.

Vid. Cic. in Epist. et 2. de Fin.

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the practices, to which inclination respectively led him. Each was a law unto himself; gluttonous, licentious, ostentatious or mean, as they felt themselves individually by humour, habit, and disposition addicted.

Aristotle, than whom the schools of philosophy never boasted a more nice enquirer into the nature of things, acknowledged indeed the immateriality of the Divine Being, and his providence too; but limited that providence to the charge of the cœlestial bodies, which he supposed by sympathy to influence and direct the course of the world, we inhabit: an idea this, which removes the Deity at a distance from us; and is therefore a principle ill-calculated, whereon to ground religious duties. *

Plato caught a glimmering of light from the father of moral philosophy.

* Vid. Diog. Laert. Vit. Philosoph.

He assigned the direction of human affairs immediately to the care of the Gods : and seemed to have a more adequate conception of the nature of the Deity, of the human mind, and other truths connected with those sublime subjects, even than the inquisitive Aristotle himself. But he had travelled into Ægypt in quest of knowledge : might there have gleaned some scattered fragments of traditional truths, which the Jews in their long commoration in that country had left behind them ; and derived the superiour illumination of his mind from a stronger light, than unassisted reason affords.

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What shall we say of Socrates ? That he conceived an idea of the unity of the Deity : whom he insulted by a weak adherence to a ridiculous system of polytheism.

I will not rake farther into the follies and extravagances of a number of other sages ;

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sages; who took upon them the arduous task of instructing mankind in the knowledge of God, the nature of the human mind, and the duties of life from the relation of man to his creator arising. The preceding reflections will sufficiently evince this resulting truth: that the natural powers of the uninformed mind are not competent to that clear comprehension of God and providence; which is necessary to establish such conviction, as shall produce amongst mankind a uniform and consistent practice of religious duties.

This has been proved on the incontrovertible authority of fact and experience, in the varying and doubtful opinions, not of the rude illiterate vulgar; nor yet of chiefs and statesmen, whose minds may have been supposed too much engaged in scenes of active life, to have allowed leisure for sober speculative pursuits; but of those learned and best-informed characters, who had sacrificed
 all

all worldly avocations to the study of wisdom, and made the acquisition of knowledge not only the chief, but the sole business of their lives. SERMON
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III. But supposing the opinions of philosophic men to have been more uniform and consistent, than we have found them : still a religion deduced from them would want, as was observed in the third and last place, perspicuity, efficacy, and universality.

I. It must want perspicuity ; consisting, as it has been shewn, in a long train of abstract reasoning : which to different persons would appear more or less obvious, as individuals are more or less perspicacious, apprehensive, and acute. Those arguments likewise would be always liable to misconceptions and misconstruction ; and diffidence in opinion would produce diversity in practice. The fundamental truths of religion must be plain and clear : a direct declaration of facts,

SERMON facts, not supported by abstruse reason-
 V. ing; but by, what would constitute a
 much firmer foundation, a direct appeal
 to the senses in the performance of mi-
 racles. The doctrine, in this case pro-
 posed to be believed, is a plain assertion:
 and my assent is grounded on what I feel,
 or hear, or see. Thus, if our reason can
 comprehend, that facts may be as they
 are represented; if our senses be con-
 vinced, that they are so; this is all
 the satisfaction, the mind can require:
 and this is a conviction suited to every
 mind.

II. In respect to its efficacy, as the
 doctrines, on which such a religion rests,
 must consist of very disputable points,
 and doubtful disquisitions: they would
 not carry with them conviction strong
 enough to influence the practice of those,
 to whom they are addressed; scarcely
 of those, who themselves might propose
 them. They might believe them: but
 belief and conviction are very different
 principles,

principles, and will be found on practice to have very different effects. Else the great heathen philosopher, above alluded to, at the awful hour of dissolution, when he was going to meet that ineffably great and glorious Existence, whom his conception had figured to him as the Creator and Preserver of Heaven and Earth, would not have ventured to insult Him with neglect; and, in weak and servile compliance with his country's silly superstitions, direct a sacrifice to be offered to an imaginary individual of a ridiculous polytheistic tribe. Would a converted christian, under the same circumstance of prejudice in favour of his country's ceremonious rites, at such awful period have been induced by any consideration to trample on the cross of Christ? This is not a question of speculation; the affirmative of which on one side is as good, as the negative on the other: we can produce facts and experience in a hundred instances, to prove he would not.

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III. And

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III. And lastly, such a religion must want universality : for it is a religion calculated not for the generality of mankind, but for a nation of philosophers. For those philosophers, were they ever so thoroughly persuaded of the truth of it themselves, could not explain it to the ignorant multitude : they could never bring those arduous doctrines of refined speculation to a level with rude uncultivated minds. And though, from the reputation of their wisdom and knowledge, they should possess sufficient influence with the vulgar, to obtain a tacit consent to the doctrines they taught : as they could propose them with no other force, than merely the weight of their own private opinions ; they could be supposed to have little influence on the lives and morals of those, to whose inferiour understandings they were addressed. Stooping with pliant minds to their opinions, some might believe ; others would doubt ; and, as such a religion must depend on deductions of reason,
others

others again would form different conclusions. Self-love and self-satisfaction, under the guidance of natural inclination, would individually communicate different appearances to doctrines of mere opinion: and scarcely one single point of duty would be received with such concurrent confidence and common assent; as to influence practice, against present interest, the sollicitation of pleasure, the indulgence of ease.

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But if, after all that has been urged, we are still to be told, “that a wise and good God cannot impose on mankind any thing relating to religion, that may not be discovered by the human mind without the assistance of *foreign* instruction, or that is not immediately founded in the nature of things:” * having shewn, from the greatest authorities in the most polished parts of the ancient world, that the case is otherwise; that certain duties

* Christianity as old as the Creation.

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are required of mankind, founded on doctrines and relations, which natural reason does not clearly make known: I might ask, in turn, in what period of the world it was generally otherwise; when those characters existed, who, by the natural powers of the mind, discovered the doctrines and duties of pure religion? And I know but one satisfactory reply that could be made; which would be, by confronting historical evidence with history.

There is an antient history, that informs us of the primæval state of man: when he lived in perfect innocence and happiness. In that state indeed he must have been possessed of a perfect knowledge of his duty, “without any foreign instruction.” For without knowing it, he could not perform it: without performing it, he could not have been perfectly innocent: and unless perfectly innocent, he could not have been perfectly happy. Thus exactly consonant with the sentiment,

ment, which from the lip of scepticism I have just cited, do we find this very antient history describe the primitive state and condition of mankind. Agreeable to it, God is represented as imposing on man no duty, of which he did not know and comprehend the force.

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The account of human nature and human manners, which that history supplies, informs us, that *though God created man perfect, he had found out many devices.* That is, that he possessed at his creation powers of mind, competent to discern what was right, and sufficient rectitude of inclination to prompt him to pursue it. But that, notwithstanding such competence to know, and ability to perform, his duty, he had deviated in his conduct into many devices; into positive acts of disobedience: that a deterioration of his nature succeeded; that his understanding became obscured, and a sense of right and wrong less sensibly affected him. And, consistent with this historical narrative,

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the proofs, that have been above offered, extracted chiefly from the antient biographer* of those characters, whose learning and love of wisdom obtained to them the distinguished appellation of philosophers, abundantly evince; that in the deteriorated, depraved state of human nature, they were acquainted neither with the doctrines, nor duties, of pure religion.

In consideration of such experienced corruption, such deterioration of human nature, this volume proceeds to unfold the dispensations of Divine Providence; and explain those mysteries, that meet in the moral conduct of mankind. It instructs us, that to supply the defect in the natural light of reason, God promised, and according to his promise gave, mankind an additional light; or, to preserve the words of the author in the sentiments quoted above, *a foreign*

* Diogenes Laertius.



instruction; * conveyed in so clear and explicit terms and manner, that nothing is wanting to the comprehension of it, but an eye that will see, and a heart disposed to understand.

I have mentioned this history, and this little abstract from it, only as the suggestion of an object worth investigating: as it may tend to reconcile to truth, and to explain the favourite opinion of those, who assert that God must have endowed man with natural powers of mind, sufficient to enable him to know His will, and to practise it. If the truth of it, as relating to a primæval state of perfection, be questioned; I might, in support of such doctrine, cite antient poets and philosophers, of most eminence in the heathen world, inculcating the same opinion †. If the presumed authority of that volume be treated with an affected air of ridicule; we may tell those

* See page 143.

† Vide Concio de Statu Paradisiaco,

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who treat it thus, and it would surprize many, who take their shadowy religion on the credit of others, to be told; that some of the ablest and most learned men, this country ever produced, have not only been private believers, but public defenders of the doctrinal truths, which that volume contains. And it would be equally mortifying on their part, to observe to them; that the adversaries of revealed religion, in this country, have been generally men of very superficial learning; such as have seldom waded into the depths of science, or contributed to the advancement of erudition and knowledge in any material article: contenting themselves, by an affectation of singularity, a love of cavil, and parade of words, with a cheaper purchase of fame. That by men of this description we may never suffer ourselves to be laughed out of our religion, out of our present comfort, and our future hopes, may God of His infinite mercy grant, &c.

SER-

 S E R M O N VI.

John iv. 2.

Salvation is of the Jews.

TO ascertain, how far natural reason SERMON VI. was competent to discover the duties of pure religion, was the object of my last discourse: which, flowing from a just apprehension of the divine nature, and the relation in which we stand to the Supreme Being, must depend for their propriety and uniformity on the reach of our ideas, as directed to that sublime subject; and the equal extent of them. If they be inadequate to the subject, the duties will be imperfect; if they vary in individuals, larger and more comprehensive in some than others, the

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rule of duty founded on them must be vague and varying. And from the preceding investigation it was by proof and example evinced ; that not only the mass of mankind, but even the wise and learned, entertained very different notions of the divine nature, and had varying and very imperfect ideas of the relative duties of man to his Creator : that, from such discrepance of opinion, no general rule of practice could be formed ; nor on the moral conduct of mankind could such imperfect knowledge, as they possessed, of God and religion, have sufficient influence.

Many of them conceived false and injurious notions of God : and the opinions even of those, who might be nearer the truth, were too much involved in doubts and obscurity, to be efficacious in gaining them to a strict and uniformly religious life ; much less in promoting the practice of religion among the multitude. Yet the creative and
preserving

preserving goodness of God, it was in-
 ferred, * demand from beings endowed
 with a degree of reason, equal to that of
 man, a return of rational service ; or,
 in other words, the observance of reli-
 gious duties. And to practise religion
 in purity and truth, we must understand
 its doctrines and commands. We must
 comprehend them clearly, we must be
 thoroughly convinced of the divine au-
 thority, that instituted and enjoined
 them : or they will have no efficacy on
 our lives. If therefore the light of na-
 ture be not competent to this effect ;
 God, who conferred that light on us, as
 he easily could, so we must conclude as
 readily would, confer on us a supplemen-
 tal aid, some stronger and clearer light.
 How such supplemental aid may be con-
 ferred, we will next proceed to enquire.

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He, who endowed the cultivated mind
 with sufficient powers, by long and la-

* See page 86, &c.

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borious operations of reason to learn to know Him, can no doubt as easily communicate to the mind such knowledge of Himself some shorter way, by immediate illumination; a ray of intuitive knowledge, lighting to certain truths, to any truths, that are not above the natural grasp of that mind. For instance, the mind can conceive the idea of a first cause, infinitely active and powerful. This knowledge may be acquired, through the medium of a long chain of reasoning: or it may be communicated to that mind supernaturally and immediately. But to comprehend the manner of God's existence, exceeds the reach of human intelligence. This is a degree of knowledge, which cannot be acquired by any exertions of reason: nor can it be immediately and supernaturally communicated to the human mind. For to receive such degree of knowledge, the mind itself must be altered, its capacity enlarged, its nature changed: but change the nature of the
mind,

mind, and you unmake the man. Hence then we find no apparent difficulty in conceiving a supernatural communication of knowledge : and we also learn, what kind and degree of knowledge may be to the mind thus supernaturally and instantaneously communicated ; viz. any knowledge, which the mind by the operation of reason is capable in a natural way of acquiring. And the man thus divinely illuminated is as capable of communicating to others such illumination of knowledge, as he who may have acquired it in the ordinary way : and indeed with greater weight ; for he feels it, and communicates it as a divine impression, and therefore an incontrovertible truth.

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But the mere belief of internal illuminations, is no proof that we possess them : for those fancied feelings, that are boasted by many of weak heads and warm imaginations, are as impressivè as real ones : we may be deceived by them
ourselves,

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ourselves, and thereby led to deceive others. There is need therefore of some external proof of the truth and reality of our pretensions : and no surer or more satisfactory one can be conceived, than the performance of acts, which exceed the ordinary powers of nature. They are direct appeals to the senses ; and when the experience of internal illuminations is attended with such characters of external evidence ; it acts with all the force of conviction truth can give, and has a claim to rational assent. Indeed it is capable of proof, that internal illuminations cannot exist, unattended with some external character of authenticity. For whom would the person, who could produce no other proofs of the reality of his mental illuminations, than his own feelings, convince ? And without the power of convincing others, what would be the use of such illuminations ? And without a use, or purpose, and a good one too, it is hard to conceive that God, who does nothing in vain,

vain, should distinguish any individual with such supernatural gifts and powers.

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The possibility of divine illuminations being thus evinced, and the characteristic marks distinguished, which authenticate their currency, and establish their truth; the next point of enquiry is, whether any such illumination, revealing God's will in a more express, and clear, and concise manner, than by arguments and abstruse reasoning, hath ever taken place; and whether the purpose to be promoted by it was such, as would justify the divine interposition.

Nations and countries have not varied more in their civil, than in their religious institutions. Some nations, in their opinions of the divine nature, have divided it into a multiplicity of Gods: and some have materialised it; for the Creator mistaking, and worshipping, his works. Great and vain men have taken advantage of this general principle of religion,

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ligion, which possesses the minds of all mankind; pretended the useful arts they invented, or their successes in war, those to have been the communications of their Gods, and these achieved by their assistance: and from thence obtained, amongst their respective countrymen, the opinion of being the distinguished favourites of Heaven, and after death the honours of Deification.

The most antient people, of which prophane history professes to give us any account, are the Ægyptians and Chaldeans: and of their histories the earliest period, to which we can refer, is the time of Sesostris; about a thousand, or, as some contend, fifteen hundred, years before Christ. And the earliest representation, which the page of history holds out to us, of their religion and morals, discovers them to have been immersed in the grossest idolatry. Nor do the records of Greece afford us a more advantageous account of their most
pristine

pristine state. The imaginary existences of deceased men were the only Gods, they knew ; their will, when living, the only rule of morals the people acknowledged ; and their vices, after they were dead, the sanction of incest, ambition, and outrage of every kind.

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If, amidst such an idolatrous world, there were a people, who thought and acted otherwise ; who acknowledged one only God, the Creator and Upholder of all things ; who paid Him a consistent service ; who lived in the habitual practice of duties resulting from a proper knowledge, a love, a fear, a reverence of Him : we can account for such knowledge, and such consistent practice, only two ways. One is, that those people must have been more wise and pious, not only than any other nation under Heaven ; but than a nation, could such an one be conceived, composed of individuals the most distinguished for superiour wisdom and erudition,

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erudition, a select nation of philosophers. Or else, that extraordinary degree of knowledge, they possessed, must have been communicated to them some other way ; than by the mere exertion of the natural powers of reason. The first of these suppositions certainly was not the case. The Jews assuredly did not possess more learning, than the rest of the nations, among whom they lived : but it may on the contrary be asserted, that in the early periods of that nation, before their emigration from Ægypt, indeed till the reigns of David and Solomon, they possessed less. The highest encomium on their great prince and legislator respecting his erudition was, that he *was skilled in all the learning of the Ægyptians* : a direct acknowledgment, that he had not acquired his learning and knowledge from his own countrymen ; but from a people more learned and intelligent than they were ; and of course more capable of instructing him. The latter hypothesis must be therefore the true one :
and

and it consequently follows, that their knowledge of God and religion had been communicated to them by some shorter, clearer, more convincing, more influencing way.

