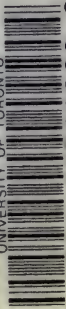


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LETTERS

ADDRESSED

TO A YOUNG MAN,

&c. &c.

VOL. II.



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1802

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LETTERS

ADDRESSED

TO A YOUNG MAN,

ON HIS FIRST ENTRANCE INTO LIFE,

AND

ADAPTED TO THE PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES
OF THE PRESENT TIMES.

BY

MRS. WEST,

AUTHOR OF "A TALK OF THE TIMES," "A GOSSIP'S STORY," &c. &c.

Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his way? By
taking heed thereto according to thy word.

PSALM 119. VER. 9.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

SECOND EDITION.

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1802.



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The first part of the paper is devoted to a general
 discussion of the subject. It is shown that the
 results of the present investigation are in
 agreement with those of other workers in the
 field. The second part of the paper is devoted
 to a detailed description of the experimental
 apparatus and the method of measurement. The
 results of the measurements are given in the
 following table.

Temperature (°C)	Value
20	0.12
30	0.15
40	0.18
50	0.22
60	0.28
70	0.35
80	0.45
90	0.60
100	0.80

The results of the measurements show that the
 value of the parameter increases with
 temperature. This is in agreement with the
 theoretical predictions. The present results
 are in good agreement with those of other
 workers in the field. The present results
 are also in agreement with the theoretical
 predictions. The present results are in good
 agreement with those of other workers in the
 field.

LETTERS,

Éc. Éc. Éc.

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR SON,

THE difficulty of opposing those rational Christians (for so they style themselves) whom I mentioned to you in my last letter, consists in their appealing to scripture whenever it countenances their opinions, and terming those texts interpolations which press hard upon their doctrines. We shall soon see what testimony we possess to disprove their fa-

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vourite

avourite assertion, respecting the pretended early corruption of the sacred volume.

Our present antagonists admit the assistances of human learning. They have called in its aid to disprove scripture testimony, nor have the champions of our faith shrunk from the test. They have tried to invalidate the Mosaic account of the deluge, and of the age of the world, by proofs drawn from natural history;—from the various strata of different minerals and fossils which have been successively deposited in the earth;—from the accumulation of soil upon torrents of lava which have flowed from the eruptions of burning mountains; and from a variety of other supposed vestiges of the vast antiquity of matter. Schemes of creation, which have agreed only in two points, namely, in their contradicting the assertions of revelation, and in their

their insuperable absurdity, have supplanted each other. Each of them has reigned the fashionable theory of the day, and then sunk into oblivion.

These puerilities have, however, had one advantage: they have provoked investigation, and have induced persons, who unite sound knowledge with humility, to step forth in defence of those truths which the wisest and best of mankind revered. The merits of Brydone's discoveries have been reduced to the agreeable language in which he dressed the jejune communications of his deistical correspondents; and the systems of Buffon and Darwin have been exploded by deeper reasoners, and more indefatigable geologists. The book of nature has been searched with minute investigation; and it has been found to speak the same language with the book of Revelation.

The records of one of the most ancient nations on the face of the earth were appealed to; and it was triumphantly proclaimed, that the scriptures of the Hindoos would overturn the allegorical fabric of Mosaical testimony. How wonderfully does the wisdom of God bring to nought the devices of presumptuous man! The very attempt that was expected to disprove the sacred writings has astonishingly tended to confirm them. Traditions of the fall of man, of the deluge, the character of Noah, and the promised restoration of mankind by a divine Saviour, are preserved among the old Sanscrit literature, blended indeed with fable, but sufficiently distinct to shew their original significancy. They constantly describe the evil spirit by the image of a serpent; and the gigantic remains of ancient art which appear in the island of Elephanta illustrate

illustrate these records; for a conqueror is there represented as treading upon a serpent. Let me observe, that the same image frequently occurs in Pagan mythology. Of all the forms of idolatry, it seems most strange that this dangerous offensive reptile should receive divine honours; yet it is supposed to have had more worshippers than any other idol. But in that worship much of its mysterious enmity to man, and somewhat of its future humiliation, was signified. It seems as if the Almighty compelled the prince of darkness to assist in keeping up a faint idea of the truth, even in that species of worship which he maliciously invented to proclaim and to continue the depravity of mankind.

But to return to the discoveries made by researches into Indian antiquities. It is no less certain than strange, that the

doctrine of the Trinity is also preserved in these writings. The Brahmins have interpolated the life of their fabulous Chreeshna with the following remarkable facts taken from the history of the true Redeemer: His humble birth (an extraordinary incident to be copied by a people who are more scrupulous than any other respecting the antiquity and pure nobility of descent). The visit of the magi; which remarkable fact is now discovered to have been caused by the predictions of Zoroaster, a Persian sage who was contemporary with Daniel at the court of Cyrus, and is known to have travelled into Judea. He absolutely foretold, that a sacred personage would be born of a virgin; and that his coming would be announced by a star, whose radiance would guide his worshippers to the place of his nativity. The massacre of the infants is also preserved

served in these records. Christ's descent into Hades, and ascension into Heaven. The Mosaical names of countries are also retained among the Hindoos; as are the names, and some traces of the histories, of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Solomon.

To these attestations of the widely-extended knowledge of scripture facts, I may add the testimony of Greek and Roman writers, who *undesignedly* establish the authenticity of that religion which their rulers strove to eradicate, and of whose founder and early preachers they wished to infuse a contemptible idea. Tacitus and Suetonius relate, that the world in general was in anxious expectation of some great character about the time of our Lord's birth. The principal part of his history, of the labours and sufferings of his apostles and the primitive Christians, with the de-

struction of the Jewish nation, have received this *indirect* confirmation from the enemies of our faith, who wrote at the time when these transactions took place. The impostor Mahomet has since given his impure evidence to the same facts. The departure of a shepherd people from Egypt, who had been ill-used by the natives; the preservation of Moses; the journeyings of the fugitives, their settlement in Canaan, and subsequent abhorrence of idolatry, are preserved by very ancient authors. Egyptian, Phœnician, Greek, and Roman writers, relate traditions respecting the original formation of the world from rude shapeless matter; the sabbatical institution; a state of original innocence, and of wilfully incurred depravity; the institution of sacrifice, a rite which human invention never could have combined with the pardon of sin, but which

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is general in almost all nations ; the existence of an evil spirit ; an expected Saviour ; the great age of the patriarchs ; ten generations before the deluge ; eight persons preserved in the ark, and the general dispersion of mankind. Whoever can believe that such a correspondent detail of facts could be *accidentally* inserted by authors living in ages and countries widely dissevered, without being derived from one general tradition, need not urge want of credulity as a reason for rejecting Mosaical testimony.

The fulfilment of prophecies is another proof of the divine inspiration of the Old Testament ; and I would entreat you to give particular attention to the writings of the learned on this interesting subject, where you will find proofs of the *literal* accomplishment of prophecies which were certainly delivered many hundred years before.

Princes are pointed out by name, as Jofiah and Cyrus, who, some generations before their birth, were appointed to overthrow idolatry, and to restore the Jewish church. Cities are devoted to destruction, which at the period of the prophets' inspiration were flourishing in the highest style of Asiatic grandeur. Could mere human prescience have taught Isaiah, that Babylon should shine with a splendor unknown in the annals of former times, and then become a noisome pool, a dangerous morass, the haunt of wild beasts and venomous reptiles? In his days it was the capital of a small state, and first known to the Jews by ambassadors which its monarch sent to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery from sickness.

Could Ezekiel have foreseen, without supernatural aid, that the flourishing city of Tyre, which in his time contained
in

in her harbours the riches of the then known world, should be overwhelmed by a mighty conqueror, whom, from his celebrity and extended triumphs, he calls by the name of the terrible subduer of his native land? Could he, *uninspired*, have related the very circumstances of the siege by which Alexander afterwards subdued that famous city, or the succeeding calamities which should reduce the proud mistress of the sea, whose merchants sat among princes, to a barren beach, on which, at this time, a few necessitous fishermen continue to build their miserable huts, and to spread their nets to the sun?

Daniel was a captive among the Chaldeans; and during the early part of Nebuchadnezzar's victorious reign, no seeds of dissolution appeared in his extensive empire. Yet that was the period in which the prophet disclosed to the King the succession of three other

monarchies. The Persians, the immediate followers of the Assyrians, were a people then scarcely known; but the holy seer extended his views to the isles of the Gentiles, as Greece was then termed; and foresaw not only the conflicts between Alexander and Darius, but the wars of his successors, the rise of Roman greatness, and events which evidently extend to the end of time. Could this man, though proverbially endowed with wisdom, discover these remote contingencies by mere political sagacity?

Was it with human ken that Moses looked through the long records of time, and traced the future fortunes of the people whom he was conducting along the wilderness in search of a promised country? He saw that they were stubborn and disobedient; but he saw also, that the Almighty, however severe
in

in punishing the immediate offenders, steadily adhered to the race of faithful Abraham, and renewed with the rising generation the covenant which he had made with the patriarchs, their pious ancestors. Had not he, therefore, who so well knew the unchangeableness of the Divine nature, reason to conclude, that if they continued to offend they would always be corrected and speedily pardoned? Yet he predicted the Babylonish captivity, and their return to their native land; the appearance of a prophet like unto himself, that is, the proclaimer of a divine dispensation, whom they were commanded to hear; the punishments incident to their rejection of that mild and merciful law which was to be delivered through a mediator, as they themselves requested at the time when they were overwhelmed by the terrors of the divine appearance at Sinai. Their dispersion

sion into all nations, and their final restoration in the latter days. Three thousand two hundred and fifty years have elapsed since the death of Moses, and one of his predictions still remains unfulfilled.

I cannot, without feeling a sentiment of horror, follow those who dare to question the inspiration of our Lord's prophecies. If there be any truth in history, Christ suffered about forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the particulars of which event he foretold with minute exactness. At the time of his passion, Judea had been recently incorporated with the Roman empire; it was governed by one of its officers, and was protected by its legions. The Jews had no cause to dread any foreign enemy; and as to the probability of domestic insurrection producing such fatal consequences as the total overthrow of their state, by provoking the indignation.

nation of their masters, the Romans had given no previous instance of such severe treatment of their tributaries ; and the Jewish historian plainly proves, that Titus was *reluctantly* urged to cruelty by unheard-of provocations ; and that it was his particular wish to preserve the temple, the awful site of Mosaical worship, even after it had been made the asylum of that desperate faction which fulfilled the divine prediction, and proclaimed by their crimes the authority of the Messiah, whom they abjured. This temple owed its destruction to one of those accidents by which the Almighty continually confounds the purposes of man, and makes second causes subservient to the plans of his providence. Contrary to the avowed determination of Titus, it was destroyed ; and with it fell the dispensation which had been superseded

perfed by the commiffion of the rejected Jesus.

You will remember, that the histories which proclaim the accomplifhment of thefe, and various other important prophecies, were not written by perfons who were interefted in the events fo correfponding. The ancient Greek and Roman authors were Pagans. If they really knew of the exiftence of a fmall fecluded nation, who lived by pafturnage amid the mountains of Palestine, they defpifed their infignificance, and hated them for their unfofial habits. If they bore testimony to the truth of the fared oracles, it was unintentionally ; for they had either never heard of them, or they knew of their exiftence only from vague indefinite rumour. They laboured to exalt the triumphs of an Alexander and a Titus, and thus gave their *undefigned* attestation

attestation to the omniscience of an *unknown* God.