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And as such supernatural interposition of God, in revealing his will to mankind by an immediate illumination of the mind, that is, by inspiration, must have a sufficient assignable cause: if we enquire the purpose to be promoted in the instance before us; we shall find it the noblest, the most important, that can be conceived worthy to engage the divine interference. It was to keep alive in the human mind the almost extinguished principles of true religion; to teach and enforce the knowledge of God, and the relative duties of all rational beings from thence resulting: that the most elevated point of human knowledge; and this the first great duty of mankind. In pity to human weakness and infirmity, which to the most vile and abject prostrations

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trations had reduced the original perfect and dignified character of man, was this revelation made. Formed with a mind competent to know, and taught to commune with, his Creator; still bearing the faint impress of His goodness, but lost to every proper idea of His nature; he had humbled himself to the worship of an animal, a plant, a stock, or a stone. And from that abyss of ignorance to recover and reinstate him in the rank of intelligence, he once possessed; was a purpose abundant to justify the interposition of God, in employing the only means equal to such an effect.

But besides the end or purpose assignable for such divine interference: some further evidence of the reality of it, as hath been already premised, is wanting. And no evidence can be produced so easy of conception, and so assuredly to be depended on, as miracles: the possibility of which having in a * former dis-

* See Sermon xi.

course been evinced, * we will now enter farther into the subject, and consider the circumstances necessary to authenticate the performance of them.

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By a miracle, we understand a sensible effect exceeding the known powers of nature. But as we are utterly ignorant, how far the powers of beings, good or bad, in superior classes of intelligence, may extend; we cannot be certain, that some phœnomena, which appear, and are, to us really miraculous, may not have resulted from their agency. And it therefore follows, that miracles are not separately, and in themselves, proofs, that the workers of them are delegated messengers of God. Yet as it is highly repugnant to all our natural notions of the divine goodness, to suppose that He can leave men, who desire to know and follow truth, destitute of the necessary

* See Sermon ii. p. 38, &c.

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means

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means of discriminating it from falsehood; it also follows, that there must ever be some discernible traits and adjuncts, which mark and manifest His interposition. By what characters then are the miracles of true religion distinguishable from deceptions? By plain peculiarities, as I conceive, in their nature, manners, and tendency.

We are, it is confessed, ignorant how far the power of evil spirits may extend: but we know how far it cannot extend: we know it is infinitely inferiour to the power of God. Upon this principle, reason, concurring with scripture, appropriates some wonderful acts of a particular kind to God Himself, and as proceeding only from Him: such as the prediction of distant contingencies, depending upon the wills of free agents; and the ability with unerring knowledge of disclosing the privacy of human thoughts. That an idea prevailed in the heathen world, of the possibility of those facts,

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facts, appears from the endeavours used to establish the belief of them. What else was the pretence of their oracles? How vain and futile such attempts, I will not go about to prove. I will not intrude on your time by exposing the futile boasts of augury, and the vain pretensions of such pillars of the art, as Nævius: his arrogated knowledge of human thoughts, a plain, palpable, conclusive juggle between his prince and him, to procure confidence from an ignorant multitude, without authentic vouchers, without sufficient end;

————— “ Nodus non NUMINE dignus.”

An observation this, which leads me to consider some attendant circumstances in extraordinary acts, as constituting another proof of their immediate procedure from God. As, when they are public, performed openly before great numbers; and when the result of them is a notoriously permanent effect. These, if not equally infallible marks of the


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finger of God, as the super-natural operation itself, are corroborating proofs, amongst others, that they proceed from divine power ; that they are true and real miracles, and not, like those ascribed to magicians, oracles, and heathen augurs, the illusions of artifice, and pretensions of falshood and imposture.

The tendency of those wonderful acts, or the purposes for which they were wrought, is likewise, as hath been intimated, a test of their divinity. A miracle, that tends to no purpose, or to a bad one, is on those very accounts suspicious. If the all-wise and good God ever suspend, or alter, the established course of nature ; it must be for some wise and good cause : for some important end, which could not otherwise be obtained. It must be immediately, or ultimately, for the removal of some pernicious and spreading errors, or the confirmation of some momentous truths ; in order to render mankind wiser and better.

ter. When therefore we are convinced, SERMON
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 that miracles bear the characters above represented, are also attended with the marks and distinctions just described; and that the ends, which in this enumeration of circumstantial evidence I have specified, are intended by them: we may be assured, that they proceed not from wicked spirits, such supposition implying a contradiction in ideas; as it is contrary to their nature to promote good: and by consequence, that they are, and can be, only from God.

After these premised observations, let us proceed to take a general view of the revelation made to the Jews. All nations have in their respective religious institutions pretended to prophecies, miracles, and mysteries; and considered such powers and discoveries to have been conferred on favoured individuals by the predilection and good-will of their Gods: which, though it do not prove, that the world in every special part of it has had

SERMON
 VI.  a revelation; yet plainly evinces, that, by the judgment of the whole world, there was reason to expect, and believe one. Till the time of Moses, the records of history were traditional: at least, we have no assurance, till then, of any written ones. He first digested the antient accounts of historical facts; and committed them to writing. And in regard to the narrative of antient facts, which he delivers, and had received from tradition; it is to be observed, that those traditions, from the longevity of the Ante-diluvians, had not in the course of descent passed through many reporters: * and the historian seems to have related them without the least prejudice or partiality to himself or his nation. Nor doth tradition, permit 'em to observe, carry an inconsiderable weight with it; or claim a moderate degree of assent, when there appears nothing to confront, or disprove it. And this is

* See Pascal's Thoughts.

so far the case in the instance before us, that succeeding historians have in general points followed Moses's relation. They have followed him in his record of the creation of the world from a rude chaotic mass; of a paradisiacal age; of the deterioration of the world, through the vices of mankind; of an universal deluge.

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From the diluvian period, this history informs us, that in one particular family, that family which survived the general catastrophe, the belief of the unity of God, creator and preserver of the world, obtained: that in one particular branch of that family, amidst its various migrations, in its prosperous and depressed state, whether independent, or in bondage, amidst idolatrous people, oppressed by the tyranny of idolatrous masters, it still retained, and of all the nations of the world alone maintained, that doctrine. It was this doctrine, that united them so closely to one another, and so continuedly separated

SERMON VI. rated them from all the world ; as in it-
 self forms a perpetual miracle.

In the time of Moses, this family was increased to a numerous people : and as they had before been separated from the rest of the world by their religious principles, they were then to be divided from it in situation, and by an appropriated inheritance ; to be delivered from servitude, and become a distinct and independent nation. For that purpose the God, whom they served, raised them up a deliverer ; and empowered him, by a signal display of miraculous powers, to lead out from amidst a powerful and war-like nation an oppressed, unarmed, defenceless multitude : who were thus led forth, separated, and supported, to preserve, and diffuse among the rest of the world, the almost obliterated notions of true Theism, and the pure worship of the One God. And if any purpose, if any end, could justify the supernatural interposition of Almighty God in the display

display of miracles, this unquestionably did.

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The religion of the Jews had been hitherto plain and simple: consisting in the knowledge of the Divine Unity, and the nature of that spiritual worship, which was due to Him. But the people were now to become a great and powerful nation: and their religion, destined within its pale to comprehend, and to bless the whole world, was now to take a new form; its essentials to be fenced with rites, and ceremonies, and usages, which had a further aspect than Moses saw, and led to a wider extent. Whatever of allegory there may possibly be in some part of that prophet's writings, and such there probably is; it militates not against the fundamental truth of the relation: the facts represented under these allegories are plain; and have, as well as the more nude representation of things, an unquestionable claim to our assent. And in his general detail of facts, so allegorised and represented, it may be further observed,

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 VI. } observed, that some of the gravest and
 best informed philosophers of antiquity
 have followed him.

This religion resolves itself into a triple division: the prophetic, moral, and ceremonial: they are well designed parts in one great building; each of distinct purpose, and design; and all necessary to the perfection of the whole. The prophecies stamp on it the character of divinity: without the moral part, as a rule of conduct it would be defective: and the ceremonial part illustrates the prophetic.

As to the prophetic declarations of Moses, and the succession of prophets, that followed him, they have in the most exact and unequivocal manner been fulfilled: down from the first prophecy of *the woman's seed, which should bruise the serpent's head*; to that dreadful monition of the future desolation of their city; with the aggravating circumstance of the people being reduced to such extremity
 of

of distress, as to be forced to *eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters*: a prophecy, which was dreadfully fulfilled at the siege of Jerufalem by Titus. Examine other predictions, respecting more recent times; and you will find some fulfilled, and others every day fulfilling.

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The moral part, an universal rule of conduct, was to continue the same always and every where: custom cannot change it, time cannot render it obsolete, nor will even the plea of necessity excuse the observance of it. *Though heaven and earth pass away, not one jot, or one tittle, of the moral law shall fail.*

But the ritual and ceremonial part of that religion was figurative and typical; even in the person of the great legislator himself. He was sent by God to be a deliverer. But out of Sion, as the apostle argues, came the true Deliverer: a Deliverer in that extensive sense of the word, in which the Messiah is described
by

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by the prophets: a Deliverer, through whom all the world should be saved. The institution of sacrifices, which originated in the earliest ages of the world, and in every part of it prevailed, apart from reverence to that great sacrifice destined to be made in the person of the Messiah, is of all strange practices the most inexplicable. On any other ground considered, the custom of offering up slaughtered animals, to expiate human offences, must appear to have proceeded from the wildest notions, the imagination of man had ever conceived. But an enthusiastic conceit, without any reasonable pretence, seldom lasts long; and never could become universal. The universality of the practice therefore adds to the improbability, shall I call it, or impossibility of it; except founded in reason and truth. And the reason and the truth of it can only consist, in its aspect to the great sacrifice destined in Christ; and are evidenced in the long continuation of the practice prefigured.

The

The deliverance from the bondage of *Ægypt* is a type of the deliverance of mankind from the bondage of sin ; each preceded by similar circumstances, one of the Paschal feast, and the other of Christ's last supper ; the one plainly prefigured by the other, and both conspiring to mark, beyond the possibility of mistake, the grand ante-type of our redemption. What do their frequent ablutions signify, but what Christ seems to allude to ; the purity of the heart ? *Ye hypocrites, says he, ye are very careful in washing the outside of the cup and platter ; but within ye are full of all uncleanness.* That is, ye blind, who can carry your eye no farther than the type ; than the mere ordinance, perfectly insignificant without a reference to the reason, the ground, and the substantiality of it. In short, it is not difficult, in most of their ceremonies, to discover an aspect to a future reality : those temporary institutions tending, like so many elucidating circumstances, to point out that Redeemer ;

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 deemer ; in whom they were taught to expect a final and compleat salvation.

And those external observances whose references and allusions lay less open to explanation, so rigidly exacted, and so strictly observed, do in no small degree contribute to stamp on it the evidence of divine authority. Burthen-some as they certainly are, ridiculous as in some instances they may appear, silly and fantastical as they have sometimes been held ; even those rites and ceremonies, contribute like under-parts to the one great design ; the proof, that it is of more than human institution. Besides the typical reference some of them contain : others have been observed * to strike at idolatrous customs ; and were calculated to guard the true Theist from heathen practices, and every tendency to idol service.

* Vid. Spencer de Leg. Heb.

And

And considered also in another view, they equally demand our admiration, and claim a rational assent to the divine original of the institution. For what private man can be supposed, without the authority of station, unsupported by the arm of power, to have had such influence over a whole nation; as, by his bare recommendation, to induce them to burthen themselves with such a grievous load of vain rites and futile ordinances, vain and futile if considered only with a view to the institutions themselves, as the Jews bound themselves to observe? What individual, unless divinely authorised, would have presumed to persuade a whole nation, to abridge themselves of so many gratifications, which the rest of the world enjoyed; and to submit implicitly to such restraints, particularly respecting the observance of the Sabbath, as might be, and was often really, prejudicial to them not only in a private, but a public capacity? And, with less than divine support, what individual

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individual could in so arduous an undertaking have prevailed? What other motive, what weaker authority, what inferiour power, can human sagacity conceive; of sufficient urgency, to influence a numerous people to observe the ceremonies above alluded to, from the first period of their institution to the present day, through a succession of more than three thousand years, with that uninterrupted and rigid adherence, with which the whole nation of the Jews have embraced them?

Examine the direct and immediate miracles of Moses, from the time of crossing the Red Sea to the approach of the people to the promised land, the principal of which are recapitulated by him in the 11th chapter of Deuteronomy, according to the criteria above laid down: and you will find in them every intrinsic mark of genuine truth and authenticity. They were sensible effects, exceeding the known powers

powers of human nature : they were so plain that every sense was convinced of them ; and as public, as the presence of multitudes could render them. They were instantaneous and compleat : and the result of them was a notorious and permanent effect. The internal character of divine power, displayed in the performance of them, is marked by the doctrine, which they tended to establish ; the doctrine of pure Theism : and the effect, that hath been already experienced from them, is the acknowledgment of that doctrine by the much greater part of the globe.

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What then do we collect from the preceding observations, respecting the nature and extent of the religion of the Jews ? Briefly this : that it is founded in truth, imperfect in its institution, extensive in its influence. It was not a religion, consisting of fopperies borrowed from different nations, framed by different persons, and put together at different

M times,

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times, one superadded to another. It was the stupendous work of one man: by him proposed to a numerous people; from the moment it was proposed, by that people universally received; and to the present period of time uninterruptedly observed. The purity of it was guarded with uncommon caution: for fear of introducing corruptions into it, the interests of policy were disregarded, and national advantages overlooked; the people were restricted from intermarriages with other nations, and thereby precluded from strengthening themselves by those advantageous alliances, which from such ties are often derived. A numerous and respectable priesthood was instituted and supported: their sole charge the conservation of the pure religion committed to them; the employment of their lives the duties and service of it. It involved their whole law, and by the priests was read and expounded to the people every week. And does not all this form, and care, and ceremony; this so expedite pro-

promulgation, so ready and general acceptance of it, even had it wanted those genuine characters of divinity, which miracles stamped on it, mark its pre-eminence to every other religion of the world; and demonstrate its truth?

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But with all those characters of divinity and truth, it was imperfect. Its rites and ceremonies discovered nothing intrinsically wise and good: they were plain allusions to something that was to succeed. And even its moral part, though far as it went complete, was destined to receive improvement. It was very indecisive in its doctrine of a future state: its promises were national, temporal; as to period of time uncertain, and probably distant. To some future period they were taught to direct their views: and thither they looked, as for the completion of their greatnets, so likewise for the perfection of their knowledge. They wanted direct and satisfactory information on many points: left by the provi-

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VI. } dence of God, on many important articles, involved in a degree of darkness ; in order to add lustre to the advent of that eminent personage, they were taught to expect, the Messiah ; who, when he came, *would teach them all things.*

As to the influence of this religion, whether regarding time or place, so extensive was it ; that it was destined to reach from pole to pole, and to continue to the end of the world. All nations were comprehended in its promises ; and the gradual performance of them, proceeding with time, was ordained to be completed and perfected in immortality.

This religion, in its rites and ceremonies, in whatever parts of it were prefigurative and typical, is now a dead religion ; no longer engaging the attention of mankind, or claiming their observance of it. But its moral parts, far as its doctrines go, are unchangeably good.

good. Let us therefore consider it as a valuable relic : let us regard it with that reverence, it merits : a light, first shining in an obscure place, but from the time, when it was given, increasing in brightness more and more ; and in its destined period breaking out in meridian lustre : its rays still continuing to diverge ; until its *light shall lighten the Gentiles*, and all the world shall acknowledge THE GLORY OF ISRAEL.

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Matt. xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

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IN the great concern of instructing mankind in the knowledge of God, and the duties from thence resulting, we have seen how far the powers of reason went: its incompetence to that effect hath been proved from fact and experience; and the consequent necessity of a revelation inferred. From that inference, without descending to a comparative view of such revelations, as have respectively urged their claim to divinity; which, with great judgment and erudition, hath, on the occasion that now engages my attention, been already done; *

* See White's Sermons.

I pro-

I proceeded to examine the merits of that revelation, which hath the most undoubted pretensions to it: and, I trust, satisfactorily evinced, that the revelation made to the Jews, though in the first period of its promulgation restricted to a single nation, was destined in its issue to become universal: and even in the mean time, amidst the vicissitudes of that people, in their migrations from one country to another, whether in a state of conquest or captivity, they left scattered remnants of the truths committed to them wherever they went. And hence have those adumbrations of antient facts, which may be traced in profane history, embellished by poetic imagination, contributed not a little to the various systems of Heathen mythology. Even the expectation of a Messiah extended farther, than the religion of the Jews: towards the period of Christ's appearance in the world, the attention of the Heathen was in some degree excited to the advent of an illustrious character,

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VII. } racter, who should form the world to
happinefs ; teaching them all things that
it was expedient to know, and perform-
ing all that was neceffary to be done, in
order to promote univerfal blifs, and ef-
fectuate the profperity of mankind.