It was Josephus, a Jew, whose bigoted attachment to the law of Moses had resisted the miracles of the Messiah, and the preaching and sufferings of his disciples, who was chosen by the Almighty to declare to the world that all which his beloved Son had foretold was accomplished by the ruin of a nation, and the downfall of a worship, which the historian with patriotic zeal laboured to magnify and preserve. A passage has been inserted in this writer's works, which briefly describes the main circumstances of our Lord's life, and acknowledges that his doctrines then existed. The learned are generally agreed in rejecting this, as a clumsy forgery, from its appearing in the form of an insulated paragraph, without any antecedent or subsequent reference; and
because,

because, if Josephus really wrote it, he could not have continued a *sincere* Jew, which all his writings prove him to have been. The cause of Christianity gains by rejecting the spurious passage ; for, undesigned coincidence is a better support than an elaborate vindication. We may now affirm, that a Jew, who joined with his countrymen in refusing to *hear* the prophet that Moses had foretold, is one of our strongest *human* evidences to prove that he really came from God.

We Protestants receive another confirmation of our faith from the prophecies ; and that is from those relating to Antichrist, which have been signally fulfilled. A late writer * has explained the predictions relating to this wonderful power, which should corrupt, harass,

* Kett's " History the Interpreter of Prophecy."

and seduce the Christian world, as relating to three opposers of divine truth, who have *successively* appeared; the Papal power, Mahometanism, and Infidelity. The two former are universally allowed, by such writers of the reformed churches as have considered this subject, to have been *clearly* prefigured in the prophecies of Daniel, St. Paul, St. Peter, and, above all, in the Revelations: The circumstances relating to the first are so strongly marked, that it is impossible to mistake the similitude; and it is very worthy of observation, that, so early as the fourth century, these predictions were applied by the fathers to some enemy which should arise out of the ruin of the Roman empire; and, conceiving that it would be more terrible to the faith even than Pagan Rome, they prayed for the continuance of the latter. We, who have lived to see the
decline

decline of this formidable power, which, springing out of the church of Christ, attempted to destroy its parent, cannot but feel awfully impressed by recollecting, that in the infancy of that church, while the doctrines of its founder were proclaimed by men divinely inspired, while those doctrines were confirmed by miracles, and, notwithstanding the opposition of persecutors, collected disciples from every quarter of the world; —that then, even during that period of internal purity, painful conflict, and supernatural aid, the apostles predicted the corruptions which prosperity and security would introduce. They foresaw usages directly contrary to the precepts which they had enjoined; and idolatrous worship, notwithstanding their *marked* prohibitions; a cruel persecuting power, in spite of their injunctions of brotherly love. They also announced
that

that the days of this tyranny were numbered ; that true religion should survive the bloody conflict, and shine forth with renovated splendor.

We will now proceed to view some of the *internal* evidences of the truth of the two revelations which God has made to mankind ; beginning with the Mo-
saic. If the historical scriptures of the Old Testament were fabricated by the Jews, why did they invent such a disgraceful narrative of their own transgressions ; their continual lapses into that sin of idolatry which their laws so strictly prohibited ; their defeats, captivities, and other chastening calamities ? How dissimilar are their early records from that of any other nation in these particulars ! They never triumph but through the assistance of God ; they are often defeated, not through the weakness of the Deity whom they worship,
nor

nor by the power of their enemies, but because they have grievously sinned. The like may be observed with respect to the prophecies which they have so carefully preserved. They are mostly filled with severe reproofs and awful threatenings, occasionally directed to other nations, but chiefly addressed to rebellious Israel and backsliding Judah. The promises of mercy are principally distant, and all prefaced by an intimation that they must be deserved by repentance; and they are interspersed with positive declarations of what must have been peculiarly painful to Jewish pride and prejudices, namely, that the Gentiles, whom they despised and abhorred, would become in their stead the *chosen* people of God.

If Moses was a mere human legislator, how comes it that his institutions are still obeyed? He flourished many ages before
before

before Lycurgus, Solon, or Numa, who were esteemed the wisest of mankind in the ages in which they respectively lived; and *they* travelled to remote regions, to form a body of laws that should combine every possible advantage which collective wisdom could bestow. These laws were solemnly imposed, and received with reverence; and the nations for whom they were designed grew powerful and renowned under the influence of those institutions.

Yet of these nations, history, my dear child, is now the only repository. No people, no body of men, not even a few exiles, are influenced by what a goddess whispered to Numa in "the Egerian grot," or by what Lycurgus from his own *perpetual* exile bound his countrymen to obey.

The present inhabitants of Greece boast a descent from that ingenious race
 who

who were so renowned in arts and arms. After the conquest of their country by the Romans, they became a province subject to that martial people, and governed by the same rulers; they were afterwards separated from it, and honoured with the seat of independent empire. In the fifteenth century they were subdued by the Turks, to whom they have since continued subject. We read of no migrations arbitrarily imposed by their conquerors; they remain in the land of their fathers; and neither the Roman nor the Turk changed the laws of the nations whom they enslaved, except by seizing the sovereign authority. The manners of these people are strongly marked by the peculiarities which distinguish their ancestors; and even their flexile forms and elegant features announce them to be the same *individual* race from which ancient artists

ists sketched these models of grace and beauty, which you have heard so highly extolled. Yet, though living upon the same spot, and preserving the same manners, they retain no recollection of the laws and polity of their ancestors: while the Jews have continued a *distinct unmixed* people; and, though they have been driven into every nation under heaven, and cruelly treated in all, they continue to be governed by their own law; they preserve their own customs; and they multiply (at least they do not diminish) under the unprecedented calamities and persecutions that have pursued them, not for a short period, but for above seventeen hundred years. The Assyrians and the Romans have either perished from the face of the earth, or they have been blended in the general mass of human kind. The Persians and the Greeks have

changed their religion and their laws; but an obscure people, who inhabited a small tract of country, have preserved their sacred institutions, and the writings in which they are contained, uncorrupted and unaltered, for above three thousand years. Let scepticism account for this astonishing circumstance by any other means than by the peculiar Providence and will of God, or by the strong impression which the miracles attending the first promulgation of the law, and the wonderful events of their subsequent history, have made upon the minds of the people.

And may we not ask, would they in early times have submitted to such burdensome ceremonies, unless they had been convinced that their lawgiver was authorized by a divine command to impose them? The existence of those ceremonies authenticates the an-

tiquity of the books in which they are enjoined ; while the nature of them proves their divine origin. I need not insist upon the excellency of the moral law, which is acknowledged as far to exceed the purest dictates of heathen wisdom, as the holiness of the Gospel transcends that which is required by the *preparatory* dispensation. In that view the Mosaical law should be principally considered. It was given in a dark ignorant period ; and its primary intentions were to preserve a *chosen* people from the seductions of idolatry, and to make them, through their knowledge of the true God, *depositaries* of his promises for the future regeneration of the world. This idea explains the meaning of those sacrifices for sin which were continually enjoined, and which were calculated to impress on the minds of those who offered them a consciousness of offence,

and of the necessity of some atonement. The reason of many of the prohibitory statutes cannot be clearly ascertained at this distance of time; but, as we gain a clearer light into the antiquities of eastern nations, we may very probably discern the propriety of what we now deem strange. Mr. Bryant* has accounted for one extraordinary injunction, "Thou shalt not seethe a calf in its mother's milk." He ascertains that veal, boiled in milk, was a favourite dish served up to the worshippers of the Syrian idols; and that, by restricting the Jews from the use of it, the Almighty gave them a protection against the allurements of idolatry, which he who knew the tendency of human appetites could alone suggest. A change of garments between the sexes is also

* In his Treatise on the Authenticity of Scripture.

forbidden,

forbidden, and for a similar reason: a promiscuous change of apparel preceded the shameful rites which were performed in the temples of those impure deities whose "love-tales infected Sion's daughters."

I have heard both these injunctions pointed out as arguments that the Deity could not have propounded a law to mankind which contained such senseless trivial restraints; and since I have seen the reason of them explained by the learned gentleman whom I have just mentioned, I have bowed with lowly reverence to that Wisdom which could descend to regulate those minutiae of manners that have such a powerful influence upon conduct; and, by forbidding customs which might lead to evil, could thus strike at the germ of wickedness.

The Old Testament cannot be a forgery of the Jews, for it clearly pre-

dicts the birth and sufferings of our Lord. In proof of its existence many centuries prior to those events, we can produce the testimony of heathen writers. It was translated into the Greek language, by the command of a King of Egypt, three hundred years before our Saviour's incarnation. This copy is called the Septuagint, and it contains all the prophecies which relate to Christ.

Four hundred years before this Greek translation of holy writ was made, the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, had been copied by the Samaritans. A strong national and religious enmity subsisted between the Jews and this people, who were descended from those heathen colonists that succeeded the ten tribes in the land of Israel. No alterations, therefore, could be made in the law *subsequently* to that period, as either

party

party would instantly have perceived the change, and have been anxious to detect and expose the forgery.

To go back to an earlier part of Jewish history. Copies of the law, and other inspired writings, were successively deposited in the sanctuary, and preserved with the greatest care. After the Babylonish captivity, they were again collected by Ezra, about four hundred years before the birth of our Lord. They could not, therefore, be forged after that event; for at that time a nation was in being, whose customs proved their existence; and if they then existed, even the prophecies in them which relate to the Messiah shew them to have been divinely inspired.

Whoever really believes in the truth of the Christian religion, as delivered in our Gospels and other holy writings, must believe, not only in the Divine

commission of Moses, and the inspiration of the prophets, but the *actual* reality of the facts which are contained in the historical Scriptures. Our Lord and his apostles frequently allude to them, not as fables and traditions, but as truths. The stories of Balaam and Jonah are among the most singular of these narratives, and our sceptics term them ridiculous and incredible. Yet our Saviour confirms the latter, by comparing his own lying in the grave, a fact which no Christian can deny, with Jonah's abiding three days in the body of the fish that swallowed him. Saint Peter refers to the account of Balaam, for an illustration of the conduct of those evil teachers who should corrupt the Christian doctrine in the last days. No Christian, I again repeat, can reject the Old Testament, and yet admit the inspiration of Saint Paul, who affirms that
the

the Jews were the depositaries of the lively oracles of God. He does not in this famous text speak only of the law, or the prophets, or of the historical, devotional, or moral books; but of the *whole* Scriptures; and he informs the Romans, that, by being made the guardians of those sacred writings, the Jews possessed a privilege which gave them a decided superiority over the Gentile world.

Before I proceed further, let me endeavour to give you a clear idea of what inspiration means; and I will copy the instructive page of the Bishop of Lincoln, as happily illustrative of the subject. “ In some cases inspiration

“ suggests clearness and precision in

“ relating words and occurrences; in

“ others, it communicates superhuman

“ ideas; in others, it delivers predic-

“ tions, which even the prophets them-

“ selves did not understand. But in
 “ every book which contains any in-
 “ spired truth, we may be certain that
 “ the Providence of God has guarded
 “ the *whole* of that book from the ad-
 “ mission of falsehood; for, would he lay
 “ snares for his creatures, which the
 “ human understanding could not avoid?
 “ These observations particularly apply
 “ to the historical books, which are not
 “ mere national annals, but a compen-
 “ dious selection of such events as tend
 “ to illustrate God’s manner of dealing
 “ with the sons of men; and their re-
 “ bellious conduct to him, also to ex-
 “ plain the progress of prophecy, and
 “ from the sad proof of human cor-
 “ ruption to shew the necessity of re-
 “ demption.”