And as this general expectation of the Jews, declared by a ſeries of prophecy, fupported the truth of that Meffiah's appearance, when Chriſt came, and in that character profefſed himſelf ; no exertions have been ſpared, to invalidate the force of ſuch expectations. It hath been aſſerted, that it was very natural for people under oppreſſion to look forward, and flatter themſelves with the hopes of ſome great character ; who ſhould riſe up among them, and break their fervile yoke : — that the Jewish prieſts by their enigmatical oracular declarations cheriſhed thoſe expectations in the people, in order to quicken their exertions ; — and that the Jews were a credulous, enthuſiaſtic people, always open

open to the deceptions of the crafty
priesthood.

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In my present discourse, therefore, I propose, 1st, to consider the general expectation of a Messiah, that prevailed amongst the Jews; and in this discussion to examine distinctly the objections to it, as already stated.

And to enquire, 2dly, whether their prophets represent him to have been a temporal prince and conqueror, or something greater.

I. The first of these points, it is obvious, regards those, who deny the truth of revelation; and who, to invalidate the doctrine of a promised Messiah, a doctrine on which the Christian religion rests, describe the Jews as a credulous, enthusiastic people, oppressed by their conquerors, impatient under their sufferings, and taught by former deliverances, often great and unexpected, *so much beyond*

SERMON *yond all that they hoped for*, to look forward to some future Moses, Joshua, or Zerubbabel; the deliverer a fictitious character, and the doctrine a delusion of priestcraft and imposture.

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If only when smarting under the oppressive arm of conquest, in their forlorn migrations, or in their various scenes of captivity, those prophetic declarations of a future deliverer had been pronounced; there might have been some degree of pertinency in the reflection, that attributes them to delusive expectations, derived from desperation and distress. But in the most flourishing and prosperous state of the nation, during their most brilliant periods of conquest and success, regularly and uniformly did their prophets predict the advent of an illustrious person of their own nation; destined to *establish a kingdom that should endure for ever*. Even the most successful and powerful princes themselves, in the spirit of prophecy, declared the time would come;

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come; when under a powerful prince, whom the Lord would send to visit Israel, *all nations should be gathered under God: that he would then set up a kingdom, which should never be destroyed; and all that should see them, when the kingdom of their Messiah should be established, shall acknowledge them, that they are a seed blessed of the Lord.* In short, the whole tenour of the Old Testament points out, and the great scope of it seems particularly directed to, that first and great purpose, the establishment of a belief in one particular person, destined to *reign and prosper; and execute judgment and justice on the earth:* whose title, importing his high office, was to be, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS:** who was to possess *dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, so universal; that all people, nations, and languages should serve him.* His dominion is described as *an everlasting dominion, which should not pass away; and his kingdom that, which should not be destroyed.*

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Nor was this notion entirely confined to the Jews: Tacitus, in his account of that people, speaks of it as an expectation entertained by many; but refers the foundation of it to certain doctrines contained in the scriptures of their priests. “Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum litteris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret Oriens, profectique Judæa rerum potirentur: quæ ambages Vespasianum et Titum prædixerant.”* †

Josephus has the same observation: and imputes to the influence of such prediction the vigorous exertions of the Jews, in the course of that fatal war, which ended in the desolation of their city. “Το δε επαραν αυτες μαλιστα προς του

* Tacitus Hist. lib. v.

† A general persuasion prevailed, that in the ancient scriptures of their priests it was declared; the power of the East should be established, and from Judæa those should proceed, who would obtain the sovereignty of the world: which mysterious prediction was fulfilled in Vespasian and Titus.

“ πολεμου, ην χρισμος αμφιβολος ομοιως εν τοις
 “ ιεροις ευρημενος γραμμασιν, ως κατα τον καιρον
 “ εκεινον, απο της χωρας τις αυτων αρξει της οικου-
 “ μενης. Τουτο οι μεν ως οικειου εξελαβον, και πολ-
 “ λοι των σωφων επλανηθησαν περι την κρισιν.
 “ Εδηλα δ’αμα την περι Ουεσπασιανυ το λογιου ηγε-
 “ μουιαν, αποδειχθεντος επι Ιουδειας αυτοκρα-
 “ τορος.” * †

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Cicero, in a letter to Lentulus, alludes
 to a Sibylline oracle, purporting the same
 event; which he applies to Ptolomy.
 “ Cum eam [nempe Alexandriam]
 “ pace præfidiisque firmaris, Ptolomæus
 “ redeat in regnum; ita fore, ut per te

* Joseph. lib. vi. cap. xxxi.

† But what chiefly excited their exertions, and sup-
 ported their perseverance in the war, was an equivocal
 oracle, which appears to have been found in their antient
 scriptures; purporting, that about that time some one
 from that country should sway the sceptre of the world,
 And the person, so designed, they understood to be one
 of their own nation: a circumstance, in which many
 of their most learned were deceived. For it is very clear,
 that the prediction referred to the sovereignty of Judæa
 possessed by Vespasian.

“ resti-

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“ restitatur, quemadmodum fenatus
 “ initio censuit : et sine multitudine re-
 “ ducatur, quemadmodum homines re-
 “ ligiosi Sibyllæ placere dixerunt.” * †

Nor will the pretended character of the Jews, as being a credulous and enthusiastic people, add any weight to the preceding objection ; founded on the feelings of desperation and distress. Enthusiasm and credulity might have prompted them to take up arms, and list under the banner of every adventurous chief, who should have ambition or address sufficient to set himself up for that *Son of Promise*. It is the nature of enthusiasm and credulity, to prompt to rash and daring enterprises. They allow no

* Cic. lib. 1. Epist ad Lent.

† When you have effected the peace establishment of Alexandria, and properly garrisoned it. Let Ptolomy return to his kingdom : so will he appear to be restored by you, as the senate at first determined ; and to be brought back without tumult or violence, as religious men have supposed the Sibyl predicted.

time

time to reason and reflect: they warm the heart with a sort of hallowed fire; that impetuously presses forward with a power superiour to the love of glory, and vanquishes doubt by a principle more efficacious than the dread of shame. Actuated only by the goad of desperation, and the influence of enthusiasm and credulity, the Jews would not so passively have borne their hopes and expectations for so many ages, as they were known to have done: their prophets in a long succession continuing to promise them a Messiah, and they in full conviction of the truth of such promises patiently continuing age after age to expect him.

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Nor do the accounts, with which the annals of that people furnish us, of a banditti of profligate and disorderly men, assembled under the conduct of this or that desperate chief, who might boast himself of consequence, and assume the character of a deliverer, affect the truth
of

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of the above remark. No state is free from partial insurrections of men ruined and desperate; who frame grievances, and oppose order, for the sake of rapine and plunder. Those riotous mobs do not invalidate the argument, against the imputation of enthusiasm, credulity, and desperation; founded on the quiet, passive, general expectation of a Messiah: by their prophets described in characters very different from those, which mark the ruffian leaders, that in the Jewish, as well as every other state, may have occasionally drawn together a rabble for purposes such as these. Or, if independent of every motive of licentiousness and rapine, the bare pretence of Messiahship had power and influence enough to draw together a company of men, ready at the hazard of their lives to support such an expectation; the effect evinces the strong and efficacious persuasion of the real advent of a promised Messiah.

And

And as to the pretence of such promises having been the forgery of their priests, calculated to call forth the exertions of the people under any enterprising chief that might occasionally arise, of courage to attempt, and conduct to execute, a plan of deliverance from captivity or bondage, and establish once more their kingdom by conquest; those prophecies, to afford any ground for the supposition, must have been confined to the day of tribulation: which has been already observed not to be the case. Their priests also in the commission of such acts of forgery, their priests must have been wretched politicians; a reflection this, which does not appear founded in exact truth; and their chiefs and civil officers very negligent and remiss, in suffering such incentives to anarchy and confusion to be proposed to the people. We must therefore conclude, that the predictions in the old testament of a Messiah, the prophecies of kings and princes, declared in times of prosperity, as well as in periods of distress, regular-

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ly continued in a course of near two thousand years, were not the forgeries of priests: and, that the people's belief in them, was not the effect of enthusiasm and credulity, but a rational assent; an assent, which neither the varying circumstance of affluence or penury could alter, the false pretensions of persons, who had at different times assumed that character, could remove, nor disappointment of any kind induce them to relinquish. For what is it, that could effect this, but a rational ground of belief; what is it, that could render such a notion so efficacious and universal, but the genuine stamp of divinity and truth?

If however we be to have it eternally in our ears, that the Jews are an enthusiastic and credulous people: without allusion to the consequences, let us freely examine the objection itself; and it will be found to a degree futile and absurd. An individual or two may be credulous and enthusiastic. A whole family, through

through some successions, held in ignorance, and biased by the early prejudice of parental example, may possess minds strongly tinged with enthusiasm and credulity. It shall even be allowed that a whole nation, while they continue immersed in barbarism, and involved in ignorance, may from those circumstances derive an enthusiastic zeal and bigotry in support of false tenets, which they may have credulously adopted. But that nature should as it were have moulded the minds of a whole nation with a peculiar disposition to believe absurd, and fancy vain, things; a nation, who have lived, at various periods, among the most polished and scientific people of the world; who among themselves have boasted many characters eminent for their great erudition; who have with freedom canvassed, and with abilities investigated, the volume, that contains their own religion; have, in their admission of the contents of that volume, discriminated truth from falsehood, facts from pretences, records of authenticity

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from doubtful relations ; and, what may weigh most with the characters, to whom these reflections are particularly addressed, a liberal-minded people, who had their free-thinkers, as well as we : that credulity and enthusiasm should be the constitutional characteristics of such a people, is a paradox, which sober reason can never explain. But any thing it seems is to be admitted, rather than a doctrine tending to support the credibility of a religion, whose universality levels the distinction of illiterate and wise ; whose large pale, exalting virtue wherever found, comprehends every good heart, and willing mind : humiliating to philosophic pride ; and at the same time so inconsistent with the pursuits of the voluptuous, that they must either renounce their pleasures, or give up all the advantages their religion proposes.

Having thus endeavoured to obviate the objections, that have been advanced against the doctrine of a promised Messiah ;

siah ; it would be a vain intrusion on your time, farther to particularise the scriptural predictions importing such a promise, or more at large to insist on proofs of the universal credit, the Jews themselves gave to the doctrine ; looking forwards to the destined period with animated hopes. It is a doctrine by their prophets so plainly revealed, and so earnestly enforced ; that if, deaf to the voice of prophecy, blind to the appeal of miracles, without one good reason for so perverse a conduct, the Jews had rejected it ; deservedly would they have incurred the reproach of the most invincible stupidity, that ever marked a devoted people. It was uninterruptedly inculcated by all their prophets, down from Moses to Malachi : who uniformly predicted a particular kingdom, that God would erect, which should never be destroyed ; and a particular person, whose dominion was to be an everlasting dominion. ONE particular king, and not a race of kings, is throughout the

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whole line of prophecy designed. The Jews understood it so; and from such interpretation of the predictions concluded, that the Messiah should never die. Accordingly when our Saviour gave intimation of his death: the Jews immediately replied, *we have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever; how sayest thou then, that the son of man must be lifted up?* And when he talked to his disciples of his death and sufferings; Peter could not bear a reflection that so shocked his hopes, and answered, *that be far from thee, Lord.*

And after prophecy was silent; that is, from the time of Malachi to the advent of our Lord, the expectation of Israel did not cease. Indeed, as the time destined for the completion of this important prophecy approached; the hope of the promise became more and more lively. Some of the heathen oracles caught the ray of illumination: and about the time, that our Saviour visited the

the

the world, the expected appearance of a great and powerful prince became so common ; that it was applied, as hath been already intimated, to several heathen princes. And from that so general and prevalent expectation, some have attacked the doctrine on the ground of its novelty : as a notion, which first obtained credit about the time of Herod.

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But, says Voffius, we must go farther back for it : so far as the time, when Pompey made himself master of Jerusalem : fifty nine years before Christ, and exactly on the completion of Daniel's sixty second week.* Suetonius speaks of a prediction, previous to the birth of Augustus ; “ Regem Populo Romano “ naturam parturire.” † And Cicero alludes to the same oracle, as well in the epistle to Lentulus cited above, as in the following passage in his treatise on

* Voffius de sibyllinis oraculis lib. iv.

† That nature was in labour of a king destined to rule the Romans.

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divination. * “ Sibyllæ verſus obſerva-
 “ mus, quos illa furens fudiſſe dicitur.
 “ Quorum interpres nuper falſa quædam
 “ hominum fama dicturus in Senatu
 “ putabatur: cum, quem revera regem
 “ habebamus, appellandum quoque eſſe
 “ regem, ſi ſalvi eſſe vellemus.” † This
 oracle was applied to Julius Cæſar: on
 which interpretation Cicero, glowing
 with the flame of patriotiſm, proceeds;
 “ Cum antiſtitibus agamus, et quidvis
 “ potius ex illis libris, quam regem
 “ proferant: quem Romæ poſthæc nec
 “ dii, nec homines eſſe patientur.” ‡
 After the death of Cæſar, this illuſtrious

* Lic. de divinatione lib. ii.

‡ Obſerve the verſes of the Sibyl, which the frantic
 prieſteſs is ſaid to have dictated: whoſe interpreter was
 thought to have drawn from thence in the ſenate falſe
 concluſions; ſuggeſting, that he, whom we in reality
 admitted as king, muſt be acknowledged and ſtiled a
 king, if we wiſh to be ſaved.

‡ But might I exchange a word with the prieſts, I
 would recommend it to them, rather to produce any
 thing from their books, than a king: whom neither
 Gods or men will ever ſuffer hereafter to exiſt in Rome.

prophecy

prophecy was applied to Augustus : Virgil compliments his friend and patron Pollio with the application of it to his infant son : and others again subscribed to the gross adulation of Josephus ; who condescended to betray the high privileges of his nation, and applied the promise to Vespasian. Many extracts might be made from the Sibylline books, alluding to different circumstances attending that promised event ; but I will content myself with producing the single one, adverted to by the authors, whom I have cited above.

Αυταρ επει Ρωμη τε και Αιγυπτη Βασιλεια
 Εις εν διθυνασα, τοτε δη Βασιλεια μεγαιση
 Αθανατη Βασιληος επ' ανθρωποισι φανειται •
 Ηξει δ' αγνος αναξ πασης γης σκηπτρα κρατησω
 Εις αιωνας παντας επειγομενοιο χρονοιο.
 Και τοτε Λατινων απαραιτητος χολος ανδρων,
 Τρεις Ρωμην οικτη μοιρη καταδηλησονται. *

From

* Orac. Sibyl. lib. ii.

But after Rome and Egypt shall unite

Their

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From what has been above observed, it is beyond contradiction evident; that the doctrine of a promised Messiah is not only asserted in the scriptures of the Old Testament, but by heathen oracles declared; not only believed by the Jews, but admitted and adverted to by profane authors, of the first rank, and the most polished ages. Let us then proceed to the second article of enquiry: which was, whether the prophets represent the Messiah as a temporal prince and conqueror, or something greater.

II. In supposing the Messiah to appear in the character of a powerful and triumphant prince, who should establish the kingdom of Israel on so sure and

Their powers, and an extended empire rise;
 A prince immortal shall the sceptre sway:
 A king immaculate; whose realms no line
 Shall circumscribe, his reign no point of time.
 Inevitable then the rage of Rome:
 And under three the power of Rome shall fall,

solid

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solid a foundation, that it should through all ages continue mistress of the world, and that all nations should finally submit to it; the Jews had one great difficulty to encounter: and this was the state of humiliation, in which some prophecies represented him. An oppressed and despised Saviour, suffering insults, and neither in word or act vindictively retaliating, displaying not the indignant spirit of an earthly conqueror, but an exemplar of meekness, patience, and humility, was little calculated to assume the port of worldly grandeur; and, by the workings of a bold and daring mind, to keep a profligate world in awe: it confounded their expectations, and crossed the proud and towering hopes, they had entertained of him.

A State of such description as this did by no means comport even with the flattering ideas, his own disciples at first formed of his future greatness. Depressed and dispirited at his crucifixion, they

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they gave up every thing for lost : and mourned their disappointed hopes in their crucified master ; whom they then deplored, that they had vainly *thought to have been him, who should have redeemed Israel*. But this erroneous opinion we find soon corrected : for after he had *explained to them the scriptures concerning himself* ; they, who on his apprehension had denied, and on his crucifixion had lost all hopes in him, after his resurrection and their frequent conversations with him, stood boldly forth in his defence : publickly arraigned the Jews for their impiety in having murdered an innocent person, and Him their own Messiah, the Lord of life ; and gloried in suffering ignominy and stripes for his sake. So clearly did those scriptures, properly understood, point out a suffering Saviour.

This suffering state of the Messiah, described in terms so explicit, as some thought could not be denied, and so glaringly

glaringly contradicting the idea of that glorious state, in which all expected their Messiah to appear, raised a difficulty; which to obviate, two methods have by the later Jews been devised: one explaining it away, and the other denying the application of it.

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1. First, in evasion of those prophecies, so injurious as the Jews conceived them to the dignity of their Saviour and Deliverer; the doctrine of the supposed advent of two different Messiahs was adopted: the one an afflicted, suffering Messiah, destined to teach them patience and resignation; and the other a great and glorious prince, sent to reward them for their sufferings. But this notion has not the least foundation in the scriptures: where the Messiah is constantly, uniformly, and clearly represented, as the one Redeemer, *the Holy One of Israel: the Lord said unto my Lord, thou art a priest for ever*: and the like. It is a futile and vain conceit, without any authority

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thority from their most antient and genuine writings to support it. And they may with equal pretence admit a number of Messiahs, as two; Elijah, Jeremiah, and every afflicted suffering prophet, that was sent to them. *

2. The other mode of interpretation denies the application of those descriptions to the Messiah: referring them to their nation at large, as figurative representations of it in its several periods of captivity and oppression. But if the predictions of the glorious appearance of the Messiah be taken in a literal sense; we have the same ground for applying a literal meaning to those prophecies, that describe his humiliation.

* Vid. Pocock Appen. ad. Comm. in Malachi: Ch. iiii. V. 1. Ecce ego mitto angelum meum, et præparabit viam meam, et statim veniet ad templum suum Dominus, quem vos quæritis, et Angelus Fæderis, quem vos vultis; ecce venit, dicit Dominus Exercituum.

Who

Who of the Jews, antient or modern, ever doubted of the following representations being descriptive of the Messiah? SERMON
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“ Unto us a child is born, unto us a son
 “ is given: and the government shall
 “ be upon his shoulders; and his name
 “ shall be called Wonderful, Counsel-
 “ lor, the Mighty God, the Father
 “ of the everlasting Age, the Prince of
 “ Peace: of the increase of his govern-
 “ ment and peace there shall be no end,
 “ upon the throne of David, and upon
 “ his kingdom to fix it, and to establish
 “ it, with judgment, and with justice,
 “ henceforth and for ever.” Again:
 “ The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon
 “ him, the spirit of wisdom and under-
 “ standing, the spirit of counsel and
 “ strength; the spirit of the knowledge
 “ and fear of Jehovah: and he shall be
 “ of quick discernment in the fear of
 “ Jehovah, so that not according to the
 “ sight of his eyes shall he judge, nor
 “ according to the hearing of his ears
 “ shall he reprove; but with righteous-
 “ ness

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“ nefs shall he judge the poor, and with
 “ equity shall he work conviction on
 “ the meek of the earth. He shall
 “ smite the earth with the blast of his
 “ mouth, and with the breath of his
 “ lips shall he slay the wicked.” Is
 there any one, that affixes to those de-
 scriptions of Isaiah a figurative meaning?
 Certainly not: and for this just reason;
 because the literal sense is plain and ob-
 vious, admitting no doubt, and involving
 no difficulty. There is nothing forced,
 or strained, or inconsistent in the literal
 meaning; and therefore every rule of
 sound criticism withholds us from flying
 to a figurative interpretation.

If by the same rule of criticism we
 judge the same prophet's representation
 of the humiliated state of the Messiah;
 we shall find it characterized in as strong
 lines in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, as his
 exalted state has been noted in the pas-
 sages above adduced. Indeed this de-
 scription, taken in a literal sense, is not
 only

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only plain throughout, and uniformly perspicuous : but in affixing a figurative meaning to it, and applying it to the Jewish nation, there are parts of it, such as refer to the atonement of the Messiah ; which are perfectly, irreconcilable with every accommodation of common sense. For instance : “ surely our infirmities
 “ hath he borne ; and our sorrows, he
 “ hath carried them : yet we thought
 “ him judicially stricken, smitten of
 “ God, and afflicted. But he was
 “ wounded for our transgressions : he
 “ was smitten for our iniquities. The
 “ chastisement, by which our peace is
 “ effected, was laid upon him ; and by
 “ his bruises we are healed.” Take this passage figuratively : and I conceive it will be very difficult to prove the connection, the necessary connection between the suffering state of the Jewish nation at one period, and its easy, peaceful, happy state at another ; or by what nice and secret train of causes and effects

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 this depended on, and was effected by,
 the other.

What conclusion then do these reflections produce? Clearly this. That the absurd device of the later Jews to obviate the predictions of the humiliated state of the Messiah, by the admission of two Messiahs, tends to establish the belief of a suffering Messiah. And with regard to the other opinion of such description, as figurative of the Jewish nation; the letter is so irreconcilable with the figure, as to destroy every attempt at accommodation. And the inference from thence must be; that, those prophetic descriptions of the Messiah being in both instances literal, in him must meet the abasement of a meek, humble, oppressed, persecuted person, and the august glories of a prince, whose government and kingdom shall last for ever.

Full as the Jews were of the idea of a Saviour and Deliverer, a powerful and
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puissant prince, who should obtain for them universal empire ; we are not surpris'd to find them endeavouring by every means, determined by any forced and foreign construction, to get rid of the doctrine of a suffering Messiah. But we have also seen, that the very same arguments, which prove his glorious and exalted state, are equally strong in evincing his humiliation. And obstinate as they have been in rejecting the declarations of their own prophets respecting the one ; we will next enquire, whether their notions respecting the other be more consonant with their scriptures. Their opinion is briefly this :
 “ that an illustrious prince should rise
 “ up among them, and by force of
 “ arms establish his kingdom : that
 “ under his auspices they should triumph
 “ over their enemies, and that
 “ even to the latest period of time Jerusalem
 “ should give law to all the world.”
 With this opinion I proceed to confront some of those prophecies, which are

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unanimously considered as descriptive of the state and character of a glorious and exalted Messiah.

And first, had they well considered the whole scope of the prophecies relating to the kingdom of the Messiah; they would have been convinced that a spiritual, and not a temporal, kingdom was pourtrayed. *Righteousness and equity*, according to the prophecies already cited, are the constant marks of it; and not conquests characterized in blood: *with judgment and justice* it was to be supported; and not by the oppressive arm of strength: *by the knowledge and fear of Jehovah* it was to be maintained, and not by the rod of earthly power. *I the Lord, saith Isaiah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee; and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, and bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them, who sit in darkness, out of their prison house.* His office

office is here plainly described to consist in the diffemination of true knowledge : he is marked out, or *called forth*, as it is expressed, not by exploits of conquest, but as an exemplar of righteousness : his destination is, not to controul the world with the authority of a chief and conqueror, but to diffeminate heavenly knowledge even among the Gentiles ; and by the illumination of the spirit to open the understanding of the blind, and release them from the prison house of ignorance and sin. And how compleatly he should be qualified for these high offices another prophecy declares : *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his root ; and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and piety, and the fear of the Lord.*

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The text, I have next to produce, seems particularly addressed to their pre-

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judiced opinion of a temporal prince and mighty conquerour. *He shall not cry, or more properly, shout, which the original word קעץ' in this place signifies, and under it the shout of war is alluded to, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets: a bruised reed shall he not break, nor quench the smoking flax; but he shall bring forth judgment unto truth: he shall not be crushed, nor discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth, and the Gentiles shall BELIEVE IN HIS NAME.* This prophecy is not only descriptive of what the Messiah should be, but declarative of what he should not be. It declares that his appearance shall not be in the character of a warrior; an invader of territories, to which he has no right, and a stormer of peaceful cities: but that so inoffensive should he appear, so far from exertions of power, so far from leading war and destruction in his train; that he should not even break a bruised reed, should exercise no act of violence, nor carry desolation into the most impotent state; implied under the figure of extinguishing

guishing the feeble light of an expiring lamp. The object of atchievement, to which he was destined, was not to render the Gentiles tributary to Jerusalem, but to bring the Gentiles into a common hope in Jerusalem's Messiah; to conciliate a BELIEF in his name, a trust and confidence in the divinity of his mission.

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If we examine the 45th psalm, which the Jewish doctors unanimously acknowledged to be prophetic of the Messiah, notwithstanding the figures of worldly majesty under which he is described, it is plainly declared that He shall prosper and reign *BECAUSE of his truth, and meekness, and righteousness; that his throne should be for ever and ever*: and, as a characteristic of his kingdom, that *the sceptre of it should be a sceptre of RIGHTEOUSNESS*. The 110th psalm has the same general evidence of the learned Jews, in proof of its reference to the Messiah. He is there represented, as an everlasting high priest: a term significant of his

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holiness : and termed by David, *his Lord* ; who should sit at the right hand of God, there to contemplate the subjugation of his enemies. Doth this description comport with the character of an earthly conqueror ? And doth it not comport with that of a heavenly delegate ? And as the nature of heavenly greatness is indescribable by an earthly pen, it was natural to cloath it under images of mortal glory. And what scene of earthly glory equals that of triumphant power and conquest ? *The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion ; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath : He shall fill the places with the dead bodies : He shall wound the heads over many countries.*

Let us next examine the prophecy of Nathan ; the former part of which directly points to Solomon : *he shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne for ever.* The prophet then, in the spirit

rit of divination, instead of dwelling on his subject, rapt with divine enthusiasm at the prospect presented to his mind, directs his prediction to the endless duration of that kingdom under the Messiah : declaring that God *would be His father, and He should be His son : that He would settle him in his house and in his kingdom for ever.* Good kings, and prophets, God sometimes denominates his servants. So was Moses styled, and David. But no one, except Christ, was ever styled in an especial and particular manner His son. The term FATHER, had it stood alone, might perhaps have by some been supposed to denote the tenderness and affection, which God promised to shew him : but the antithetic term SON discovers a more marked and restricted meaning. It was too distinguishing a title, to be conferred on a mere human prince and governor. It was never applied to either of the characters noticed above ; and could with much less propriety be ascribed to an inferior one, as was Solomon :

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mon : inferior in piety, in zeal for God, and concern for his people. Moses was a prince and leader, and David a king : both of them delegated by God for high purposes, and both of them prophets. Yet thus distinguished, they were never stiled the sons of God. SON OF GOD, was the reserved appellation of a superior character : but what character could be superior to both these, but something supra-human or divine ? That other expression, *I will settle him* IN MY HOUSE, seems to bear an allusion to that particular holiness of character, which should distinguish the Messiah : and which, in the preceding quotation, was noted by the office of an everlasting priesthood.

Behold, saith Isaiah, the prophet from whom I have extracted most of the preceding quotations, and whose predictions, though confessedly delivered seven or eight hundred years before the appearance of Christ, are more like a history

tory of his life, than a prophecy ; *behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes, that is princes under him, his ministers, shall rule in judgment.* JEREMIAH in still stronger colours characterises the Messiah : *and this is his name, saith he, whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.* The word is, Jehovah our righteousness : He, in whose exalted merits shall be our righteousness ; He, in whom we look for salvation : a salvation not placed in his conquests, in his military prowess and exploits of valour, but in his righteousness, holiness, equity, in all those virtues calculated to raise the mind, and fit it for universal bliss and endless happiness.

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And is this the character, destined by a series of martial exploits to obtain the sovereignty of the world ; and by His prowess hold that subject world in awe ? Are those the means calculated to establish an universal monarchy ; and to crush the vigorous exertions of rival and contending

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tending powers? Let the nation of Israel question itself; whether holiness, righteousness, equity, and judgment, were the means, by which it established even its narrow dominion in Palestine. Ask them whether they did not wade through blood, through havock, and devastation, to that establishment; which they effected, under their puissant heaven-favoured chiefs and princes, Moses, Joshua, David, and others. The object, the important object, we acknowledge, justified every step they took: an object, of all that can concern mankind, the greatest: the conservation of the knowledge of God; and, from thence derived, a sense of the love we owe Him, of the reverence with which we ought to regard Him, of the service we are bound to pay Him.

Let them dispassionately search their own scriptures, and enquire whether they do not uniformly represent the dominion of the Messiah, as founded, and
consisting

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consisting in righteousness: whether they do not character His glory, in a stile superior to that of earthly grandeur; His *kingdom, as not of this world.* It may indeed appear strange, that those, who should seem most interested in what their prophets had declared, and whom one might conceive possessed of the greatest helps to understand them; that those, to whom the glad tidings were first sent, should stop their ears against them. But giving something to prejudice, and much to self-interest, for they had learned to expect present honour and advantage, we may in some measure account for that obstinacy; which shut up their hearts against every impression of truth. And when we hear their own prophets, in words inspired by God himself, declaring; *hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not: the heart of this people is fat, and their ears heavy, and they shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart,*
and

SERMON *and convert and be healed*: the effect is explained; and their predicted mistake of the Messiah affords an additional argument to us, of the truth of His mission: which so pointedly meets the description of their prophets; and with the added particular of their own rejection of Him.

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From the preceding reflections I will offer only one short inference, the inference of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, drawn from similar reasoning: *wherefore if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He spare not thee.* If the Jews, with eyes so blinded, and hearts hardened against the voice of truth, victims to invincible obstinacy, and inveterate prejudices, experienced such a series of evils, as in no other national instance ever marked a devoted people: let us profit by their example; and not by a similar conduct draw down upon ourselves similar, or greater, evils: let us not, through love of pleasure and dissipation,

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pation, neglect to know and to understand the sacred records of our religion; nor through vanity, and the little catchings at admiration, by daring to do, what really wise, and truly good men, would not do, affect to treat them with scorn. Let not the contemptuous air of irony and ridicule, nor any other motive whatever, divert us from studying, and from professing to study those volumes; on which a Newton, a Locke, and a Boyle were not ashamed to employ their great abilities, and valuable time. If any learning be worth pursuing; it is that, on which the interests of another world depend. *Search the scriptures; for in them are the words of eternal life.* And the farther we search them, of this truth we shall be the more convinced; and conviction will add new incitement to our labours: and the more we study, and the better we understand, the more we shall learn to value, them.

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Matt. xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ ?

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UNDER this general subject, the questions discussed in my last discourse were, first whether the general expectation of a Messiah was founded in reason and truth : and secondly, whether that Son of Promise, destined to visit and redeem Israel, was to be a mere mortal, an illustrious prince and conquerour, or something greater ; of nature supra-human, and divine. And in this latter investigation I referred to the prophecies of the old Testament ; which the Jews were found most wretchedly to have mistaken, and misrepresented : and, in consequence

consequence of such misinterpretations, to have rejected a favour, and with silly expectation looked forward to a conqueror. Misjudging nation! Was it for this, that Jehovah led you forth from the land of affliction; and by a train of splendid miracles conducted you through the pathless sea, and waste wilderness, to your promised inheritance? Was it for this the light of prophecy shone forth; beaming blessings on mankind, and proclaiming a new æra of happiness to the world? Had those prophecies no farther aspect, than to conquest and extended dominion; to private ambition and public injury? Wretched politicians! Or ye would have known; a warlike prince, such as your narrow prejudices figured your Messiah, though conquest like a slave seem chained to his triumphal car, is the greatest scourge an oppressed nation can experience. Did increased extent of public territory ever produce an increase of private happiness: or is it not notoriously otherwise? Be that as it

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VIII. } may: the Jews in general entertained no other idea of their Messiah, than that which worldly splendor suggested; the range of greatness and power.

And there is a sect of Christians also, that hold doctrines much the same: if indeed those are to be called Christians, who regard Christ with scarcely more reverence, than even the Mahometans themselves; who deny to him every character of divinity, and every degree of distinction, above Peter, James, and the rest of his followers, except that of master and disciple. “It is evident, ‘say they,’ that the Jews themselves “expected nothing more than a mere “man for their Messiah.” And then is commonly cited in proof of it this prophecy of Moses: *a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from among your brethren,* LIKE UNTO ME. And this likeness they conclude to consist in dignity of character, rank, and nature: whereas the expression alludes to the
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the office only ; and the true and literal translation of the original is, “ a prophet not like unto me, but as I am *εμει*, one who shall sustain the prophetic office, as I do, *shall the Lord God raise up unto you, from among your brethren.* And if instead of a loose translation, the original had been consulted ; it would have precluded such ground of Socinian cavil.

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With regard to the general assertion, that “ the Jews expected nothing more than a mere man for their Messiah ;” it is very readily acknowledged : and the conclusion follows ; that as they were charged by their own prophets, with having mistaken the scriptures ; and that charge was renewed against them by our Saviour ; their opinion is no proof of the truth of the doctrine they entertained. On the other hand,

* See Priestley on the Influence of Philosophy on Christianity, p. 310.