To the above let me add some miscel-
 laneous observations collected from other
 authors. “ Miracles,” says Dr. Hey,
 “ cannot

“ cannot be conceived credible in any
 “ other light, than as attestators to the
 “ truth of a new revelation, or creden-
 “ tials to its teachers. The first mi-
 “ racles that ever were performed by
 “ man, graced the mission of the Jewish
 “ Legislator, and first High-Priest, when
 “ they were sent to comfort their af-
 “ flicted countrymen, and to awe their
 “ unjust oppressors. Prophecy is a species
 “ of miracles. Were prophecies per-
 “ fectly plain, it might seem possible for
 “ human devices to accelerate or to ob-
 “ struct their completion.” Sir Isaac
 Newton observes, that, a little previous
 to the accomplishment of a prophecy, a
 more general expectation of some impor-
 tant event is excited ; and the attention
 of the learned is more closely directed
 to those writings in which the mysterious
 prediction is contained. He therefore
 supposed, that those relating to the de-

struction of Antichrist were fast approaching; and subsequent events have justified his conclusion, so far as the Papal and Mahometan powers were prefigured by this designation.

The language of prophecy is not, as infidels assert, vague and indefinite; but certain symbols always refer to similar explanations. A prison, and prisoners, are the common terms used to denote a state of pagan ignorance. The sun, moon, and stars, are the emblems of the ruling powers; and their fall from heaven describes changes in the governments. Popular commotions, and wars, are ever described by the apt similitude of raging waves of the sea. Allusions to the earth denote times of tranquillity. Nations are frequently described by the symbols assumed by their kings. A ram's head was one of the regal ornaments worn by the kings of Persia; and

and the Macedonians were called the goat's people two hundred years before Daniel used those distinguishing signs in the sublime and almost historically descriptive prophecy which proclaims the progress of the great "Emathian conqueror*."

Prophecy has often a double sense. This consideration will enable you to comprehend those predictions of Christ which are contained in the latter part of the 24th chapter of St. Matthew, and the corresponding passages in St. Mark and St. Luke. They relate first to the great changes which took place in the time of Constantine, when the kingdoms of this world became the kingdoms of Christ, and they will be again fulfilled in the consummation of all things.

* Kett's "History, the Interpreter of Prophecy."

Moses wrote one thousand years prior to any Greek author. Malachi, the last of the prophets, was contemporary with Herodotus the first of their historians. The Jews esteemed Malachi the last of their inspired writers; and after his death they closed the sacred canon. For, as prophecy ceased with him, they would not even mix those historical facts which they knew to be true, such as the books of Maccabees, with Divine inspiration. The early Christians received only those books as sacred which the Jews had previously adopted. They could neither add to, deduct from, nor anywise alter, writings which were also in the hands of their adversaries, and to whose decision, as the standard of truth, both parties appealed.

If great attention and much previous information are necessary when we peruse the works of any ancient author, must

must not these qualities be peculiarly requisite when we examine a record antecedent by many centuries to any other composition? Instead of cavilling at the Old Testament because it is so contrary to our present habits and ideas, a reflecting mind will see in that very contrariety a proof of its authenticity. Its narratives, like those of the Gospel, are plain, characteristic, natural, and impartial. They are neither studied eulogiums on any particular hero, nor a systematic regular account composed to further a particular aim. They testify that they pass over large portions of time; and some events which happened during those chasms are afterwards incidentally described. They faithfully pourtray the weaknesses, the fears, the desires, and the sorrows of human nature, with a simplicity which proves them to be genuine descriptions
of

of *real* events. Incidents are preserved, which a fabulist would either never have thought of, or else have rejected as contrary to his design. Actions are described, which would have been buried in oblivion by any author who did not feel his regard to the perfection of his composition overwhelmed by a preternatural impulse. The sublime uses which Dr. Priestley ascribes to historical knowledge, may be derived in their highest perfection from the study of those writings which many of his associates take every opportunity to decry.

It is worthy of remark, that travels into the eastern countries have always tended to confirm the authenticity of Scripture narratives and descriptions, by elucidating allusions, and proving the existence of local usages. I will only instance the Abyssinian custom of wearing a large horn, bound upon the head,

in

in days of festivity and triumph, which Mr. Bruce mentions. This discovery illustrates many passages in the Psalms, in which the royal shepherd pours forth his gratitude to his God for having "exalted his horn on high."

The types and figures which abound in the Old Testament are, by some, made a plea for rejecting it. It must be confessed, that fertile imaginations have often indulged themselves in a great latitude of shadowy analogy between the two dispensations of God's will; but their carrying the similitude to a ridiculous excess, is no reason why we should deny a fact which revelation attests, I mean that there is a marked and designed coincidence. The preparatory law was a schoolmaster to bring the world to Christ. The promised Saviour, faintly alluded to in the sentence denounced on the serpent, was

humbly

humbly expected by succeeding ages ; till, at the grand epocha of selecting a peculiar people to receive and preserve the divine promises, the awful event of his atoning sacrifice was impressed on the mind of Abraham, the father of the faithful, by a visible sign, which no parent could forget, namely, a command to sacrifice his long promised, dearly beloved son. Bishop Warburton's idea on this subject illustrates the reason of that extraordinary circumstance. He thinks that Abraham was extremely solicitous to know what the great spiritual blessings promised to mankind through his seed should be. In consequence of his requesting this communication, he was required to sacrifice his son. He prepared to obey, fully confident that God would either reanimate the lifeless corpse, or by some other means fulfil the promises which had been made

made to him, and which he knew he could not forfeit by obedience to a positive command. He stretched out his arm to slay his child; an angel stopped his hand, pointed to the visible object of a ram caught in the thicket; and, as the bishop supposes, communicated to him a clear view of the great sacrifice of atonement, by one of his posterity, according to the flesh, being really offered in that very place for the sins of the whole world. Our Lord assures us, that Abraham enjoyed the honour of a full revelation in this particular; "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." From many passages we may infer, that Abraham's mind was impressed with the conviction that one of his race would be the restorer of mankind; that is, would satisfy divine justice for the offence of Adam. The curse which
had

had been denounced upon the earth had already been greatly alleviated by the blessings which had been given to Noah, to whom a regular return of seasons, of seed-time and harvest, was promised. The sterility, therefore, which had intervened between the fall and the flood had abated; and we know that Abraham's enlightened mind certainly looked forward to *spiritual* promises.

You will perceive, from reflecting on the above hints, that Isaac really was a remarkable type, or antecedent representation, of the expiatory sacrifice of our Lord. Our present customs are not calculated to give you any just idea of the strong effects which such similitudes were likely to produce among a people who were addicted to expressive gestures and emblematical actions. The eastern nations have the same tendency at this time. The Almighty constantly
adapts

adapts the style of his instructions to the manners of the people to whom he addresses them; and thus he enforces his precepts, by adverting to the peculiar habits and propensities of those whom he requires to obey them.

The Mosaic and Christian dispensations have this marked distinction, which would alone prove their divine origin. They made our habits and propensities *subservient* to the cause of religion, which was superadded to the natural character, only changing it in those points which were morally wrong. Remember this, my dear child, and apply it to those visionary attempts at reformation which the dangerous philosophy of the closet (so inapplicable to real life) frequently suggests.

To conclude the subject of types, on which I have enlarged further than I intended. Christianity makes no use
of

of them, because it leads to no other dispensation. The omission of them is as strong a proof that no further declaration of God's will is to be expected, as the use of them in the Old Testament is, that mankind were by that constantly instructed to look for a clearer revelation. Let us remember, that they were understood by the people for whose use they were intended; that they encouraged the patriarchs and confessors of old times to stem the torrent of general corruption, and to feel a firm dependence upon God; and they tend to confirm *our* faith, when, with humble diligence and profound attention, we investigate the awful plans that Providence gradually unfolded.

It is become a fashion among our sceptics to allegorise scriptural narratives. This custom is also very prevalent among mystical enthusiastic people.

The

The method is extremely injurious to the cause of true religion; but God forbid that I should ascribe the same motives to the two parties who adopt it. The author of "The Rights of Women" called Moses's account of the fall an allegorical poetical story; and declared, that she would never view it in any other light, though an angel came from heaven on purpose to convince her. This lady, you must know, though an advocate for reason, never reasoned; but formed her religion from feeling and sentiment, and her philosophy from intuitive knowledge. I trust, my dear boy, that you never will reject the only account of an event upon which our religion is built, which was certainly communicated by inspiration, and which all our views of human life, and all our researches into antiquity, confirm—because, in the plain brief narrative of
what

what happened six thousand years ago, there are some circumstances which you cannot comprehend. The remembrance of the fall of our ancestors is not preserved to satisfy the curious, but to instruct the humble; not to gratify philosophical fastidiousness, but to open the grand plan of God's government and method of dealing with mankind. You must not consider it as a parable or allegory, because scripture does not contain one instance of any allegory professing to relate an actual fact. Parables abound in holy writ, but the slightest attention may distinguish between these and real history. Figurative modes of speech are continually used in the prophetic and poetical parts of the Bible; but the narration of any event is always communicated in the plainest and clearest language.

The

The Mosaical law is objected to, on account of its enjoining a variety of sacrifices, between which and the forgiveness of sins our reasoners can see no analogy. And we now come to the true reason of that virulent animosity with which the defenders of the Socinian system attack the Old Testament; for they are conscious that they must either deny the divine institution of sacrifice, or abandon their objections to the doctrine of the atonement. If the former remains as the type, the latter must be received as the fulfilment.

When a fact or a doctrine is plainly declared in Scripture, no weight is due to probable reasoning, metaphysical speculation, or conjectural criticism. We have only to examine whether it be really there, and to satisfy our minds that the writings in which it is contained

were divinely revealed.* I shall not enter upon those arguments on which natural religion is founded; for, however valuable they may be to those who do not possess the light of the Gospel, to us, who do, they certainly are but secondary considerations. Whatever excellence may be theoretically ascribed to the light of reason, the state of those nations who were guided by that alone, irrefragably proved the necessity of a divine revelation, to fix a proper standard in morals, as well as to give just ideas of the Creator, and of the future destiny of man. The Greeks, though a highly polished people, were very far indeed, in these respects, below the Jews, who were destitute of many of those natural advantages which the former possessed. And as to savage nations, we may speak of them from pre-

* Dr. Hey.

sent experience; in their rudest state, they even want words to express the essential truths on which religion is founded.* Our deists of latter times have, indeed, talked well on the subject of morals; but are they aware that they are indebted to Christianity for that clear knowledge of duty which they possess? Have they really more strength of mind, a clearer discrimination, a more elevated sense of right, than nature bestowed on Socrates, Plato, or Tully, and those other great sages whose names have been preserved, from the general wreck of time, as the wisest and most enlightened of mankind? If so, fame is very unjust to our present moralists, who, instead of eclipsing their predecessors, generally twinkle and disappear, the meteors of the moment.