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if it appear from the scriptures of the new Testament, that Christ is there represented as something more than mere man ; the contrary opinion of the Jews tends to confirm the apparent doctrine of the new Testament, and to fulfil the prophecies of the old. To this investigation, then let us now proceed, and enquire into the nature and character of Messiah the Christ, as the scriptures of the new Testament represent him ; with one previous observation : which is, that some line is to be drawn, according to which we must admit, or reject, figurative constructions. And the proper rule of admittance I conceive to be, when the literal one implies a contradiction to reason ; or to other clear, direct, and positive texts of scripture. For if, as fancy prevails, figurative meanings be arbitrarily assigned ; the doctrines of the new Testament could not be considered as a general rule of faith or practice : but must be liable, as whim and imagination

nation led, by every fanciful reader to be frittered away.

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The method, I propose in the sequel to pursue, is ; first, to enquire what is the general scope and tenor, which the scriptures of the new Testament, on the subject of our present investigation purport and propose : and secondly, to meet the objections to Christ's pre-existence and divinity, in the full force in which certain readers of a revived sect have pressed them.

I. To begin with the birth of Christ, which the histories of the Evangelists, Matthew and Luke, declare to have been in an eminent manner supernatural, we find him introduced into the world without a human father ; and therein charactered with a plain mark of individuation, which discriminates him from all other men, and places him above the rank of human beings. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest*

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highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing: διο και το γενωμενον αγιον, not Βρεφος, not that holy infant, child, or son ; but that holy thing, or being, *which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* Derived from a source thus divine, the production must necessarily partake of its divine origin : he was accordingly *called*, that is, he *was*, in a peculiar manner was, *the Son of God.* Look through nature, and observe if we have not as plain and powerful an argument in support of this doctrine, as analogy can afford. The Evangelist John also, in his account of the origin of Christ, as plainly as words can express a meaning, asserts his divinity, and also his pre-existence : declaring that he *was with God in the beginning* ; and that by his instrumentality all things were made. This could not be affirmed of a mere man : and that this proœmium of St. John's Gospel did refer to Christ,
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it would lead me too far from my present subject to go about to prove.*

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Agreeable to such divine origin is the next account we have of him, when the Holy Ghost in a bodily form descended on him; and a voice from Heaven pronounced him to be the *beloved Son of God*. And uniformly and consistently with the celestial declaration, when there is occasion to specify his nature, and testify who he really is, he both styles himself, and is acknowledged by his disciples as, THE SON OF GOD. The condition addressed to the Ethiopian eunuch, previous to his baptism, was, *if thou believest*. His answer evinces the extent of the implied question: *I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.* † Adam it is true was also styled the Son of God:

* See "Free Examination of the Socinian Exposition of the prefatory verses of St. John's Gospel." Printed for W. Flexney.

† See Sermon I.

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because God was his immediate author. But Christ, notwithstanding Adam's priority in the flesh, is stiled ο υιος πρωτοτοκος. A distinction this not without a difference, and the difference is plain : Adam was created by God, a mere human creature ; and, being produced without father or mother, was therefore stiled in the genealogical account of Christ, the Son of God. But the difference of Christ's procedure from God, is marked by the strong term τοκος, begotten : a term plainly expressive of a communication of nature.

In the account of the transaction at the wedding at Cana, there is in the answer of our Lord to his mother something very declarative of a superiority of nature, above what appearances might challenge. *Woman, not mother ; what concern have you with me ?* What influence do you claim over me : to what dependence on you am I subject ? And much to the same purpose we find him continually

continually expressing himself, on any claims of earthly kindred. When, arguing with the doctors in the synagogue, it was told him; that his *mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him*, he answered, *who is my mother; and who are my brethren? And stretching forth his hands to his disciples, he said; behold my mother, and my brethren!* The passage, connected with other reflections, that had at different times occasionally dropped from him, may in some such terms as the following be paraphrased.

“ Whatever appearances may speak me :
 “ earthly connections have I none. I
 “ am a stranger in this world ; without
 “ a home, or residence in it, where I
 “ may lay my head ; without one na-
 “ tural relative, to engage me with the
 “ tender tie of affection ; without
 “ other business here, than that which
 “ I received in commission from above.”

Thus also on his mother’s expostulation with him on another occasion ; *thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing* : his answer

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answer is similar and uniform. *Why is it, that ye sought me?* And then, indirectly declaring Joseph not to be his father, he adds; *have ye not known, are ye yet to learn, that I must be about MY FATHER'S business:* that I am now acting in my proper sphere, that I am now about my real father's business, that I must be employed as I am?

No mere man, no prophet ever assumed the power of forgiving sins: the forgiveness of sins was universally held to be the prerogative of God alone; and therefore when our Lord exercised that authority, the Scribes we find accusing him of blasphemy.* Hence then it follows, that arrogating to himself a power, which did not belong to man, he either assumed a greater authority than he had a right to exercise; or that he was supra-human, and therefore took upon him no higher power than what strictly belonged to him.

* Matt. ix. 3.

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When it is said, Matt. xi. 27. that *no one knoweth the father, except the son*: it is very clear, that the nature of the father is intended. And in the same verse when it is declared, that *no one knoweth the son, but the father*; the context shews, that the nature also of the son is alluded to. For as to his office, many knew him to be the Messiah; and acknowledged him as such. But the knowledge, here implied, appears to be of a very different and superior kind: a knowledge delivered immediately by the father; a knowledge, which man did not possess, for even his disciples do not appear to have been completely acquainted with it, till after his resurrection; even the knowledge of his eternal power and godhead. *All things are delivered to me of my father: and no man knoweth the son, but the father.*

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After our Lord had silenced the Sadducees, on the subject of a resurrection; the Pharisees we are told entered into controversy

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 VIII. controversy with him: to whom He proposed the question in my text. They in reply returned him the usual answer: on which he pressed them with the prophetic declaration of David; *the Lord said unto MY Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy foot-stool.* And he then argues on the words with such force; that if he did not effect the conviction of his hearers, he at least left them without the power of reply. We might risk the issue of the present controversy on this single passage: so decisive is it in point. The scope of it appears too plain to be mistaken: I will therefore only enlarge on the words, and leave it to the most determined opponent of Christ's divinity, to find a different meaning.

Our Lord's general question was, "what think ye of the Messiah?"—
 "We consider him, answer the Pharisees, as an illustrious prince descended from that glorious king of Israel David."—

"And

“ And nothing more, rejoins our Lord, SERMON
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 “ than a great man, an illustrious
 “ prince ?” — The reply is, “ no.” “ If
 “ that were the case then, saith our
 “ Lord ;” with what propriety could
 that great and glorious monarch, the
 greatest that ever filled the throne of
 Israel, in the spirit of prophecy declare
 of him, declare of any mere human be-
 ing, however exalted in rank, or blazon-
 ed with victories, “ that he was HIS
 “ Lord: and that Jehovah would seat
 “ him on his right hand ?” Consider
 the just degree of profound reverence,
 with which the Jews contemplated Je-
 hovah, whose adorable perfections no
 epithet will suit ; whose name, except
 on the most solemn occasions, they fear-
 ed to pronounce, and never heard it
 without a reverential bow : and the force
 of our Lord’s argument applies with
 irresistible power ; in demonstrating that
 the Messiah must be by nature superior
 to David, something more than man.
 And if we be asked what effect this ar-
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gument had on his hearers minds: the effect was such, as truth must ever produce on minds which obstinacy had seared with impenetrable callosity, the forced assent of silence. *They were not able to answer Him*: they could not refute his arguments; nor, without giving up their prejudices, and retracting their erroneous opinions concerning the nature of the Messiah, could they admit the force of them: they therefore made him no reply. *Nor durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.*

Of that day, and that hour, saith St. Mark, knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the FATHER. Though we may not presume to ground a doctrine on verbal construction, it may be alledged as a circumstantial evidence of the truth of it, when grounded on a firmer foundation: and as such I submit to consideration the preceding climax; which represents the nature of Christ, not only as distinct from,
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and superior to that of mere man, but even above the angelic nature itself.

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The Evangelists Matthew and Luke mention the circumstance, of John having sent two of his disciples to enquire of Jesus; whether he were that great prophet, John had been taught to expect, or not. Our Lord in answer refers them to his works; leaving their master from them to form his judgment of him. When they were gone, he very naturally addressed to those, who were about him, some reflections on the character of John: which He represented to have been so high, that *among those who were born of woman there was not a greater prophet than he.* Then with allusion to his own nature, rank, and dignity, which the question asked by John's Disciples very aptly introduced, he added; *but he, that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he:* in the kingdom of heaven, in that kingdom, where previous to my existence

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ence here on earth I enjoyed glory with my father, who is in heaven: great prophet as he is, of course he is very inferior to me. In support of this exposition I will only add, that the common glosses on the passage give no pertinency to the last clause; nor do they obviate an apparent falsity in the clause preceding: for if Christ had not considered himself, of a nature and dignity superior to that of a mere prophet, he must at least have excepted himself as a much greater prophet than John.

If from the evangelical histories of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we proceed to that of John; the scope and tenor of his gospel we shall find still more clearly declarative of the divinity and pre-existence of Christ. To inculcate that doctrine, appears to have been the particular design of it. The prefatory verses of that gospel, as hath been already intimated, are full in point; and seem to have been directly levelled at the opposite error.

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error. *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.* And, as if to enforce a doctrine that had by some been questioned, he repeats it: *οὗτος*, this very word, *was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made, that was made. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* And this doctrine, adds the Evangelist, was confirmed by John the Baptist; who allowed him preference in honour, in consequence of such his priority of existence: *He was preferred above me, for he was before me.*

No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which was in heaven. For the exposition of this verse, observe the context: for scripture is best explained by scripture. *Verily, verily, saith our Lord, we speak that we do know, and tes-*

John iii. 13.

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*tify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not; how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things. No man ever ascended up to heaven, and there received in an enlarged mind the communication of divine knowledge: except him who came down from heaven, to whom alone that knowledge was communicated, even him, who had his first existence in heaven.** The force of this passage cannot be better ascertained, than by the figment fabricated by Socinus to elude it: who supposed Christ to have taken a journey to heaven after his baptism; and afterwards to have returned to the earth, and entered upon his ministry.

The Baptist in direct words testifies in acknowledgment of Christ's superiority, that *He came from above*: and then, as

* Ο ων εν τω ουρανω. The participle present here, as in various other passages, has the signification of an imperfect.

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it were in explanation of the term he had made use of, by the word *ανωθεν* from above, he instructs his hearers, that he meant *heaven*. *He, that cometh from above, is above all: he, that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He, that cometh from heaven, is above all.*

And in this declaration of our Lord, *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me*; he plainly assumes the doctrine of his having descended from heaven, as a truth, to which that full assent, he had repeatedly demanded, he supposed was implicitly paid: and declares his motive for such an humiliation to have been obedience to his father's will; and his design, a full determination in every article to pursue it. And in a few verses distant distinguishing himself, by the particular communication he had enjoyed with the father in heaven, as alone competent to know and teach the perfect will of God, he adds; *it is indeed*

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 VIII. *written in the prophets, that all men shall be taught of God: not that any man hath seen the father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the father; he is intimately acquainted with the nature and essence of God, he alone exactly knows his will, and deep designs, his hidden counsels, secret, and unfathomable by the human mind.*

This doctrine of Christ's divine nature and pre-existent state appears to have given offence to some of his followers: which however we find him very far from retracting, or explaining away. On the contrary, with an indignant reproof he adds, *does this offend you?* And then perseveringly maintaining the doctrine, he had clearly asserted, he foretels his future ascension to those mansions, he had formerly left: and asks them, if such an appeal to their senses would satisfy their doubts; *what and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up, where he was before?*

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His superiority of nature, in a chapter or two following, is in terms the most unequivocal again asserted: *ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world:* and (as the chain of subsequent reasoning supplies) if you will not believe this account of myself, which I have so expressly and repeatedly declared; *ye shall die in your sins.* Then said they unto him, *who art thou?* To which question, expressive of the most invincible obstinacy on their part, he made them no other reply than, *the very same, that I said unto you from the beginning,* that I have constantly and uniformly declared myself; the Son of God, that came down from heaven to do my father's will, and redeem you from your sins: which great truth ye will not believe, and must therefore die in your sins. This passage evidently declares the reason, why they should die in their sins; because they did not believe him to be the Son of God, and to have come down from heaven, to do his

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father's will, and to redeem them from their sins. And if their disbelief in that article was a sin; the doctrine, in which they were so urgently required to believe, was a truth.

Towards the close of the same chapter, we find the same doctrine again insisted on; and in terms so express, that his hearers, though they would not believe him, appear by their rude proceedings to have perfectly understood his meaning: for irritated at the claim of divinity, which he arrogated, *they took up stones to cast at him*. The offensive declaration was a direct assertion of his pre-existence: *before Abraham was, I am*.

In a conversation with his disciples, the plain scope of which was to prepare them for his departure, and console them under their loss, he tells them that in this world he counted not his origin, nor was the condition he had here assumed
 his

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his true and proper station ; and that, in removing hence, he was only going to the place of exalted happiness and glory, which in coming hither he had so lately left. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the father.** The antitheses evince the literal meaning of the above passage beyond a doubt. The world he was going to leave, was the very same world into which he a little before had come ; and the world, or state of existence, with the father, into which he was going to remove, was the world, or state of existence with the father, which, when he came to visit this world, he had left. This the Disciples, to whom the words were particularly addressed, understood to be so clear and intelligible ; that they immediately observed, *lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no parable.*

* John xvi. 28.

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I will close this general examination of the histories of our Lord's life with a passage in that remarkable prayer, immediately preceding his apprehension; which throughout speaks the heart, and mind, and design, and interest of an inhabitant of another world, a stranger and sojourner here. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* These words plainly declare his pre-existence, and his pre-existence also in a state of glory; with the avowed consciousness of the glories of that his pre-existent condition. And as the generality of readers, I will say farther from the perspicuity of the passage, every impartial and unprejudiced reader, must so understand the import of the words: it follows, either that the declaration is calculated to deceive, or that it is absolutely true; either that Jesus arrogated in it a degree of pre-eminence, to which he had no claim, or that

that he was of a nature supra-human, pre-existent, and divine.

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After his resurrection he was constantly and uniformly preached by his apostles, as a superior being; not a separated soul in hades, nor a drowsy soul sleeping away a long period of existence in the grave: but as enjoying glory with God, that state of glory he had affirmed to have enjoyed with Him before his humiliation on earth. And the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, doth in the plainest language confirm the doctrine of his pre-existence; and, in that pre-existent state, of his instrumentality in the creation of the world *For in him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created through him and for him.** And I the rather cite this pas-

* Col. i. 16. and 17.

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sage, as it forms a kind of comment; explaining, and confirming a similar assertion in St. John's Gospel in its primary and literal acceptance. *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.**

On these words of the Evangelist Socinus remarks, that “ the words, *all things*, are not to be admitted in so general a sense as is commonly supposed, denoting the original formation of the world.” — “ They are not to be taken, ‘ continues he,’ in their primary sense, as if referable to the material world; but are to be applied to the publication and reception of the gospel: as if John had said, all these spiritual and divine transactions, which are seen among us in the world, are derived from no other source than the preaching of the gospel of Jesus

* John i. 3.

“ Christ;

“ Christ ; and were effected by his in-
 “ fluence and power.”

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That such interpretation of the words of the Evangelist is as false, as it is forced, foreign, and jejune, the preceding passage cited from St. Paul demonstrates. It doth most clearly ascertain the literal interpretation of the passage in the Evangelist, and enforce the truth of it : evincing that the words could not be used in that figurative sense, Socinus hath affixed to them ; nor referred to moral habits, and spiritual improvements. Things *in heaven*, as well as *on earth*, *invisible*, as well as *visible*, *whether they be thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers*, refer to a more extensive creation, than that of new moral habits, a reformation of manners in this world ; and disprove the idea of restriction to this world, or any thing solely connected with it.

The general scope and uniform tenor of the scriptures of the new Testament,
 respecting

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respecting the doctrine of Christ's divinity and pre-existence, having thus endeavoured to evince; I proceed, as was proposed in the second place, to obviate some objections, that by certain writers of the present day have been advanced against it.

II. One objection to this doctrine is founded on the appellative man, in some passages of the new Testament applied to our Lord: as in Acts ii. 12. *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you: and again, He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world by that man, whom He hath ordained.* Acts, xvii. 31. And to these passages, from the Epistle of Paul to Timothy, I will add another; *there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus: remarking on this last passage, that the idea of a mere man being delegated to the high and important office of mediator between God and man, that is, between God and himself, is less agreeable*

able to reason, than the doctrine of a superior and divine existence, by inheritance so claiming, or so ordained.

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Respecting the general application of the denominative MAN to Christ, we know that the Evangelist John says, he *was made*, or became, *man*: and as such, he is in scripture frequently stiled MAN. But who is he, that St. John declares was made, or became, this individual man? Even that Divine Being, that existed with the father from the beginning. Acknowledging therefore with the Evangelist, that he was man; why are we not to believe the same Evangelist, who in subsequent words assures us, he was, prior to such state of humiliation, existent with the father? *He was made flesh*: and how is he, who hath shined his divinity in the veil of manhood, to be otherwise denominated, than as man? Such humiliation of himself, while fashioned in the form and figure of a man, whatever degree of divinity he might
under

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under that shade possess, would in historical detail characterise him as a man. Thus, Gen. 18. the three angels, one of whom is styled the Lord, that is the immediate messenger or angel of the Lord, appearing in the form and substance of men, are styled men. And, in the next chapter, of the angels, that in the assumed shape of men visited Lot, it is said; *and the men put forth their hands, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut the door.* Gen. 32. *A man* is said to have wrestled with Jacob: yet that man we learn was no other, than the angel of the Lord. *For Jacob called the name of that place Peniel; because he had there seen God face to face.*

A second objection to this doctrine is urged in terms to the following purport. “ If a divine being, ‘ in the instance of “ Christ,’ had really animated a human “ body; it must have appeared in the “ course of his history, that such an ex- “ traordinary measure was necessary.”

Now

Now I really see not the necessity of the consequence inferred. If the fact really were so, I conclude it expedient and necessary, that it should be so; without seeing such necessity in terms asserted. However it happens, for the satisfaction of the objector; that the necessity is absolutely declared: though he has been so unfortunate, as to overlook the declaration. *Him God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible he should be holden of it.* Acts ii. 24. But if mere man, why not possible? The absolute impossibility therefore being thus asserted, according to this writer's requisition, by his own argument proves our Lord's divinity.

It is further objected against Christ's divinity, that his apostles are frequently represented as on a level with himself; and that many passages of scripture expressly say, they will be advanced to similar, if not equal honour. Unfortunately however for the bold asserter of
this

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this extraordinary remark, the very passages, adduced by him in proof of such equality, militate directly against it. Such are the following: *That they may be one; as thou, father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us. — And the glory, which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou has sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* The import of the petition is, “that
“ closely connected as he was with the
“ father in love and obedience, so his
“ disciples might be in love and obedi-
“ ence to the father and him.” The nature of the unity implied is further explained, in the subsequent clause *that they may be perfect* *us ev, unto one thing;* “that they may unite in design and
“ operation to that one great end, the
“ redemption of mankind.” And so far from declaring his disciples on a level with himself, the words imply a
marked

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marked inferiority to him : in as much as he, who gives glory, is superior to him, to whom he gives it. The glory, here spoken of, is the power of working miracles ; a power, which as the father had given him, he had exercised a similar authority, and given to his disciples, in testimony to the world, that he had received his commission from the father ; and in proof that the father, in permitting that power to be delegated to them, had loved them, not in the same degree, but *utroque*, as, even as, manifestly as, *thou hast loved me.*

“ Other parts of this remarkable prayer, ‘ adds the author,’ are in the same strain.” For the satisfaction of my audience I will subjoin some of those parts alluded to. *I have given unto them the words, which thou gavest to me : and they have received them, and have known surely, that I came out from thee, and they believed that thou hast sent me.* In this ejaculation how does our Lord here

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characterise his disciples? Not as immediately coming themselves from God; but as acknowledging him the immediate delegate of God, and knowing that he was so. Here is a manifest distinction observed between them: A distinction wide as the different degree of honour, in being the immediate delegate of God, come from the presence and a participation of the glory of the father, to reveal his will to men; and one of those, to whom such revelation was made, and who acknowledged it: a distinction obvious as the difference implied in receiving a kingdom, and being appointed to employ of honour in that kingdom under him, who received it.

1. Cor. 15. 24. Christ's kingdom is said to have an end: and from thence an argument is formed against his pre-existence. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also*

also himself be subject unto him, that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. “ This, ‘ says the objector,’
 “ is what we should hardly have ex-
 “ pected, if Christ had been the first of
 “ all created Beings : by whom all
 “ things were made, and who upholds
 “ and governs all things.” It is suffi-
 cient to draw up this argument in form,
 to expose the weakness of it. “ If
 “ Christ existed from the beginning, of
 “ his kingdom there could be no end.
 “ But the scriptures assure us, that of
 “ Christ’s kingdom there will be an
 “ end : therefore he could not have ex-
 “ isted from the beginning.” How the
 termination of Christ’s kingdom, erected
 on the redemption of mankind, should
 depend on the date of his first existence,
 it is not easy to conceive. When the
 œconomy of that redemption shall be
 completed, and Christ’s mediatorial king-
 dom of course cease : by no rule of rea-
 soning doth it follow, that Christ shall
 not continue to exist, accompanied with

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SERMON every appendage of universal sovereignty, in the plenary enjoyment of an eternal weight of Glory.

VIII

In proof of Christ's absolute and real humanity another argument is founded on a passage in the epistle to the Hebrews, which in our translation runs thus. *We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.* Heb. 2. 9. The original is, Του δε βραχυ τι παρ' αγγελους ηλαττωμενου ελεπομεν Ιησουν, δια το παθημα του θανατου: and the literal translation, *for we see Jesus, who was for a little time lessened below the angels, for, or by, or on account of the suffering of death,* The word ηλαττωμενον is very significant of his pre-existence, and in a superior state. And the passage not only proves, that, previous to his present humiliation, he did exist in a superior state; but in some measure ascertains the degree of superiority he possessed, viz. a state of nature above the angelic.

It

It also evinces the particular, in which he was lessened : not by any privation of his divinity, but in being subjected to the suffering of death, the angels enjoying a blessed immortality.

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To the supposition of Christ having existed in a prior state and superior station it is objected, that St. Luke mentions in him an *increase of wisdom and stature* : which, on such supposition, the objector finds a difficulty in reconciling to his idea. There may be a difficulty ; but it is certainly such as implies no impossibility. Let us therefore hear what scripture says in explanation of it.

The apostle to the Philipians ch. ii. v. 6. observes of Christ, that *εν μορφη Θεου υπαρχων, εαυτον εκενωσεν, μορφην δουλης λαβων.* The word *μορφη* signifies not only the external form or surface ; but often the whole substance, and essential nature. And such is plainly the import of it in

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the passage before us : the word in any other sense being unapplicable to God. According to this interpretation then of the word *μορφη*, the meaning of the passage is obvious : “ who, when he was “ of divine nature and essence, emptied “ himself, that is, divested himself of “ his glory, taking the nature of a servant.

Let us next examine, how this passage of St. Paul corresponds with what the evangelist John hath said on the same subject : for scripture is the best comment on scripture. John i. 1. Ο λογος ην προς τον Θεον, και Θεος ην ο λογος. — και ο λογος σαρχ εγενετο. *The word, that was with God, and that was God, was made, or became, flesh.*

Now if the *logos*, which the Evangelist says *was God*, and the Apostle affirms to have been *of the nature and essence of God*, according to that Evangelist became, or *was made flesh*, and according

to

to the Apottle took the nature of man : SERMON
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 he took with it all the infirmities and
 affections of human nature ; and must
 necessarily have experienced the imbecility of infancy, and with maturing age an increase of the powers of body and mind.

If it be questioned, in the language of Christ's sceptical visitor, *how these things can be* ; how such an absolute conversion of the logos into manhood could be effected : with humble diffidence in our own capacity, let us ingenuously acknowledge we cannot explain it. But it hath been proved to be expressly asserted : and where the assertion implies no impossibility, I may on sufficient authority believe a fact, though I can neither explain, nor account for it. I have the assurance of an apostle, that *great is the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh* : as such I acknowledge it, without endeavouring to pry into secrets, perhaps known only to God himself ; and without presuming, with

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the key of human knowledge, to lay open that, which the spirit of God hath declared a mystery. Our present investigation is no farther concerned, than in proving it the doctrine of scripture. As such, other arguments, and another train of reasoning, will supply abundant proof that it is the doctrine of truth.

In vain presumption to fix the bounds, within which divinity may expose or conceal its nature, another argument against the divinity of Christ is urged from the improbability “ of a man, who “ died on the cross, having been the maker of the world.” It is improbable too, that a Being, who, though in the appearance of man, was produced by the energetic influence of the holy spirit, and born without a human father ; who could penetrate into the hidden secrets of mens hearts, who could control or suspend the powers of nature, bid the sea be still, and be obeyed, and by divesting himself of gravity, or giving a temporary solidity to

to the water, walk upon the swelling
 surges; who could exercise even a crea-
 tive power, in feeding several thousand
 people on some morsels, in themselves
 insufficient to satisfy a few individuals;
 and lastly who, having died on a cross,
 after his burial revived, and in embodied
 form and substance exercised all the
 functions of life, for the space of forty
 days conversed freely with his friends,
 and after that ascended openly before
 them into heaven; it is improbable, that
 he, who was possessed of such powers as
 those, should be that weak, impotent, li-
 mited being, a mere and absolute man.

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I will mention only one objection
 more: which is founded on the argu-
 ment from analogy. From the assumed
 denial of the pre-existence of human
 souls, it is inferred that the soul of Christ
 could not have pre-existed: analogy re-
 quiring, “ that the whole human species
 “ be upon one footing, in a case, which
 “ so very nearly concerns the first and
 “ confi-

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“ constituent principles of their nature.”
It is freely confessed, that no argument can be produced in proof of the pre-existence of human souls : and on the other hand it is equally clear, that no argument of weight can be advanced against the doctrine, except the want of consciousness : a defect, as hath been already observed, * from which the superior nature and mind of Christ were free.

As to the pre-existence of human souls, notwithstanding the many ingenious conjectures, that have been urged in support of it, conceding to this writer his full postulatam of its being a false and erroneous doctrine ; no argument can be framed from the analogy of human nature to that of Christ. The difference of Christ's nature from that of mere man, is the great point in controversy : and to build an argument on the sup-

* See page 248.

posed equality of them, is begging the question. What equality of nature is there in a mere man, and him, who was produced by the efficiency of the holy spirit, without a human father; between him, whose feeble powers are contained within narrow limits, and controled by positive laws, and him whose powers seemed to know no bounds, and, instead of submitting to, superseded the laws of nature; between him, whose body putrefies in the grave, and whose separated soul exists where the common course of mortality claims it, and him who triumphant over death rose from the grave, his soul not left in Hades, nor his body subjected to corruption? And in beings, wherein subsists so little equality, no argument can be founded on a supposed analogy: no, not even in the particular case, with which the argument we are now considering is qualified, “in the first and constituent principles of nature.”

Such

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Such are the principal objections, I have in modern writers * observed, to the doctrine of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ: and to the objections of modern authors, on every subject in the course of the preceding lectures discussed, I have particularly applied myself. And now in a few words to press on you the subject of those discourses, let me observe; that, if there be a God, who made, and preserved us, and who will take account of our conduct, there must be such a duty as religion; and that it is both a serious, and a necessary thing: so serious, and so necessary, that as its regards extend to eternity, eternal happiness or misery attend our right election of, and correspondent conduct in it. Freely investigate it: examine the volume, in which as with the finger of God I think, and have supposed, it written. Though it may contain some

* Dr. Priestley, Mr. Lindsey, &c.

things hard to be understood ; it holds forth much, that if practiced will improve our nature : enough so cheering and intelligible, as to excite our endeavours to understand it more and more. The doctrinal parts of religion are scientific : and where is the science, that hath not its mysteries ? The most demonstrable of all sciences, even mathematics, has them.

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Look through nature, as she lies before you in the works of this our world : and mystery meets the mind at every step. And will you extend your thoughts beyond the confines of this habitable globe, to God, and a world to come ; and not expect to find some mystery there ? Shall we reject as false whatever we cannot comprehend ? To how narrow a compass then shall we reduce truth ? Doth human reason rank so high : or is God so level with the capacity of mankind ? Shall we question his declarations, because we cannot accom-

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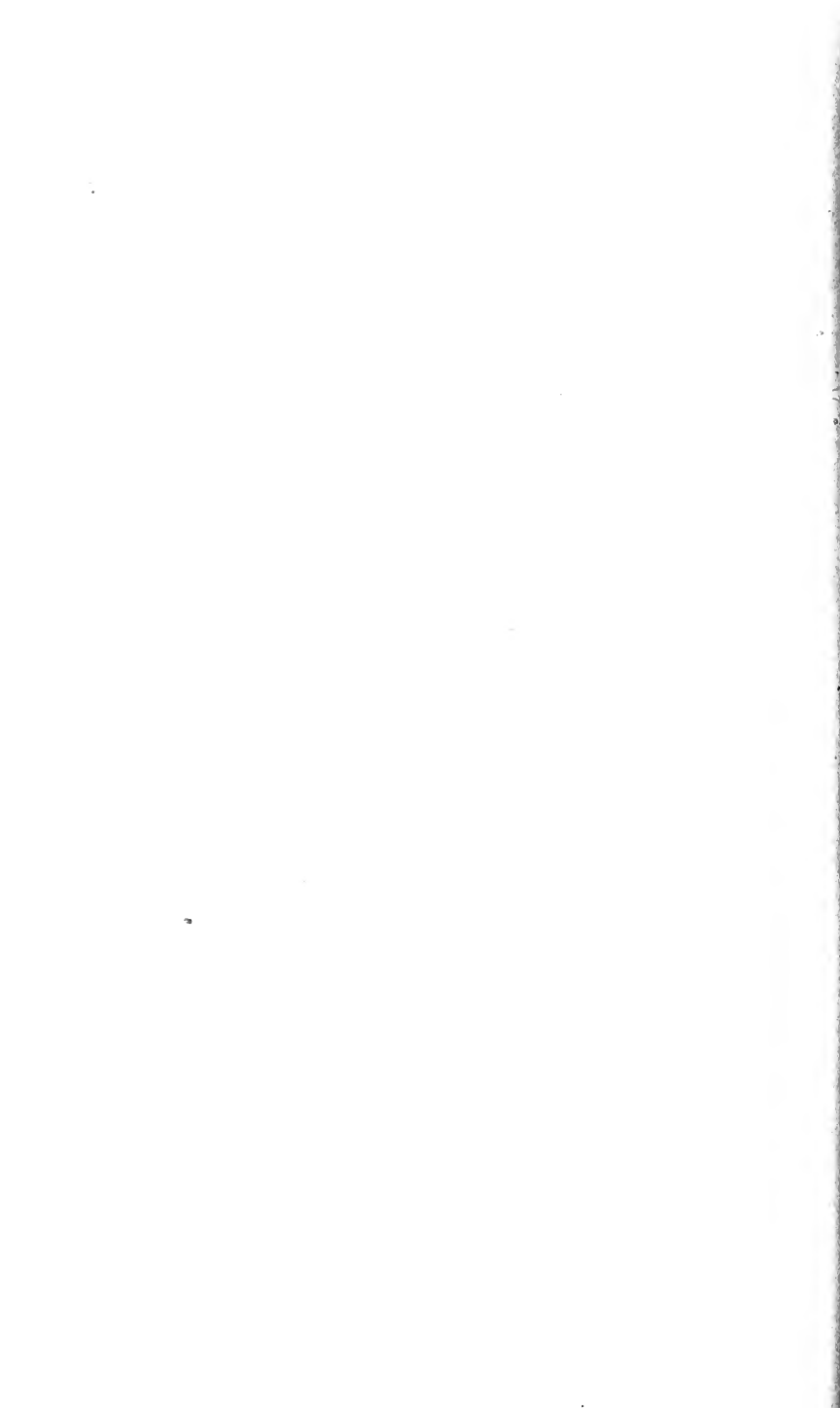
accommodate to the size of our minds the design and propriety of them? Shall we fastidiously refuse assent to what He hath been pleased to reveal; because He hath not revealed more? Or shall we not rather with due gratitude and humility acknowledge the goodness of God, who hath by the revelation of Jesus Christ revealed so much: who hath condescended to unveil the blaze of divine majesty in such degree, as to enable mankind acceptably to serve Him; and so far made known the nature of another world, as to quicken our exertions, amidst the various mansions there to attain to a station of bliss and glory, through the applied merits and mediation of the same Jesus Christ our Lord?