* Bryant.

Reason tells us, it is probable that the Being who created us will supply us with that light which nature has denied. Without supernatural aid, all that we can discover is, that a God must exist, and that we depend upon him. This knowledge, with a few inborn notices of right and wrong, is all that nature can bestow. Revelation teaches us, that what reason thought probable really has happened. It produces a plan corresponding with the perceptions of nature; and it calls on reason to examine the evidences by which it proves its divine authority. It is the office of reason to examine these credentials with the most scrupulous care, and by such means to guard against imposition. If the new discovery attests its credibility by miracles, by prophecies, by internal marks of omniscient wisdom, such as consistency of plan, moral purity, and suitability

ability to the condition of humanity; if it is supported by corroborating truths which history, chronology, local habits, and the sufferings of its preachers, afford; above all, if it is confirmed by any preceding or subsequent revelation of the divine will, which bears the above-named signs of being genuine, reason must receive such united testimony, and bow to it as to the authority of God.* Her business then is, not to cavil at what she discovers of mystery in this revelation, but to apply her powers to investigate and enforce the precepts that relate to human duty. If reason possesses that humility which ought always to attend the qualities of a finite being, she must confess, that a divine revelation must necessarily contain something that her unassisted powers

* The reader will here discover the author's obligations to Paley's Evidences.

could never have discovered. If she recollects her own gradual increase, she will know, that what was inexplicable in childhood seemed capable of solution in youth, and became plain in manhood. If she attends to the varieties of the human mind, she will own that it has as many gradations as the human form. If reason is to decide on the attributes of God, and the mysteries of Providence, should it not be the aggregate wisdom of the Christian world, and not that of each individual? But the former has already decided, and bowed to revelation. The deists, in their attempt to erect the latter into an infallible guide, do not merely ascribe such pre-eminence to this quality when lodged in the bosom of a virtuous sage; but they thus honour the reason of a fool or a villain, whom they furnish with a ready plea to reject the Gospel, if, through negligence,

one assemblage of atoms assumes the appearance of a leaf, and another that of a stone? Are not gravitation, magnetism, and electricity, obliged to clothe their limited knowledge in those scientific terms which quaintly cover a paucity of ideas? Let reason fully explain all the mysteries of the natural world; for there, as well as in the world of grace, she now "sees through a glass darkly."

Knowledge is progressive; but Christianity has ever been most clearly understood in proportion to the degree of light which mankind possesses. By acknowledging this fact, we disprove the assertions of those who insinuate that our religion derives any support from ignorance and mental imbecility. In the lapse of ages we may more clearly comprehend its mysterious parts. Great progress has been made in sound theological

logical learning within these last three hundred years ; but we have apostolical authority for affirming, that, although whatever relates to saving faith and sound knowledge may be known in this life, full knowledge is reserved for that which is to come. There we shall know the divine nature even as we are known. In this infancy of our being we cannot, neither is it necessary that we should.

Does any reasonable person wonder that savages know less than civilized people ? Is it unjust that brutes should only comprehend what suits their nature ? We grant it would be so, if the duties of men were required from brutes. The limited knowledge of man would be equally unjust, if he were commanded to exercise the faculties of angels. The path of his duty is plain. If a finite being may dare to judge of the motives

of Omniscience in partially revealing the mysteries of the divine nature, may we not suppose that it was thereby intended to exercise our humility? (humility, a very much reprobated quality, and yet the ground-work of all Christian graces.) Another motive may be, to give us an experimental proof that we are now in the early or infantine state of our being; in which those faculties begin to expand, that shall in a future stage acquire vigour and perfection. This, if we will trust the *declared* word of God, will really be the case; and, doubtless, the third reason for this mixture of discovery and concealment, which we perceive in scripture, proceeds from a wish to quicken our desire for that promised felicity in which every secret will be revealed:

Dr. Hey, speaking of mysteries, or, as he frankly calls them, unintelligible doctrines,

doctrines, observes, " That to throw
 " aside notices from Heaven, because
 " we cannot understand them, is like
 " savages throwing gold and jewels into
 " the sea. And we do the same, if, in
 " order to avoid difficulties, we lower
 " them to what we esteem common
 " sense. Whether we understand God's
 " message or not, it is our business
 " faithfully to record it, and by prayers
 " sermons, hymns, and the like, to im-
 " print it on our minds."

Away then with those arguments
 which are drawn from analogies be-
 tween what cannot resemble each other,
 human motives and divine decisions!
 Tell us not that a great prince might
 act more nobly than Christianity repre-
 sents the Deity to have done, in not
 forgiving rebels without a stipulated
 ransom! We know, because reason
 assures us, from her examination of the

evidences above referred to, that he has made two revelations of his will; both of which are founded on the same idea of propitiation for sin. One *enjoined* typical sacrifices, the other *records* one great expiatory atonement. We also know, that either from the practice of the patriarchs, or from some gleam of knowledge caught from revelation, sacrifices universally prevailed in the heathen world, and were even practised in some of the American regions, though that continent had not, from time immemorial, any correspondence or intercourse with the old world. Various supposed efficacies were assigned to these rites. With some nations they were expiatory; with others, offerings of gratitude; but one general idea prevailed, namely, that they were acceptable to the gods.

We

We have, in my opinion, no more to do, after we have examined the credibility of the evidences by which Scripture proves its divine origin, than to determine whether what we now call by that term be really the same as was originally dictated by divine inspiration. Great learning is requisite to investigate the first point with the scrupulous attention that it well deserves; on the latter head, a few observations will enable us to form a just opinion.

The Scriptures have ever been preserved with peculiar care. Without referring to miraculous interposition, we may say, that the same divine Power who caused his will to be revealed to mankind would certainly guard the knowledge of such revelation, through the intervention of those second causes by which he regulates human affairs. The reverence which the Jewish and
Christian

Christian church felt for their respective charters, caused them to multiply and circulate copies. Every Jew was constrained to have a transcript of the law in his house, which he was daily to rehearse to his family; while the original, by which the fidelity of the rest was ascertained, was preserved in the ark of the covenant. Numerous copies of the Christian sacred writings were also quickly dispersed; and, as sects and heresies sprang up early in the church, the greatest care was taken that there should be no corruption of those holy records, to whose decision both parties appealed.

We have many manuscripts of the various books of Scripture: some are above a thousand years old, and some have been procured from remote countries. We have versions in various languages; yet all agree in affirming
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the same great fundamental truths. Dr. Kennicot examined seven hundred ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament, without perceiving *one material* difference. The Septuagint differs in no essential point from the Hebrew; and the Samaritan copy of the law is said to have only two interpolations, which were immediately noticed by the Jews.

The Trinitarians are charged by the Socinians with having *corrupted* the Gospels. Are they aware that they borrow this charge from those whom we term the orthodox, who, so early as the second century after Christ, accused the heretics of those times of this enormous offence? The early diffusion of the Scriptures, and the great reverence which the primitive Christians had for them, render either charge highly improbable. The New Testament did
not

not then rest quietly upon the shelf, as an heir-loom, possessed with indifference, and seldom reverted to. It was daily examined by people who had the most awful objects of death and torture always before their eyes; who felt themselves called upon either to deny its validity or to die in its defence; who saw in it the hope of immortality, and their title to an inheritance in a happier world.

As these reasons may persuade us, that any material alteration could not take place; so we have historical evidence to prove that there did not. Dr. Paley shews, that whoever attempted to give a narrative of our Saviour's life agreed in one general story, and represented one uniform character. Even those spurious gospels which the church early discovered and rejected, though they

they intermix many fables, yet retain the evangelical portrait and history of Christ. These gospels were mostly forged to support early heresies; some of which denied that our Lord really suffered; some assigned to him nothing but a spiritual ideal body; and others conceived that he was merely an inspired teacher. Another sort so intimately connected him with the father, as to maintain that the latter actually suffered upon the cross.

In opposition to these tenets, the earliest, or, as they are called by distinction, the apostolic fathers, who were nearly contemporary with the apostles, assert the divinity, humanity, miracles, sufferings, and resurrection of our Saviour. The quotations from our present Gospels during the early ages are so numerous, that Mr. Bryant doubts whether the fathers have omitted a
single

single verse that relates to any *doctrine*. The enemies of Christianity, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, by their ridicule of our doctrines, acknowledge that the early Christians held the same as we do. Indeed, they impute the miracles of our Lord and his apostles to magic, but they do not attempt to deny their publicity. Pliny too, a heathen writer, in his letter to the Emperor Trajan, gives the same account of the leading tenets of the Christians, telling him, that "they sung hymns to Christ as God."

The mysterious doctrines of our religion do not rest upon single texts. That of the atonement commences with Genesis, and pervades the whole series of the sacred writings. In support of that of the divinity of our Lord, it has been computed that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are named together in the New Testament forty-eight times.

Why,

Why, if the Son is only a great created being, and the Holy Ghost a faculty of the divine mind, are not some other created beings, and some other faculties, as, for instance, the Archangel Michael, and Justice, once joined to the sacred source of Deity? If Christ merely announces or patronizes Christianity, did not Moses do the first with respect to the law, and did not the Jews look upon the blessed angel whom I have just mentioned, as the guardian of their commonwealth? Let our adversaries, then, give a reason why these distinguished characters among *created* beings are never associated with God.

The famous text in St. John's first epistle, "There be three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one;" has occasioned much dispute, and the opinions of Trinitarians

nitarians are divided respecting its authenticity. We may, however, assert, that this is not our strongest evidence in support of a doctrine which is either *tacitly implied*, or *positively affirmed*, in every chapter of the New Testament. It is a doctrine on which the sublime evangelist St. John delights to dwell; and be it remembered, that, as he of all the apostles was most honoured by an intimacy with the Divine Word, while he resided among us; so he of all the apostles more particularly boasts of that species of inspiration which the Bishop of Lincoln describes as communicating superhuman ideas.

The voice of ecclesiastical history; the testimony of the early fathers; the usages of churches as remote as east and west, north and south, in the three then known quarters of the globe; the testimony of heathens, especially Pliny,
and

and Julian the apostate ; all accidentally affirm these facts, that the early Christians worshipped Christ as God ; that they baptised in the words which our Lord prescribed in the last chapter of St. Matthew's gospel ; and that they used the form of benediction which St. Paul introduced ; in which a separate blessing is implored from each person of the Trinity. The high importance which was early ascribed to the Scriptures ; the careful previous examination which every part of them went through before it was received by the church as worthy to be united to the sacred canon ; the multiplicity of copies which were every where diffused ; the constant appeals which controvertists on each side made to them as the standard of doctrine ; and, finally, the general scheme and tendency of the whole body of Scripture, manifestly prove that there has
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been no corruption of the original revelation. We can discover no doctrine foisted in; all is compacted and firmly bound together; and we must either receive it as a rule of faith, or totally reject it.