Such is the anchor of hope, we have in Christ: and such in sum and substance the doctrine, which in answer to the words of my text the scriptures dictate. It is not in the ability of man to
mend

mend them * ; nor shall human devices prevail in refining them. In plain legible characters, *they contain the words, all the words, of eternal life.*

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* See Lindfey's sequel to his apology page 119.



DE
STATU PARADISIACO.
CONCIO
IN ECCLESIA BEATÆ MARIÆ
APUD OXONIENSES
HABITA.

Ecclus. vii. 30.

*Hoc tantum inveni ; quod Deus homines
perfectos creavit, ipsi autem ratiocinia plu-
rima invenerunt.*

TERRARUM hic noster orbis, & CONCIO
IX.
quicquid in orbe viret, quicquid ultra
hujus mundi fines aut oculus assequi,
aut mens deprehendere possit, Deum
optimum maximum arguit : tanta sapi-
entia, tanta ubique patet Potentia. O
orbem fœlicem, summi artificis, omni-
bus absolutum numeris, opus ; cui herba
S quæque

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quæque levissima, cui quicquid avium pecudumque usquam invenitur, aut pulchritudinem aut usum suppetit ! O hominum foelicissimum genus ; cui tot utilia, tot perpulchra serviunt ! At longe aliter se res habet : tot tamque præclara et benevolentiae et sapientiae Dei argumenta malum multiforme inquinat. Morborum numerosa cohors, nec arte nec medicinâ depellenda, humana corpora obsidunt ; animos pravi affectus deturpant : durâ adeo lege vivitur, ut *foelicissimus ille, qui minus miser.*

Quo fonte derivata mala hæc, ut dicuntur, tam naturalia, quam moralia, vitam humanam miseriis ærumnisque obruerunt : quo pacto homines foelicitate exciderunt, quos foelicitatis perfruendæ gratiâ in lucem evocavit Deus, et olim et nunc temporis variè contenditur. Hinc alii, quales sunt Manichæi, omnipotentiâ Dei denegatâ, dæmonem alterum potentem quidem, sed malefuum et maleficum, fingunt : cui ordinis per-

perturbatio cordi est. Quodcunque boni aut excogitavit, aut effecit Deus; ut hoc inquinet, illud ut missum faciat, hic malorum opifex pro viribus usque laborat: et artis chymicæ ratione quasi invertâ, ut ex optimo quoque malum eruat, huic labor atque opus est.

Alii potentiam Dei summam esse agnoscunt, providentiam ejus omnino tollunt. Deum talem designant, cujus majestati rerum humanarum moderamen ne minime conveniret; cujus foelicitas ne perfecta et continuata fieret, hujusmodi curæ quam maxime obstarent: naturæ divinæ æstimatores pravi, quippe qui, uti de Epic reis testatur Cicero, * verbis relinquunt, re auferunt Deos; nihil curare eos nec sui, nec alieni, fingentes.

Ipsâ Dei existentiâ prorsus sublatâ, nodum alii audaciter resolvunt. Si Deus sit, sicut hi ratiocinantur, ab operibus suis cur malum haud procul amovit?

Vid. Cic. de Nat. Deor.

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Aut nequivit fane, aut noluit. Vel potestas ejus, vel benevolentia est finita: Ens vero, quoquo modo finitum, nequit esse vere et absolute Deus. Ratiocinio igitur si huic assentiamur, rerum hic lucidus ordo nullo moderamine certo geritur; sed fors omnia versat.

Hicce variis de mali origine hypothesibus accedit altera; quæ naturam humanam ita esse comparatam affirmat, ut a malo separari et sejungi humanitatis fors omnino nequeat. Animis, hac veri specie delinitis, malum quasi de essentiâ hominis esse videtur; et crimina quæque misericordiâ potius, quam pœnâ digna putantur. Hinc, non me malum! sed me miserum! clamare quisque in promptu habet: hinc neminem confitentem habemus reum; dum peccata quisque non sua deflet, sed quæ humana parum cavit natura. Hominum vero crimina in naturam humanam dum temere transferrant; ne in authorem naturæ culpa ad extremum recidat, isti parum cavent philosophi.

Opi-

Opinionum, quas supra memoravi-
 mus, prioribus tribus jam prætermiffis,
 ad refellendam hanc pofteriorem, quippe
 quæ neotericis quibusdam præcipue arri-
 det, ſententiam potius accingor.

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Hominum genus e creatoris fummi
 manibus, adeo appetens mali, adeo im-
 potens benè beatèque vivendi, adeo im-
 perfectum evaſiſſe fingunt hujusce ſen-
 tentiæ propugnatores ; ut innocentiae
 perfectæ et foelicitatis ſtatus nec fuerit
 unquam, nec fore poterit. Si vero Mo-
 ſeos de Statu Paradifiaco, atque autorum
 ethnicorum de ætate aureâ, ſcriptis quid
 veri inſit ; philoſophorum iſtorum hy-
 potheſis reipsâ refellitur : et, ratiocinii
 fui fundamine ſublato, caſſum ruit quod-
 cunque ſuper extruitur. Statum igi-
 tur naturæ innocentiae et foelicitatis eſſe
 ſtatum, ac forte tali beatum hominum
 genus olim floruiſſe, hac in concione
 contenditur : cujus tripliciter diviſæ hæc
 norma ſervabitur.

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IX.

I. Quid de hominum conditione primâ mundi ætate, in sacris scripturis traditum accepimus, primò exponendum est.

II. Auctores profanos, tum poetâs, tum philosophos, eadem suffragantes deinde proferam.

III. Hæc tandem dogmata de Statu Paradisiaco, ab antiquissimis scriptoribus tradita, rationi esse consentanea tertiò comprobabitur.

I. Sermonis itaque hujusce prædictam mihi servanti normam, quid de primigenâ hominum conditione, scriptura sacra tradit, primò investigandum est. Fabricationem *εξημεριωνυ* depingens Mofes, * hæc refert ;


* In istâ narratione quædam esse parabolica, nonnulli existimant : alii etiam sermonem totum exemplar artificiosum esse volunt ad res veras explicandas : nempe naturæ primæ statum Paradisiacum, & ejusdem degenerationem, necnon humani generis novitatem. Alii quasi historiam summâ fide dignam, narrationem totam
sensu

refert; “Deus omnia, quæcunque fabricaverat, aspexit; et ecce omnia bona:” omnia nempe ad affequentium finem, cujus gratiâ creabantur, in sese fat potestatis habuerunt. Innocentiam primœvâ, et mali originem historicus idem divinus planè et enucleatè exponit. Porro ratio vitæ, quam parentes primi agebant, morum simplicitatem et securitatem, ab innocentîâ omnino ortam, hisce verbis tradita, luculenter designat. “Ambo erant nudi Adam et uxor ipsius, neque illos pudebat*.” Naturam nempe ducem et magistrâ fecuti, nec labis ullius conficii, nulla vestium involucra quærebant; neque iis vitio facta nuditas, dum

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sensu omnino ad literam expresso complectuntur. Explicatio quænam sit verissima, hic loci non investigandum duco: talem, qualis contenditur, extitisse statum, degenerationem postea contigisse, sententiæ utriusque propugnatores pariter agnoscunt.

* Historici sacri sententiæ isti hæc Platonis conferatur. *Γυμνοὶ δὲ καὶ ἀστρωτοὶ θεραυλῶντες τὰ πολλὰ ἐν-
μοντο, τὸ γὰρ τῶν ὤρων αὐτοῖς ἀλυπὸν ἐκκράτο.*

CONCRO IX.  imago Dei, formâ humanâ eluceffens,
peccato intaminata fteetit.

Neque his folis claufulis Statûs Paradi-
fiaci dogma innititur : fcripturis facris
excerptæ, fententiæ aliæ proferri poffent,
quæ creationis mundi hiftoriam, ficut a
Mofe traditam accepimus, non folùm in-
nuere, fed plane affirmare naturæ humanæ
perfectionem, fatis arguunt. Innocentiæ
et fœlicitatis primorum parentum fidem
apud Judæos summam valuiſſe hinc præ-
cipue liquet ; quod Apoſtoli de forte iſtâ
beatâ, traditionibus acceptâ, Mofe lucu-
lenter expoſitâ, prophetarum monitis
munitâ, non obſcurè, dubitanter, et
quafi ambagibus, summâ vero cum fidu-
ciâ, loquuntur : quippe quod pro certo
uſque habebatur. Sententias huc ſpec-
tantes, in novo fœdere paſſim diſperſas,
ut plurimas omittam ; hæc Pauli verba
hujufce dogmatis argumentum amplifi-
ſimum præbent. “ Sicut uno homine
“ peccatum in mundum introivit, mors
“ quoque peccati cauſâ, &c.” ac in
eodem

eodem capite paulum infra, “ sicut hominis unius inobedientiâ plurimi fiebant peccatores, &c.” Quibus ex clausulis Apostolum, ut satisfactionem Christi omnes complecti omnis ætatis homines probaret, fœlicitatis primæ jaçturam non modo nudè et simpliciter affirmare constat; hoc vero ex dogmate, quasi re cognitâ et universim concessâ, ad alias probationes progreditur. Sed in re apertissimâ diutius cur immorandum? Tum fœlicitatem primævam, tum fœlicitatis istius jaçturam, scriptura sacra si alibi usque taceret; ad utramque probandam prædictæ solæ clausulæ abunde sufficiunt, et quasi vim habent demonstrationis. Sententias ergo supra memoratas hæc, de quâ jam concionamur, claudat. “ Hoc tantum inveni, quod homines perfectos effinxit Deus; ipsi autem rationum plura plurima invenerunt.”

Clausulis istis cæterisque plurimis, quæ, idem spectantes, in scripturis sacris inveniuntur, sibi invicem collatis; hæc dogmata

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dogmata summam exinde sequi habentur. Mundi origine primâ homines, uti alia singula sapientissimi et omnipotentis auctoris opera, perfecti creabantur. Appetitus singulos, ad felicitatem assequendam, ad promovendam virtutem unicè spectantes, et mutuo et amicè conspirantes, ratio gubernatrix administravit. Satis et ad felicitatem et ad virtutem valebant: dum hanc excolant, illâ fruuntur; hâc læsâ, illa amittitur. Libera bonè beatèque vivendi datur potestas; nulla imponitur necessitas: cuique incoacta sua stetit voluntas. Minus morigeros denique se præbuerunt, imperium Dei repugnarunt, iussaque detrectarunt: Inobedientiæ suæ pœnas luebant. Hinc malum oritur; et vires acquirens eundo, longè latèque ingruit. Hoc fonte derivata, clades omnigena ubique diffunditur; hinc, quicquid vitam humanam miseram aut insuavem reddit, quale quale insit amari, id totum accipit; ferrosque in nepotes defluens, contagii instar, naturam humanam commutasse

commutasse videtur; immo, si fas sit
vera loqui, commutavit.

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I



II. Sensu scripturæ sacræ de primâ hominum conditione ita breviter exposito; quid de eâdem autores profani conscripserunt, servato proposito, proximè investigandum est: rerum enim antiquissimarum, quæ in literis sacris continentur, historiam, apud omnes gentes, quamvis plerumque obscuram, remansisse constat. Cumque concionis nostræ norma clausulas ex scriptoribus ethnicis plures, quàm in hujusce generis scriptis commendat usus, proferri postulet; apud hunc concessum me excusatum iri spero. A philosophis igitur ac historicis, quippe queis major quam poetis fides habetur, initium sumendum duco. Quos inter præcipuus Plutarchus, philosophus idem et historicus, regionis cujusdam, notis Paradisi distinctæ, nomine insularum beatarum designatæ, descriptionem exhibet: cui orbis terrarum portiuncula omnino

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nino nulla nunc temporis convenit.*
 “ Imbres, *inquit ille*, rari et amæni hîc
 “ loci decidunt ; dum venti molliter spi-
 “ rantes, et rore quasi alati, insulam per-
 “ vagentur : quibus efficitur, ut studio et
 “ labore nullo elicitî, omnigenæ herbæ
 “ fructusque jucundissimi suaptè nascan-
 “ tur.” Descriptioni huic sententiam
 proxime sequentem historicus insuper
 addit. “ † Adeo ut fides usque ad bar-
 “ baros perlata firma est, illic campos
 “ esse Elysijs, et beatorum sedes quas
 “ Homerus decantavit.” Hinc de Para-
 diso, five beatorum fede quid sensit Plu-
 tarchus, quid etiam barbari sensere,
 liquet.

* Ομβροῖς δὲ χρωμεναι μετριοῖς ὕπανως, τὰ δὲ πλεῖστα
 πνευμασι μαλακοῖς καὶ δροσεβολοῖς, οὐ μόνον ἀρουὴν καὶ φυ-
 τευεῖν περιεχουσὶν ἀγαθὴν καὶ πῖονα χωρὰν, ἀλλὰ καὶ καρ-
 πων αὐτοφυῆ φερουσὶν, ἀποχρῶντα πλῆθει καὶ γλυκύτητι
 βοσκειν ἀνευ πονῶν καὶ πραγματείας σχολάζοντα δῆμον.

PLUT. in Vit. Sert.

† Ὡστε μέχρι τῶν βαρβάρων διιχθαι πίστιν ἰσχυρὰν, αὐ-
 τοῦ τοῦ ἡλυσιῶν εἶναι πεδίου, καὶ τὴν τῶν εὐδαιμονῶν οἰκίαν,
 καὶ Ὅμηρος ὑμῆσεν. Ibid.

Eadem

Eadem fere, quæ de infulis fortunatis Plutarchus, de infulâ Toprobanâ afferit Diodorus Siculus: hoc infuper addito, nempe quod hujufce regionis incolæ expertem morborum vitam agebant. Nec prætermittendum duco, quod de morte Tobrobanitarum historicus idem tradit: utpote ſententiam haud omnino iſti diffimilem, quam ſcriptores quidam Chriſtiani de morte, vel potius e vitâ exceſſu, in ſtatu paradifiaco ſi homines uſque permanſiſſent, ſtatuerent. * “ Duplex apud eos
 “ naſcitur herba; cui ſi quis indormiat, cru-
 “ ciatûs omnis et doloris expertem mors
 “ grata ſuaviſque ſupervenit.” Sententia iſta Diodori Moſaicæ *arboris vitæ* explicati-
 onem fortasſe veriſſimam præbet; quippe qua ab origine narratio illa primi-
 tîvè derivatur. Mors, ſi hiſtorico ſacro fidem habeamus, non humanitatis con-
 ditio, ſed peccati pœna, plane conſtituta

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* Φυεσθαι γαρ χαυτοις διφυη βοτανη, εφ ης οταν τις κοιμηθη, ληθηδωτως και απονωσ προς υπνον κατενεχθεις αποθ-
 ηςκει. Diod. Sic. lib. 2.

fuit.

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fuit. Arbori vitæ igitur talem quid vetat ineffe vim, qualis iructum ejus gustanti transitum facilem atque suavem ad immortalitatem conciliaret?

Paradisum quendam in Africâ situm Procopius fingit; fontibus amœnis irrigatum, sylvis ornatum, viridantibus usque, quæque usque dulce redolebant: dum aerem tepentem frigiduli venti continuò mulcerent. Talem denique statum, qualis hac in concione contenditur, olim revera extitisse, non solos inter Hebræos, aut Ægyptos, aut Græcos fides valuit; in idem consentientes Indos quoque habemus: quos apud Calanus Alexandrum magnum ita alloquens a Strabone inducitur.* “ Tritici hordeique olim

* Το παλαιον παντ' ην αλφιτων και αλευρων πληρη, καθαπερ και νυν κοινως και κρηται δ' ερρεον, αι μεν υδατος, γαλακτος δ' αλλαι, και ομοιως αι μεν μελιτος, αι δ' οιου, τινες δ' ελαιου υπο πλησμονης δ' οι ανθρωποι και τρυφης εις υβριν εξεπεσον. Ζευς δε, μισησας την καταστασιν, ηφανισε παντα, και δια πονου τον βιον απειδειξε. Strab. lib. 15.

“ erant,

“ erant, sicut nunc pulveris, omnia ple-
 “ na ; fontes quoque, alii aquâ, lacte alii,
 “ alii melle, alii vino, nonnulli oleo flue-
 “ bant : donec ob fatietatem luxuriamque
 “ homines in contumeliam sese tradide-
 “ runt. Statum igitur præsentem Ju-
 “ piter exofus, omnia abolevit ; * *vitam-*
 “ *que labore degendam instituit.*” Nemo,
 ut opinor, hæc legens, quo ex fonte
 manarint, diu dubitabit.