To those who profess that they not only esteem and reverence the moral precepts of the Gospel, but also believe them to be divinely inspired, and yet at the same time reject the mysterious doctrines which it contains, we may address this plain argument: What you despise is not only contained in the same volume with what you revere, but they are united with the most intimate combination, in the same chapters, verses, and sometimes sentences; they cannot, therefore, be interpolations; for, beside the external testimony which has been produced to shew that none of any importance could take place, internal evidence

dence proves the same fact. For the continual references to the grand scheme of redemption are casual, undesigned, often obscure, and rather *presupposing* a knowledge of this doctrine than *designedly* inculcating it. If, therefore, you do not receive the morality of the gospel as you would that of Confucius, or any other human composition, merely as matter of good counsel and expediency, but as a positive obligatory rule, you must receive the doctrines which are interwoven with it. The contexture will be rent and disfigured if you attempt to divide them. The terms of salvation, and the rule of life, are blended together. Either the Almighty tenders the one for our belief, and the other for our practice, or both are fictitious. The precepts naturally flow from the doctrines, and the analogy proves that they must be inseparable.

They

They will ask us, if we require them to believe what they do not understand: let us candidly answer that we do, and produce our own example as explanatory of what we mean by belief. In natural philosophy we take many things for granted, as truths, the principles of which we cannot ascertain. We only ask them to extend this acquiescence to things of a spiritual nature; to believe that God has revealed some particulars of his own nature, and principles of moral government. What he says must be true; what he does must be just. Can assenting to these general principles be deemed credulity? If we believe nothing but what we can minutely and accurately analyse or define, conviction must in almost every instance give place to scepticism.

Let

Let me produce two instances, as explanatory of the difficulty (I should rather say the impossibility) of altering whatever has obtained great publicity. If it were easy to eradicate what we dislike in scripture, and to substitute what supports our own opinions, why did not the prohibitions of image-worship, the command to administer the sacrament in both kinds to *all* the disciples, and, above all, the prophecies which relate to the usurpations of the Papacy, disappear from the sacred canon, while the church of Rome had it, at least in the western empire, *exclusively* in her custody? And why did not the Protestants, on their recovering possession of it, find some interpolated texts which enjoined the sale of indulgences, the doctrine of pilgrimages, penances, and all her other fopperies? The principles of this church justified, or rather inculcated, the practice

tice of pious frauds, which tended to support her own authority; and she had an opportunity, which the primitive church could not possess, of falsifying the scriptures; for holy writ, instead of being read, studied, and appealed to, remained in the envelope of a learned language, which was understood but by few even of the clergy, and was wholly unintelligible to the common people. Here was every chance that the corruption would have remained undiscovered; and nothing can be more dissimilar than the state of Christian knowledge in this period, and in that preceding the conversion of Constantine. Yet the sacred volume escaped uncontaminated by its corrupt guardians; and the reformers had only to appeal to it, and to restore it to general use, to overthrow all that mass of absurdity which had been founded on oral tradition,

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dition, or on apocryphal writings. Peter, as Dean Swift terms the church of Rome, did not alter his father's will; he only locked it up in a strong box, and forged a codicil.

Let us consider, whether it would be possible in these days to make several hundred alterations in any popular work, a play of Shakespeare for instance; (I do not mean mere verbal changes, but such as would affect the plot and character;) and to persuade the public, not that these changes were made on the authority of some unpublished manuscript which had received the author's last corrections, but that all copies actually were, and always had been, similar to the new edition. At whatever period these supposed alterations of the New Testament took place, such impudent nonsensical assertions must have imposed on the *bodily organs* as well as

the *rational faculties* of Christians. I hope this comparison is not indecorous; I am aware that it is very inadequate. Our national veneration for our admired bard, and the care with which critics guard his page from spurious insertions, cannot be compared with the zeal, attachment, and vigilance, which the Christian world *anciently* felt for their sacred charter of immortality. Nor can the number of our copies of our favourite author bear any resemblance to the infinite multitude of transcripts of holy writ which were diffused among all nations. In the second century, “the gospel was preached from Gades “to Ganges”; and, from a circumstance which attended the persecutions of Christians, there is reason to conclude, that almost *every* family possessed *one* copy of the New Testament.

Aware

Aware of the difficulties which must follow from persisting in this charge of interpolation, Dr. Priestley seems inclined to abandon it, and to contend that the apostles were only *partially* inspired. Admitting this, we lose no ground; for, grant inspiration to any part of a book, and you must allow the veracity of the whole, or affirm an impossible contract between Christ and Belial. Let me here again refer you to the Bishop of Lincoln's definition of inspiration: "If one part of a book contains any *inspired* truth, the *whole* of that book must be guarded by Divine Providence from the admission of falsehood." Granting, then, that the apostles could discover the mysteries for which we contend by the mere light of reason, their discoveries were true, or God would not have suffered them to be blended with those awful truths

which even Dr. Priestley affirms were *supernaturally* revealed.

As to the translation of scripture which is in general use, it was made early in the reign of King James the First. It had been preceded by various other translations, and by unwearied researches into original manuscripts. It had thus an opportunity of profiting by the errors of its predecessors, and of availing itself of that critical and philological sagacity which had been recently excited. Many urgent requisitions have lately been made for a new translation, some of which have come from people who wish to make the scripture more consonant to their own ideas, and others from those who wish to remedy verbal errors. The clamours of the first deserve no attention, unless they can disprove what our divines assert, that it is a faithful transcript of the original manuscripts.

nuscripts. It is generally deemed inexpedient to comply with the suggestions of the latter, there being greater danger of multiplying faults, than there are hopes of producing something faultless. The minds of men are familiarized to the expressions of the translation now in use; and there seems no cogent reason for changing them, unless they falsify the archetype.

The English Bible, however, possesses more than this negative commendation. Our most learned divines unite in terming it a wonderful and incomparable work; equally remarkable for its general fidelity of construction, and magnificent simplicity of language. It is also affirmed, that the zeal, local knowledge, and profound learning of the men who executed this glorious task, were far greater than the habits of the present times allow us to hope for in a

body of men sufficiently *numerous* to undertake and to examine the work. What I have before said of the number of manuscripts which Dr. Kennicot alone collated, may give you some idea of the *preparatory* knowledge which should precede the translation of any part of scripture; and this reflection may teach you how to appreciate the value of a translation of the whole by any one person, however learned, studious, dispassionate, and discerning.

When the productions of man nearly approach perfection, it is adviseable to remember the fallibility attached to all human efforts, and to beware of hazard-
ing the loss of the comparative excellence which we possess, by searching after a superlative degree which will ever be unattainable.*

* Dr. Hey.

Our church is charged with disturbing Christian unity, by requiring subscriptions to her incomprehensible creeds and unintelligible articles. She acknowledges that her creeds contain doctrines which are above the power of the human mind to comprehend; but these doctrines are founded upon scripture, and warranted by the belief of the primitive church. Her articles, she affirms, are not unintelligible to those who will study them with a diligent impartial mind. The doctrinal part of them is also founded upon scripture; and, by imposing them as a pledge of communion, she exercises that jurisdiction which *all* independent churches have ever possessed. But would the cause of unity be assisted by their abolition? The *rational* Christians are no more *one entire* body among themselves, than we and the presbyterians are *one*

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church.

church. They agree, indeed, in one point; namely, that reason should supersede faith; but they dissent in every other. They take the sacred volume into their hands with a resolution to new mould it; but they cannot suit it to each particular fancy, and their leaders at different times impugn and adopt the same tenet. Sometimes our Saviour is a great pre-existent spirit; at another, he is actually the son of Joseph. With some, there is a necessity for a mediator between God and man; with others, a redeemer and an intercessor are equally superfluous; and the benefits of Christ's mission are confined to his promulgating a purer code of morals. One set charge the apostles with being inconclusive reasoners, because they do not distinguish between argument and illustration. Another party points its weapons at the prophecies, and reduces them

them either to history or nonsense. Some *allegorise* the historical parts of scripture, while others *literally* explain the parabolical. But, though among each other they thus “agree to differ,” and support, invent, and attack tenets, as caprice or the love of novelty directs; the church of England is thought bigoted, illiberal, and uncandid, if she defends her own doctrines, either by restrictive statutes, or by the pens of her champions. Their hatred to a venerable permanent establishment, which has resisted adverse winds of doctrine, is their bond of union. If we remove that cause of contention by annihilating ourselves, their secret animosity would break out in more hostile attacks upon each other.

I have taken the more pains on this subject, because I consider this species of dissenters as particularly attractive to a

young mind, conscious of its own powers, and somewhat impatient of restriction. I do not mean to term them deists; but I have affirmed that their principles *lead* to deism. Their sentiments are not in unison with their conduct. If faith be of no consequence, why are they so indefatigable to propagate their own opinions? If the Jew, the Pagan, and the Christian, are alike acceptable in the eyes of God, surely our national church is not the only object that he does not behold with complacency. They attack our doctrines; does Christian charity forbid us to defend them? They boast that they will undermine our establishments, and they insidiously try to alienate those who still hold communion with us. They are perpetually endeavouring to unite all other sects against us. Does this conduct shew them to be dangerous enemies, or peaceable, liberal, candid brethren?

brethren? I might as well say, that an extemporary prayer which I heard one of their ministers use indicated true humility, because, after naming "proud Episcopacy," he went on to call themselves "God's *meek* and *humble* servants; as that it is consistent with Christian charity to *commence* and *maintain* a vehement contest by which the national tranquillity is endangered, merely to overturn our establishment, because it holds tenets which are, by their own account, immaterial in the sight of God.

A sermon, which is deeply impressed on my memory, commenced with nearly these words: "While on one side we are reproached with worshipping the idol Jesus, and on the other hand reproved for denying the God who bought us, it becomes the members of the Church of England to examine and defend her doctrines." With

this

this view, my dear son, I have addressed to you three long letters ; and must still beg your attention to another, in which I mean to take a brief review of the thirty-nine articles wherein those doctrines are contained by way of inducing you to form a thorough acquaintance with those divines who defend her cause with a degree of learning and ability to which I cannot pretend. In most parts I have been but an humble copyist ; and you will perceive what were my own additions by several *internal* marks. Amid those humbling proofs of inferiority, I will at least aspire to the commendations of fidelity and zeal.

Conscious of the assiduity, the number, and the talents of our enemies, and persuaded that virtue is most likely to be permanent when it is built on judicious principles, I am anxious to ground you in the doctrinal part of religion.

ligion. We will then consider it as a law regulating the heart. But there is one injunction, which, though properly belonging to the practical part, may be introduced after this long discussion. However you may condemn the *opinions* of others, preserve that charity for their *persons* which our master continually enjoins as the mark and distinguishing sign of his true disciples. Avoid all invectives; and, in general discourse, refrain from entering on those serious subjects on which you know that you materially differ; for disputes will excite acrimonious feelings in the best minds; and religion, besides that it is much too awful a subject for table-talk, must be a matter which deeply agitates every person who thinks seriously on its important issues. Pert cavilling, frothy raillery, and invidious insinuation, may suit the purposes of the infidel or the libertine;

libertine ; but every true believer will, by the reverence of his expressions, discover that he owns a heart-felt homage for whatever is connected with his God. In fine, endeavour “ as much as in you lies “ to live peaceably with all men ; ” and you may easily do this, without relinquishing your own sentiments by habitually exercising yourself in discretion and moderation.

I remain, &c.

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR SON,

I HAVE already observed, that almost every denomination of Christians, on forming that distinct society which we call a church, collected their distinguishing tenets into a specific code, which they published as a bond of communion among themselves; a precise declaration to the world of the belief which they professed; an apology for their dissent from the mother-church; and a declaration of the terms by which others might gain admission into the new society.

If these articles contain nothing contradictory to Scripture; if they enforce no doctrines but what the tenor of the sacred writings plainly discovers; if they breathe no denunciations of temporal punishment

punishment against non-conformists; there can be nothing blameable in adopting them. On the contrary, we find, that the few sects of Protestants that have not adopted this regular plan, have fallen into great absurdities in doctrine, and great errors in practice. From the want of that restrictive power which every public body ought to possess over its own members, the most ignorant and unprincipled of the community have, as is generally the case, pressed forth into public notice; and, solicitous to acquire popularity, while they were indifferent about the means of obtaining it, they have disgraced themselves and their profession, sometimes by immorality, and oftener by blasphemy. Against such unchristian excesses in prayer and preaching, a prescribed form of worship, and definitive restrictive articles of faith, are an admirable security.

It is thought by many, that, as subscription to our articles is required from few except the clergy, the laity in general have no need to extend their religious knowledge further than to that brief compendium, the catechism. That certainly is admirably adapted to instruct *children* in the great leading truths of religion; and those who have little leisure to spare from the necessary business of life, or no opportunity of acquiring habits of improved reflection, may *safely* rest satisfied with that instruction which their catechism contains. But to those who can study polite literature, and who feel their abilities equal to the attainment of any science, or to the comprehension of a diffuse argument, I would say with the apostle, that, though “milk is proper for babes, strong meat is the food of man.” Let them not rest in the rudiments of elementary knowledge,

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ledge, but let them “ press forward
 “ to the prize of their high calling.”
 Let them consider, that the world, with
 its allurements and cares, will be con-
 tinually forcing itself upon their atten-
 tion; that any favourite pursuit, either
 of business or study, will soon engross
 their thoughts, and become to them the
 one thing needful; and that, to prevent
 this worldliness of mind, and to secure
 their attention to the duties of religion,
 nothing will be more conducive than
 such an examination of her doctrines,
 as may impress their minds with a con-
 viction of their superlative importance,
 and give stability and energy to their
 devotion. This attention is chiefly, and
 indeed indispensibly, requisite to the
 written word of God; but as, from the
 acknowledgment of inspiration itself, we
 know, that “ there are many things in it
 “ which the unstable may wrest to their
 “ own

“ own destruction,” let the well disposed student, especially the *young* student *direct* his researches into the abstruser parts of his bible by the light which superior learning and abilities supply. And thus with diffidence, humility, and seriousness, let him dedicate the morning of life to his Maker; and, by taking care to improve in heavenly wisdom, in proportion as he increases in human knowledge, let him sanctify his intrusted talents by laying out part of them in the purchase of unperishable merchandize.

Though the sacred Scriptures thus claim the preference, our mother-church has just claims to the respectful attentions of her members, as being a faithful expositor of the word of God. Let us not conceive, that being baptized into her communion, and participating in her offices, makes us indeed her children. Much less are we entitled

entitled to that denomination from railing at her adversaries. I know some who, I verily believe, think that invincible hatred to Presbyterians is the prime ingredient in the character of a good churchman. Their conduct reminds me of a ludicrous story of a tipsy cavalier, who, in Oliver's days, supported himself against the wall of a church while in a state of inebriety, and, with much affectionate abuse, declared his resolution "of sticking to the old jade forever."

I have often attributed the acknowledged alarming increase of scepticism and infidelity to the great neglect of *that* species of religious instruction on which I have so long dwelt. I do not accuse our clergy of this neglect; for the mischief is chiefly confined to those orders of society which would be *offended* at the interference of their spiritual pastors. The young gentleman learns lan-

guages, rides, shoots, games, and is a complete critic in the mysteries of the turf and the arcana of politics. The young lady plays, sings, draws, and dances. Neither of them could explain the meaning of the words trinity, incarnation, or atonement*. The parents, who yet perhaps are well intentioned, people, have either forgotten what they themselves knew upon these subjects; or they have adopted the new system of education, from which religion is excluded by *principle*, or they have harboured a strange idea, that religious knowledge is not necessarily connected with the practical parts of duty. Our catechism proposes belief as the first act of reverence

* I must here intreat the reader to consider the amazing advantages which our remote ancestors possessed over us in these particulars. They had less mechanical and philosophical knowledge, but they were most deeply learned in divine wisdom.

which

which we owe to God; and I cannot allow that this belief, which is the groundwork of all other duties, should be founded on a slight indefinite knowledge superficially acquired. The consequence of this fashionable neglect of laying a sure foundation is, that children imbibe the idea that faith is unimportant; and, having never seen the tenets of their religion displayed with truth and soberness, they either grow up latitudinarians in the faith they profess, which they call being charitable; or noisy ignorant partisans, clamouring for what they do not understand, which they term being zealous in the *good old* cause. There is still another and greater danger in these times, from the activity of those declaiming deists, who, owing to the restless doubts which agitate their own bosoms, are anxiously solicitous to remove their own scruples by making converts, and
thus

thus giving their cause the support of numbers. From such people young persons are almost sure to have speculative points continually obtruded upon their attention: and if they are not thoroughly acquainted with the general aspect of Christian faith, as described by the friends of religion, that admirable system will certainly disgust them, if the first ideas which they imbibe of it are acquired through the distorting medium of scepticism or infidelity. Incapable of defending what they never studied, at the first attack they give up their religion as indefensible, and remain cold uncomfortable moralists the rest of their lives; or, what is more probable, they add licentiousness to incredulity.

To obviate these dangers, let all parents ground their children in the *rudiments* of that faith which they will be called upon to defend. This was the

good old custom; and, however we have improved in other respects, I dare appeal to every person's experience, whether they have not observed even our immediate progenitors to possess more sound religious knowledge than the rising generation; though the latter are, unquestionably, better informed in every other respect. Yet faith cannot be a matter of indifference; no considerate person can affirm that it is, and yet believe the holy scriptures to proceed from God. If it be not, let us carefully examine what we nominally profess; and if we find it to be confirmed by sacred writ, let us strenuously adhere to it; if we discover it to be opposite to the tenor of the gospel, let us renounce the church in which we have been educated, and join ourselves to some other body of Christians. If

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we act otherwise, we are guilty of hypocrisy.

It is not in my power to enter with argumentative minuteness, or theological precision, into the mysterious and extensive subjects on which our articles express the opinions of the church of England. All that I shall aim at is, to give you a *general* idea of them. They were originally drawn up by our great reformers in the days of King Edward the Sixth. I have already repeated the eulogium that has been bestowed on their framers, many of whom perished at the stake in the following reign. They were revived, or rather new modelled, in the reign of Elizabeth, by whose clergy some additions, and many alterations, were made; but none *materially* affecting the doctrines of the original. As our language has been greatly changed since that time, some of

the expressions are become obsolete. There is, besides, another source of obscurity; many of them were levelled at doctrines and sects which were prevalent at that time, and which, in their violent contest for pre-eminence, disturbed the peace of the church and state. To this we must add, that in a short compendium, designed to embrace a vast variety of topics, the opinion of the church on each subject must be delivered with a sort of abstruse brevity. It will, therefore, be impossible for an *unlearned* person to form a just conception of their value by *barely* perusing them; and it will be necessary for him to consult some expositor, who, by being well acquainted with the history of the times, and the sentiments of the original composers, can open and explain their tendency, shew the false notions at which they were pointed, and illustrate their

their meaning by references to the other compositions of their authors.

I trust that many people who are prejudiced against our Articles, from not knowing the precise meaning of many expressions which were well understood at the time they were framed, will have their doubts removed by a candid attention to some of our many able authors who have treated on this subject. I could produce my own example, which is in point. On perusing them, I thought one or two of them unwarrantably severe. I now confess, that the fault lay in my own ignorance and *misconception*. But, though these difficulties attend them in their present form, there are many most serious reasons against their being new-modelled; which our divines consider as an expedient that we should not have recourse to, except our church determines to change her constitution and doctrines;

that is, to annihilate herself, and to create something new. This, as I have before observed, would not promote the cause of unity, because, in the infinite number of her present opponents, no *two* sects are agreed as to what doctrines should supersede those of the establishment. Nor does any one body of dissenters propose a rule of faith, or polity, which would not be displeasing to others. As to the expedient of abolishing all forms, creeds, and restraints; when we can meet with a state subsisting without magistrates, laws, or punishments, we may hope to meet with a religion without order, definition, or protection.

With respect to merely verbal alterations; granting that such might prove real improvements, we have as little reason to hope for unanimity here. Language is, in a great measure, a matter of taste; and many would prefer
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the old expressions which they had thoroughly considered and well understood, thinking them grave, venerable, and better suited to the solemnity of a national confession of faith, than the easy elegance of modern phrases. And if we consider how intimately authority and prescription are blended; our reverence of what we are long accustomed to; the hazard of new expedients; the dreadful consequence of unsettling the public mind at such a period as the present; and the advantages which infidelity might gain through that freedom of discussion which a revision of our fundamental doctrines would produce; surely it would be extreme temerity to hazard all these contingencies, merely to put a new *trimming* on a *valuable* old garment.

We will now examine our Articles in their present form. You will refer

to your Prayer-Book for the text, while I repeat the comments whence I have derived the conviction and comfort which I would impart to you.

The opening of the First is truly awful, and must impress every serious mind with most profound reverence. It needs no explanation; meditate on every sentence. Having defined the glorious Being in whom we exist, it proceeds to treat of a doctrine which is shadowed in the Old Testament, and plainly affirmed, but not explained, in the New. Following the example of scripture, this article asserts the fact, without presumptuously pretending to make that clear which will ever be mysterious. The belief of a God has existed among all nations, except half-brutal savages; and it must either be referred to tradition, or to one general deduction of reason. But, though nature

ture could discover that she must have an author, she could proceed no farther. She must now listen to revelation, who consequently declares what nature could not know. Is it wonderful that the being which is created cannot comprehend the essence of its Creator?

Some vestiges of a Trinity, or three persons in the Godhead, are said to be found among the writings of Plato, and in the sacred books of the Hindoos. They may be urged as proofs either of an ancient tradition, or of some borrowed light derived from the writings of Moses. It is implied in the Pentateuch by the general* use of a plural noun whenever the Creator is mentioned. You will recollect, that Moses was beyond all other men favoured by a peculiar intercourse with the Deity,

* See the Bishop of Lincoln on this Article.

and that no writer more strongly affirms the *unity* of the Godhead. Yet there is scarcely any manner of speaking by which a plurality in the divine nature can be implied, that does not occur in the original language of the Old Testament. The Gods, the Holy Gods, thy Creators, Jehovah, thy Gods, are repeated one hundred times in the law; the Divine Spirit thus presciently dictating terms that would not be unsuitable to the fuller revelation which it proposed to make; yet forbearing to communicate a truth which, during the universal propensity to idolatry that prevailed in the early ages of the world, might be perverted to countenance the general depravity. The ancient Jewish paraphrasts explained these passages in this manner; the modern Jews, from their opposition to the Christians, labour to give them another signification.

In

In the New Testament, the Divine Persons are, as I before told you, enumerated together forty-eight times. The ancient Unitarians, instead of denying the divinity of our Lord, considered him and the Father as the same. The form which our Saviour prescribed in baptism (in using of which the primitive church was so scrupulous, that they immersed the convert at the repetition of each sacred name); St. Paul's benediction; the salutation at the opening of the Revelations; the prayers, doxologies, hymns, and creeds, of the first Christians; all prove that the church believed in and *worshipped* the holy Trinity from the times of the apostles. The name of heretic was never applied to those who received this doctrine during the first three ages; which shews that a denial of it was a dissent from the general practice.