Scriptoribus istis, regionem naturâ
 plane eandem, situ loci utcunque diver-
 sam, designantibus philosophum gravem
 et instar omnium Platonem jam tandem
 liceat mihi subjicere. In dialogo isto,
 cui titulus Πολιτικός adscribitur, quippe
 qui, præcæmium veluti, libris sequentibus
 Πολιτείας και νομίων præponitur, de origine
 politiæ philosophus fusè differit. Et re
 altè repetitâ, hominem a Deo creatum
 conditione primâ beatissimâ et verè aureâ

* Vid. Genes. Cap. 2 Com. 19.

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potitum esse docet. Ætatis aureæ et fœlicis descriptionem *μυθον* appellat ; traditionem aliunde desumptam isto nomine designans : ne quis forsan pro figmento et somniis quasi *φιλοσοφεντος* narrationem habeat. Fidem ac authoritatem quam huic *μυθω* conciliatam vellet, hæc sua testantur verba.* “ Ista nobis tradiderunt primi
“ illi majorum nostrorum, qui primam
“ mundi revolutionem proxime contingebant. Horum sermonum testes præconesque illi extiterunt.” Platonicæ isti primævæ fœlicitatis tabellæ, coloribus adeo vividis depictæ, haud abs re erit paulò diutius immorari : in qua si veritatem ipsam non deprehendamus, veritatis saltem vestigia nemo fere non agnoscet. † “ Ætate ista, nihil erat ferum ;
“ neque

* Απιμνημονευετο δ' υπο των ημυτερων προγονων των πρωτων, οι τελευτωση μεν τη προτερα περιφορα τον εξης χρονου γεγιτονου, της δε κατ' αρχας εφουοντο. Τουτων γαρ ουτοι κηρυκες εγενονθ' ημιν των λογων. Plato Πολιτ :

† Τοτε ουκ αγριον ουδεν, ουτε αλληλων εδωδαι, πολεμος ουκ εην, ουδε στασις τοπαρραπαν. — Θεος ενεμεν αυτους, αυτος

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“ neque aliæ alias animantes vorabant :
 “ aberat bellum penitus atque feditio.
 “ —Deus homines pascebat ; ipse erat
 “ et pastor eorum et custos : ipsoque
 “ eos regente, civitatum constitutiones
 “ nullæ extabant.—Fructus illis, et
 “ poma et fruges, arbores et fertile solum
 “ sponte suâ subministrabant.” De Sa-
 turni regno alia plurima philosophus
 idem scribit ; quæ statum paradisiacum
 quam verissime designant. Alia, ut ipse
 testatur, innumera, et illis longe mirabi-
 liora, ab ejusdem *μυθου* quasi fonte perma-
 nant : longinquitate vero temporis, par-
 tim sunt exoleta, partim dispersa atque
 dissipata perturbate dicuntur.

Descriptioni illi uberrimæ si quid am-
 plius deerit, quo Platonis sententia de
 hac re plenius enitesceret ; *Τιμαις*, sive
περι φυσικης dialogi, pars ista, in quâ de ho-
 minum creatione agitur, argumenta huc

*επιστατων.—Νεμουτος δε εκεινου. πολιτειαι ουκ ησαν.—Καρπους
 δε αφθονους ειχον απο τε δρυων και πολλης υλης αλλης, ουκ
 υπο γεωργιας φουμενους, αλλ' αυτοματης αναδιδουσης της
 γης. Plat. ibid.*

T

spec-

CONCIO IX. } spectantia amplissima præbet; ubi de mali causâ et origine argutè differitur. Ex involucris tandem, quibus veritas fere obruitur, hoc veri erui potest: homines benè, justè, et honestè vixissè contenditur, dum in semet impressam dei similitudinem puram atque intaminatam conservarent; malè vero, postquam cupiditatibus crassis et corporeis semet ipsos involvissent.

Ab historicis et philosophis ad poetas descendere, ac Homerum Elysiis campos depingentem in primis audire, erit operæ pretium.

Vitæ hic humanæ ratio jucunda paratur;
 Nec fera tempestas, nec nigri nubila cæli
 Inficiunt æthram, tranquillâ luce serenam:
 Suaviter ast Zephyri spirantes arva salutant,
 Et leviter stringunt recreata silentia ponti.*

Quid de hortis Alcinoi dicam? Nonne et hi et illi ab eodem fonte derivan-

* Τη περ εριστη βιοτη πελει ανθρωποισι,
 ου νιφετος, ουτ' αε' χειμων πολυς, ουτε ποτ' ομβρος.
 Αλλ' αιει ζεφυροιο λιγυπνιοντας αητας
 Ωκεανος αλησιη αιαψυχειν ανθρωπους.

tur? Vana omnino fictaque cecinisse
 poetam grex totus criticorum negat. CONCIO
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 Quó vero pictura illa amœni, immo
 amœnitatis, horti referenda est? Non,
 ut iidem fingunt, ad insulas Atlanticas;
 neque usquam regionum præter eam, ab
 hominibus primis enarratam, a primis
 scriptoribus depictam, præter Paradisum.

Genus hominum primigenorum de-
 cantans, locum Homero proximum He-
 siodus sibi vendicat; ejusdem, ut aliqui
 volunt, ut alii, ætatis prioris scriptor.

Tunc homines divûm vivebant more; neque illos
 Anxia curarum moles, operumque labores
 Lassabant: aberat morbus, tristisque Senectus.
 Igneus ast ollis vigor; et dum corpore vires
 Regnabant solido, convivia læta placebant.
 Mors similis somno fuit, atque uberrima tellus
 Omnia liberius nullo cogente ferebat
 In commune bonum, nec quisquam invidit habenti. *

* Ωστε θεοι δ' εζων ακηδεα θυμον εχοντες
 Νοσφιν ατρεπτε ποιων και οϊζυος' εδε τε δειλοσ

Nemo,

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Nemo, ut opinor, scriptorum Christianorum statum Paradisiacum plenius et melius depinxit, quàm in istis versibus Hesiodus. Ætatem auream ab Ovidio in libro primo metamorphosium expressam, utpote omnibus notam, præmittito. Neque de regno Saturnio tacet Virgilius :

Ante jovem nulli subigebant arva coloni :
Nec signare quidem, aut partiri limite campum
Fas erat ; in medium quærebant : ipsaque tellus
Omnia liberius, nullo poscente, ferebat.

Ad calcem libri proxime sequentis scilicet secundi Georgicorum, hi versus idem quoque spectant.

Ante etiam sceptrum Dictæi regis, et ante
Impia quàm cæsis gens est epulata iuvenis ;
Aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat.

Γηρας επην' αιει δε ποδας και χειρας ομοιοι
Τερποντ' εν θαλιαισι, κακων εκτοςθεν απαντων.
Θηησκον δ' ως υπνω διεδημημενοι' εσθλα δε παντα
Τοισιν εην' καρπον εφερε ζειδωρος αρουρα
Αυτοματα, πολλοντε, και αφθογον, δις.

Hes. Erg. Και Ημερ.

En

En manifestam statûs Paradisiaci notam : CONCIO
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 quum homines nondum animalium carne, sed folis terræ fructibus vescerentur !
 Sententiæ istæ variæ, ex scriptoribus antiquis excerptæ, suaviloquis hisce verbis Lucretianis jam tandem claudentur.

Jamque adeo affecta est ætas, affœtaque tellus,
 Vix animalia parva creat, quæ cuncta creavit
 Sæcla, deditque ferarum ingentia corpora partu.

Præterea nitidas fruges, vinetaque læta
 Sponte suâ primum mortalibus ipsa creavit.
 Ipsa dedit dulces fœtus, et pabula læta :
 Quæ nunc vix nostro grandescunt aucta labore.

Statum hominum primigenium eo, quo nunc degitur, perfectiorem ecce ipsum Epicuri discipulum plane agnoscentem habemus. Neque statum naturæ talem poeta iste agnovisset, nisi ut rem fide dignissimam : rem universâ traditione acceptam, gravissimorum hominum auctoritate fancitam. Narrationes igitur istas, quibus ipse Lucretius suffragatur, pro

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De statu Paradisiaco quæ tot tantique scriptores protulerunt, alii penè innumeri, si res postularet, et locus ferret, eadem suffragantes allegari possent. Quid, ista omnia de conditione hominum primigeniâ pro figmentis poeticis habenda putabimus? Nonne philosophos, nonne historicos, viros eruditos gravissimosque in eadem consentientes habemus: singulos, si non vera, certe verisimilia proferentes? Atque istas singulas de regno Saturni, ætate aureâ, et similibus descriptiones, obumbratas quidem et variis erroribus implicatas, historiæ Mosaicæ vestigiis insistere et insequi nullus dubito. Ab extremo fonte, nempe a primævis hominibus derivatas, verissimas ætatis primæ narrationes accepit

cepit Noa : easdemque, a Noæ filiis traditas, posteros accepisse, constat.*

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III. Tertiò probandum restat, ut historiæ istæ de Statu Paradisiaco, a primis hominibus acceptæ, scriptoribus tum sacris, tum profanis confirmatæ, minimè futiles esse et ineptæ demonstrantur : immo e contra, rationi consentanea, naturâ humanâ digna, Deo optimo maximo dignissima esse hypothesis ista contenditur. Omne ens, ut loquuntur scholastici, est perfectum : quo dogmate perfectio relativa, non absoluta, significatur. Quodcumque a sapientissimo Deo creatum est, id omnibus numeris absolutum creari necesse est : dum singulæ cujusque animantis facultates atque organa, inopiis suis subveniendis, suis optatis potiundis aptæ et idoneæ, foelicitati propriæ infer-

* Primam hominis vitam cum simplicitate fuisse, et nudo corpore, docebant et Ægyptii ; unde aurea poetarum ætas, etiam Indis celebrata, ut apud Strabonem est. Grotius de ver. Rel. Chr. lib. 1. Sect. 16.

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viant, ad foelicitatem propriam affequentiam omnino fufficiant. Hoc experientia docet omnium, qui in ftudiis hiftoriae phyficæ verfantur : hoc, quaquaverfum oculos circumferamus, adeo conftat ; ut fi Davidi liceat jure exclamare, ‘ *O Domine, in fapientia omnia fecifti* : haud injuriâ exclamationem alteram fubjecit, *terra, O Domine, plena eft benevolentia tuâ.*

O infœlicem humanæ naturæ fortem,
O homines infortunatos : qui, hujufce orbis dominatores conftituti, in hoc orbe miferi foli deprehenduntur ; qui tot animalium principes, unufcujusque fua quatenus poftulat natura perfecti, imperfecti foli effinguntur ! Cuinam enim bono dux ifta et jucundiffima comes vitæ, ut vanè garriunt philofophi, ratio infervit ? Quapropter divinæ ifta auræ particula nobis conceffa eft ? Anne, ut perfectionis iftius, iftius virtutis apicem hominibus oftendat, quem natura humana nequit attingere ; anne ob ea ut excruciet homines, quæ hominum natura effugere nequit,

nequit, commissa; ane ut miseros homines reddat? *Talia, O Domine, procul tibi absint consilia!* Actionum ergo humanarum moderatrix ista conceditur, ut actiones morales dirigat, ut appetitus cohibeat, ut vitam suavem atque jucundam reddat. Ei itaque assequendo fini aut sufficit ratio, aut non. Si non, impar est fini instituto; ac homines, quibus hujusce finis gratiâ ratio conceditur, eatenus sunt imperfecti: Omne vero ens e manibus creatoris perfectum evasit. Fini igitur proposito sufficit ratio: nunc autem temporis fini isti rationem haudquaquam iustificere experientia quotidiana testatur; ergo olim se rem ita habuisse necesse est. Atque ex his ratiociniis sequitur, talem fuisse primævum naturæ humanæ statum, qualem a primis scriptoribus expressum accepimus.

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Quantum miseriarum vitam hominum obsidet, neminem latet: ac prævidentia ipsa miseriarum quæ eludi nequeunt,
quas

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quas neque prudentia effugere, neque ipsa virtus repellere valet, ærumnas istas graviores reddit. Ferarum vita in malis versatur; illas vero nec præteriti recordatio, neque timor futuri excruciatas tenet; natura illis largita est jucunda oblivia vitæ. Ast morbi, dolores, mors, et pallida malorum cohors, non modo hominum vestigia comites certissimi insequuntur, oculis autem continuo obversantur, et mentibus quasi inhærent. Et si partem alteram vitæ humanæ, lucidam nempe et splendidiorum, contempleremur, certa homines ne minima quidem voluptas manet. Hoccine vero creatoris benevolentis, hoccine est Dei optimi maximi; ut animantes crearet, quas magna et plurima necessarió premunt mala; quarum vitas voluptates parvulæ tantùm, breves, et fortuitæ mulcent?

Quid, nonne hominis vita, affectibus cum ratione bellum civile gerentibus, certamine perpetuo versatur? Meliora laudare atque probare, deteriora sequi,
humanum

humanum est. Spes, Timor, Ira, Grex totus affectuum *ασυταξίαν* ciens, vicissim dominatur; dum ratio, gubernatrix veluti timida et pusilla, fervis istis rebellibus politiam hominis internam administrandam tradit. Facultatum hanc humanarum dominam et reginam, quid verum est atque decens monentem, homines male adversantur: iis, prava jubentibus, aures faciles præbent; quodcunque mali consulant, obtemperare heu nimis parati! Hebescentibus denique et quasi defatigatis appetitibus torva aspici redit ratio; delictique nos tunc ferò pudet, piget, pœnitetque. Quid multis? Peccare, et pœnitere, atque iterum peccare, vitam humanam miserâ vicissitudine distinguit.

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Humani generis Picturæ tali tabellam alteram et longè diversam jam tandem conferre liceat: hominis imaginem, innocentiae et fœlicitatis compotem. Corporis atque animi vires puta aptè amicèque conspirantes: mentem scientiâ omnigenâ instructam; arbitrium voluntati
Dei

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Dei inferviens; appetitus congrua et consentanea quærentes, affectus denique summissos et rationi obtemperantes: facultatibus humanis ita ordinatis, (et facultates rectè ordinari quid vetat?) harmonia Platonica inde sequitur: hinc Moyses Status Paradisiacus; hinc ætas aurea poetarum.

Perfectionis istius apicem, in qua homines primitus creati demonstrat ratio, ipsorumque conditionem, quam experientia hodierna probat, qui perpenderit philosophi, tantæ metamorphoseos causas hinc et inde quæsierunt. Quin talis effecta fuit Morum atque Indolis Mutatio, nemo fere dubitavit; causa usque latebat. Nodum istum resolvere, nodum herclè Deo vindicæ dignum, veritatis fons et principium Deus ipse dignatus est: *Nubesque inter et tenebras, quæ obvolvunt eum, æquitatem et justitiam solo ejus insidere, demonstravit.* Et ecquis adeo iniquus est rerum æstimator, qui œconomia divinae explicationem talem nullius ponderis

aut

aut ufûs leviufculi pendit ? At nihilne
 intereft, ut de Deo et nobis ipsis recte
 fentiamus ? Nihilne intereft, ut nobis
 innotefcat, quam ob culpam in hunc
 mundum, veluti in carcerem, Deus ho-
 mines relegavit ; miferiis innumeris ob-
 fitos, foelicitatis veræ vix umbris releva-
 tos ? Hæc denique nefeientibus, foeli-
 citatem eorum futuram ecquæ argumen-
 ta compertam facient ? Si hic mifer
 fim, et id unde fiat, nefeio ; quomodo
 fciam me non poft hac quoque miferum
 futurum ? Dubitationes iftas curafque
 follicitas, quibus tenetur quifque cui fua
 foelicitas cordi eft, Deus jam benignè
 diffipavit ; et formidinis loco fper novas
 fuppeditavit. Verbum igitur Dei, in
 fcripturis facris quafi jubare confcrip-
 tum, in queis reteguntur arcana, mundi
 ab origine primâ caliginofi erroris nebulis
 obvoluta, in queis folummodó falus, in
 queis nuda fimplexque veritas deprehen-
 ditur, animo facili gratoque amplecti,
 noftrum eft. Hoc duce ufa, vires novas
 ratio

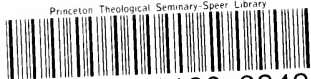
CONCIO
 IX.

CONCIO ratio depromet; quæ, si male fastidiosa
IX. ducem sequi dedignetur, in errorum
 turbine tumultuante illico immergitur :
 quo fit, ut nihil ferè adeo absurdum in-
 veniatur, quod non aliquis θεολογητων nos-
 stratum asseveravit.

F I N I S.



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