The *term Trinity*, it is granted, was not adopted till the fourth century. The violent contests which then took place obliged the orthodox Christians to compress and embody those notions which had been ever diffused through their faith and worship. Our opponents call this inventing the doctrine; but there is as positive proof, that this idea of the Godhead had long subsisted, as sacred and profane history can give.

“ When the expressions of scripture re-
 “ lating to this doctrine are connected
 “ and bound together by our admitting
 “ the existence of three Persons in the
 “ Godhead, they appear natural, easy,
 “ and capable of being explained by
 “ the soundest rules of criticism. If
 “ you reject this explanation, the most
 “ forced and violent construction can-
 “ not reconcile these passages to sense;

“you must expunge them, which is
 “*making*, not *receiving* scripture.”*

The terms *us* and *ours* were absurdly as well as impiously assumed by eastern tyrants, when they began to claim divine honours.

The Second Article, continuing the sublime idea which the first suggested, asserts the divine nature of Christ, and its union with the human. The early Jews had an expectation, that the Messiah whom the prophets had taught them to expect would somehow be united with the *Logos*, or Divine Word. Various heresies sprung up in the church in very early times, concerning the union of the two natures; but it seems to have been reserved for the present times to degrade our Lord to mere *fal-
 lible peccable* man. Eternal existence,

* Dr. Hey.

creative power, preserving power, omnipresence, omniscience, and a right of receiving worship, are all, in various parts of the gospels and epistles, ascribed to Christ.

The Jews knew what was meant by our Lord's calling himself the Son of God, or why did they attempt to inflict upon him the punishment prescribed for blasphemy? And they constantly condemned the first Christians for being guilty of idolatry in *worshipping* our Saviour. The Pagans also charged them with the same action. The Greek translation of the scriptures was more used in our Lord's time than the original Chaldee. From this, himself and his apostles quote; and they generally use the very word, which in that copy implies Jehovah, when they speak of Christ.*

* Bishop of Lincoln's "Elements of Theology."

If Jesus Christ be not the true God, the protomartyr Stephen, who is said to have died full of the Holy Ghost, expired in a wicked idolatrous act of worship. The famous text of the Sender and the Sent, which the Socinians quote against us, is easily explained by our recollecting, that our Lord constantly speaks of his two natures as distinct, and that he rapidly passes from the properties of the one to the other. In this very chapter, the seventeenth of John, he describes himself as a man *sent* from God to teach the world, and as being *equal* with God when his earthly office was over. We, who never deny his humanity, can thus make every text plain and easy which expresses inferiority to the Father; while those who deny his divinity must have recourse to the expedient of erasing those which positively assert that doctrine.

The

The church knows that this article treats of a mystery, which it does not explain, but affirms. The safest way of defending our doctrines consists in shewing that the tenets of our adversaries cannot be reconciled to scripture. We know no more than our opponents how God and man were united; but we say, that, as we cannot be sure that our present reason is right reason, we must not put it in competition with the express word of God. We recollect the time when it was yet more weak and imbecile; and if we live to a good purpose, we find it is in a state of continual improvement. If we believe the scripture, we know that its full perfection is reserved to another life. It is presumptuous to argue with our Maker; to be dissatisfied with the degrees of knowledge which he has vouchsafed us; or to pretend, that a faculty which we know

know to be limited, and progressive, is a safer guide in things relating to the invisible world, than that revelation which our reason, on full consideration, has determined to proceed from him. Much information is given, much more is withheld. Let us exercise our understandings on what is communicated, and our humility in submitting to those privations of knowledge which the Almighty has deemed most suitable to our condition. I need not dwell on the historical part of this article.

Article the Third.—By the descent of our Lord into Hell, or Hades, the receptacle of departed souls (not the place of final punishment), it is only meant to affirm, that he was really and truly dead; not in a trance, which would entirely have confuted the grand miracle of his resurrection. Many fancies are built upon a text in the third
chapter

chapter of the first epistle of St. Peter, which intimates that he preached to the spirits in prison. Our church preserves a decent silence respecting a circumstance that is imperfectly revealed, and founded upon one single attestation.

Article the Fourth treats of the resurrection of Christ; that transcendent *authenticating* miracle, to which the apostles constantly appealed as the pledge of our Lord's divine mission, and of our redemption having been fully accomplished. Bishop Sherlock, in his sermons on the fifth and five following verses of the second chapter of Philippians, admirably explains the *three states* in which we are to contemplate our Lord; and, by carrying in your mind his definition of their distinct characteristics, you will be able to understand those passages of scripture which refer to each.

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You must first consider him as God the Son, partaking in the glory of the Father: this is his natural or original state. Then comes his humiliation, when he *emptied* himself of those glories, and appeared on earth in a human form. In this state, he was to the Jews their promised Messiah, and to the rest of the world that seed of the woman who should subdue the serpent. As Messiah, his commission seems to close in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew; in which, after pathetically lamenting their blindness and obstinacy, he leaves his countrymen to their predicted destruction, and declares, that they shall see him no more till they shall say, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" referring, it is supposed, to that general conversion of the Jews which shall precede the consummation of all things. This accounts
for

for his not shewing himself to the great body of that nation subsequent to his resurrection: after which event his third state, that of exaltation, commenced. His commission was then extended to the world at large. He became head of the church, and received a name above every name. But, though his delegated and mediatorial power will terminate at the day of judgment, when the scheme of human redemption will be complete, and God will be all in all; yet, as God the Son, our Lord will continue to reign for ever.

I trust it is unnecessary to say any thing to confirm your faith on this article; and I believe the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ has not of late been often attacked. You will find the narrative of this event ably elucidated in Gilbert West's excellent treatise on that subject.

Article

Article the Fifth.—The word Spirit, in scripture, is used for air, breath, life, mind, the soul; divine, angelical, or demoniacal beings. Carry these ideas in your memory; apply them to those parts of scripture in which the actions of the Holy Spirit are mentioned; and see if, preserving the sense of the passages, you can interpret them any other way than by referring them to a Divine Being; to whom, conjointly with the Father and the Son, we are dedicated in the initiatory rite of baptism, and whose blessing is implored, as well as their's, in the form of apostolic benediction. He is not, as the Socinians and modern Jews affirm, an energy, operation, quality, or power; but a *person*: by which term, speaking of the Deity, we mean a spiritual intellectual substance. He descended like a dove at our Lord's baptism;

baptism; and he was heard as a rushing mighty wind when the apostles received their plenary inspiration. His divinity was never questioned till the fourth century.

By the words Son and Spirit, as applicable to the Trinity, revelation meant to illustrate what we cannot comprehend by using familiar terms. Some of our expositors have attempted to explain it, by the progression of the three human faculties, of understanding, memory, and will, and their union in one mind. Our difficulties on these subjects arise from our aiming at clear ideas on incomprehensible points. I have already told you, that the term *Trinity* cannot be found in scripture; but the doctrine which we mean by it, of a triad of persons in the Godhead, is deduced from *various* parts of holy writ. For you must remember, that

no digested methodical formulary of faith, nor yet any regular system of morals, can be found in the New Testament. Doctrines, precepts, illustrations, and narratives, are promiscuously blended together; the Holy Spirit exciting us to a more diligent attention to the *whole* from this *beneficial* want of arrangement.

I have anticipated most of what I might have said under the Sixth Article, from a desire of not making my observations upon it swell to a size so dissimilar to the rest. I will only observe, that there are two particulars in which we differ from the Church of Rome respecting the Scriptures. They admit the validity of oral tradition, which we positively deny. This possessed much greater advantages in the early ages of the world, from the extended lives of the patriarchs, than it
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can now pretend to. Yet, even then, it proved to be an unsafe depository of truth. Abraham was contemporary with Shem, Shem with Methuselah, and Methuselah with Adam. Thus the tradition of the creation might have been transmitted through four persons; yet idolatry was become so general in the world during the life of Abraham, that it even infected the patriarch's family. In this deference to tradition, many of the corruptions of the Romish church originated.

That church differs from us in another particular, by withholding as much as possible from the common people the use of the Holy Scriptures; and thus making them more easily submit to her impositions. It is the *wish* and the *prayer* of our church, that all her members "may read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them." She appeals to them
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on all occasions, both in proof of her doctrines, and in confirmation of her authority.

The Seventh Article was framed against the Anabaptists and all who suppose that the obligations to the moral law have been abrogated by Christ. It asserts what I have before observed, that the two dispensations of the Law and the Gospel are blended and absolutely united together. Christ declares, that he came to *fulfil* the law and the prophets, not to destroy them. He fulfilled the ceremonial law, by explaining and completing its typical sacrifices. He fulfilled the moral law, by expounding its precepts in the most enlarged and spiritual sense. He fulfilled the prophets, by accomplishing their predictions, and by proclaiming, as Micah had done before, that God would prefer

the practice of mercy to the performance of sacrifice.

It is a great but universal error among low and illiterate sects to explain Scripture in detached passages, without attending to the context, or considering the circumstances to which it alludes or the people to whom it is addressed. Such sorts of expositors often make Scripture contradict itself; and, unless we have some settled ideas of order and relation in our minds, we may fancy that holy writ justifies the grossest absurdities. The fanatical Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, who denied that any war could be lawful, at length engaged in a most furious and bloody contest, esteeming themselves authorised by a *misquoted* passage of Scripture so to do.

Though a future state was not expressly revealed to mankind by Moses and
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the prophets, yet they certainly had expectations of immortality, and believed in the promised Redeemer who was to proclaim it. Moses governed a rebellious uninformed people, in the most peculiarly trying circumstances, by the influence of *promised* temporal blessings and punishments. This was a strong proof of his divine legation, which was farther supported by miracles; and nothing but such a wonderful theocracy as that which subsisted among the Jews could have preserved them from the prevailing error of idolatry, which seems to have been the contaminating crime by which the tempter corrupted the postdiluvian world. The rewards and punishments of another life would have had but feeble power to restrain that stiff-necked people; and therefore during the Mosaical dispensation, a particular national providence interfered, awarding blessings to the obedient, and

punishment to rebels ; but when Christianity was revealed, it taught us to look to a future state of retribution ; and since that event the world has been governed by a more *general* providence.

The Eighth Article treats of creeds. Compendiums of faith, as necessary forms for preserving peace and unity of doctrine, were adopted in the primitive churches as soon as heretical opinions began to be divulged. By the repetition of our fundamental doctrines, we inculcate the practice of those religious duties which depend upon them. Heresies defile the purity of faith. They induce men to act on wrong principles. They afford a handle to infidelity ; and they defeat the end of Christian society. If our church did not insist on a prescribed confession of faith, infidels might justly charge us with the doctrinal errors of the Papists, Antinomians, Anabaptists, Moravians, Quakers, Socinians, and

and every other sect into which the flock of Christ is divided. If it be indifferent to receive or to reject Christianity, the prophets prophesied and Christ died in vain. If the modification of our religion is immaterial, to what purpose did the apostles so strenuously oppose heresies? Or why do we bless the memory of those pious men who detected the false tenets of the Church of Rome? Do not principles always influence conduct? Will the man who thinks he shall be saved by *faith* alone, or the man who thinks that his own merits give him a *right* to salvation, act alike? Will either of them act as he does who thinks that salvation is the free gift of God, but that a sincere discharge of moral duties is necessary to enable him to receive it?

Our three creeds are enumerated. On the first I need not expatiate, as you are well acquainted with the doc-

trines which are therein plainly expressed. I will only observe, that by the phrase "Communion of Saints," we acknowledge that there is one common interest between all Christians militant on earth, which is an admirable motive to *unity*; and that we have sympathy with the church triumphant in heaven which encourages *hope*.

Light of Light, in the Nicene creed, is an amplification of God of God. You may interpret it, by conceiving rays of light emanating from the parent luminary, which is the source of light; and it is a sublime illustration of the *progression* of the Son of God.

The Athanasian creed contains the same doctrines with the preceding; but it treats of them in a more *diffuse* manner. It is the only attempt which our church makes to *explain* what it acknowledges to be incomprehensible; and I need not tell you that it is the
 most

most disputed part of our service ; many condemning its expressions, while they heartily embrace its doctrines. It is very sparingly used, which even its defenders advise ; and they also recommend, that whenever it is read it should be accompanied by an express explanation.

Those who, on account of its damnatory clauses, are anxious to discard it say, “ That as we know not what degrees of incredulity will exclude men from heaven, we should be careful not to let Christian zeal overpower Christian charity. The searcher of hearts only knows the motives which may diminish the guilt of infidelity ; and to his uncovenanted mercies let us leave the rejecters of his proffered grace, and the impenitent transgressors of his laws *.”

* From the Bishop of Lincoln’s “ Elements of Theology.”

Dr. Hey, who is an advocate for retaining the Athanasian Creed, has employed much critical sagacity on the damnatory clauses. His opinions, in general, are so candid and moderate, and seem to have been formed with such patient deliberation, that they are entitled to the utmost respect. He tells us, that in this creed is collected what ancient catholic writers pointed against existing heresies. The damnatory clauses are of two kinds: The first respects the utter rejection of Christianity. Our Lord, in the sixteenth chapter of Mark, and the sixteenth verse, uses equally threatening words; and the church ought to guard her members by all possible means from conceiving such rejection a matter of indifference.

The second kind of damnatory clauses, respecting what is called the true catholic faith, were declared by our divines,
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in 1689, to be pointed at those who should obstinately deny the sum and substance of the Christian faith. To these they are addressed as a solemn exordium, an eloquent exhortation, exciting them to examine their own belief with the most apprehensive care. And let the unstable, who are tossed about with every wind of doctrine, recollect the last declaration of our Lord, which is as forcible as what is used in this creed. Infinite degrees of happiness and misery may be comprehended in the terms salvation and damnation: Scripture warrants our declaring that there may; and the recollection of this may serve to compromise all disputes respecting the salvation of heathens, of those who lived before the birth of Christ, who have never heard of his doctrines, and even of those who have not a true Christian faith, whether the want of it be owing to their fault or their misfortune. But as the Sa-

viour of the world could not die to accomplish a light trivial matter, it cannot be a Christian doctrine to say, that the above-named persons will obtain *equal* blessedness with good Christians. I would here repeat an observation which I made on the Communion service, that it would be highly uncharitable and presumptuous to make any *particular* application of this text in St. Mark, or the clauses in this creed which are founded on it.

The first eight Articles comprise the opinions of our church respecting the nature of God, and his attributes. We now proceed to the ten following, in which she treats of man as an individual.

We have heard much of a Redeemer; let us now see why we required one. The second part of our Articles opens with the doctrine of original sin. Those who cavil at this doctrine find it extremely

tremely difficult to reconcile the actual situation of the world, with their notion that a perfect God will create nothing but perfect creatures. If we look at either animate or inanimate nature, we must discover many things at which the pride of reason might start. For where can we find either a plant or an animal which, however admirable in its kind, can be deemed an absolute standard of perfection; that is, combining every advantage which a fastidious imagination might require? It seems to have been the design of the great Creator to give infinite variety and distinctness to his works; and, in so doing, to form many orders of beings endowed with various properties, and more or less consummate. It may be the characteristic of some of the angelic orders to be invulnerable to temptation: The perfection of man is, to resist it. The former are supposed to be free from all sinful

desires: the duty required of the latter is, to subdue them. Angels are ministering spirits, employed in furthering the great designs of creation and Providence: men are soldiers, and pilgrims, appointed to combat with many enemies, and to journey through a troublesome world to a better.

We Christians say, that our nature was originally more exalted, and that it received a criminal taint from the rebellion of our common ancestors. Naturalists allow, that plants and animals transmit peculiar properties to innumerable generations. Is our tenet more absurd than this confession, which experience forces from philosophers? If no remedy had been discovered for this disease, we might have deemed it inconsistent with the moral attributes of God; but the doctrine of the atonement obviates every objection to Divine justice

tice on account of the peccability of man.

Our church's explanation of this doctrine in the Ninth Article may be understood two ways; as born in the state of offenders, or born with evil propensities. All must agree in the truth of the latter conclusion; the best of us must acknowledge this degree of corruption; but the worst of us cannot say, that they are *irresistibly* impelled to evil. Sin is not a part of our nature, like reason or memory; it is always voluntary and always curable. Some, by original sin, signify the mortal and corrupt nature which we have received from Adam; and they say, that, though no man ever lived to maturity without committing actual sin, and thus becoming through his own criminality a child of wrath; yet this term, when applied to an infant, or an idiot,

idiot, only means that he is subject to disease and death.

However obscurely the history of the fall is related in Scripture, we find that fact so strongly *insisted* upon in the New Testament, that we cannot, without rejecting the whole system of redemption, deny the reality of Adam's transgression, or the essential injury which our nature *then* received. What we might have been if he had never sinned, it is useless for us to inquire. We know that in Paradise man was innocent, and, it is supposed, not subject to death. To this, after his offence, succeeded a state of punishment, and, we may add, of probation too; for, though our blessed Lord appeared on earth four thousand years after Adam's transgression, Scripture assures us, that he was, in respect to the sins of mankind, the "Lamb slain" "before the foundations of the world;" and

and that the fathers, trusting in the promises of God, were justified in their unborn Saviour. To this state of trial a state of retribution will succeed; in which (unless our own actual sins exclude us from it) we may enjoy a greater degree of happiness than would have fallen to the portion of man had Adam never offended.

We know that we inherit from our parents a painful, frail, mortal existence; that our inclinations continually intice us into error and guilt; and that in such a state we cannot please a pure and holy God. Reflection teaches us, that we must deserve punishment; and our offences are so often repeated, that we dare not hope that the mercy of God will continually prevail over his justice. This is the state of mind in which we are left by natural religion; this was the state of the best and wisest of the heathen world,

world, who, while they hoped for pardon, feared punishment.

Revelation teaches us to consider mankind as divided into two parts. With one the Almighty has entered into covenant, with the other he has not. He is the Creator, and in that sense the Father, of all; and we know that he will deal equitably with all his children. By whatever rule they have guided their actions, by that rule shall they be judged. In bestowing more exalted privileges upon Christians, he does not act *unjustly* toward those who are not admitted into the Gospel covenant, because he requires from us a degree of righteousness far exceeding that which natural religion could teach. The terms of the Christian covenant are explained in the subsequent Articles. Before we have entered into it, Scripture always describes the human race as "children of wrath," and
 liable

liable to condemnation. Archbishop Secker's 35th lecture on the church-catechism explains this term to mean mere human creatures, as "children of grace" signify Christians.

With respect to the latter, this Article teaches a truth which every man's experience may confirm; namely, that a tendency to evil does remain even in those whose vigilance, strengthened by religious motives, has in some degree acquired a habit of controlling sinful passions. Often by endeavouring to avoid one error, we rush into another; and this humiliating circumstance, to which the best of us are liable, proves, that there is always some propensity (some desire of the flesh, as the church here terms it) which is not subject to the law of God. And though the Almighty will *pardon* such transgressions in those who truly repent, and are sincerely desirous

firm of obeying his laws, yet we cannot doubt that such offences have the *nature* of sin.

Many sects of Christians, who have deviated into enthusiasm, appear to take particular pleasure in magnifying the guilt of human nature, till they give it a disgusting, I might say a diabolical, appearance. Extremes are always prejudicial to the cause of religion, because infidelity is never so successful as when she can urge a charge of extravagance and absurdity against any body of Christians, however ignorant or fanatical; which, with *marked* injustice, she is sure to produce, in order to censure those who actually deny the *questionable* tenet. What is said of human frailty in Scripture, is intended to promote humility, gratitude, and all the generous affections incident to true piety; despair, indolence, presumption, or misanthropy, increase the dreadful depravity

depravity which it is the purpose of revelation to remedy.

Article the Tenth treats of free-will. This abstruse point was much argued by divines at the commencement of the Reformation. In a work published by Cranmer, preachers are admonished
 “neither so to preach the grace of God,
 “that they take away free-will; nor so
 “to extol free-will, as to do injury to
 “the grace of God.”

Whenever either divine grace or human agency is mentioned in Scripture, the other is implied. We may instance the case of Pharaoh. When his perverseness in detaining the children of Israel is spoken of, Scripture uses the expression “*he* hardened his heart;” when the miracles which Moses performed to punish him are described, it is then said that “*God* hardened his
 “heart,” in order to shew his mighty
 power.

power. It is thus in all other cases. We, the agents, always feel that we are free, and that we are not *irrisistibly impelled* to vice. On looking back upon an ill spent life, the sinner must confess that he might have avoided every guilty action. So long as our own part in working out our own salvation is clear and plain, let us leave the awful subject of the foreknowledge of our Maker in those clouds and that darkness with which it is enveloped.

The doctrine of divine grace is contained in the latter part of this Article; which thus proceeds in tracing the awful plan of providence, from man's corruption, to his restoration to a happier state than what his ancestors forfeited. The preceding Article spoke of human nature as continually prone to evil; this treats of it as "able to do good works pleasing to God, through his pre-
"venting

“venting and co-operating grace.” We are greatly depraved, yet good inclinations are not extinguished in us. We are naturally charmed with the beauty of order and virtue; and, through the assistance of divine grace, we may imitate what we admire. The doctrines which relate to natural corruption and divine assistance, united together, give us a just portrait of the weakness and strength of man. “The assertors of the irresistible impulses of grace, and those who deny that the Divine Spirit influences the human mind, should be admonished, in this high matter, that superiority belongs to the grace of God, but that the will of man is its free handmaid*.”

Many enthusiasts degrade this sublime doctrine, by referring the ordinary in

* Dr. Hey.

different actions of each individual to the irresistible impulse of the Deity. Are they aware what a copious source they open to ridicule by such a supposition; how unwarranted it is by Scripture; or how much their narratives of experiences, as I think they term them, expose them to the censures of absurdity, fanaticism, and hypocrisy? When we consider enthusiasts as sincere, we must lament that they do not apply to that study of human nature, and of general occurrences, which would open their views, and prevent them from finding religion a scourge instead of a blessing *.” For can he be happy who delights to dwell on the guilt and reprobation of his fellow-creatures? Is not even his benevolence, to such a being as he supposes man to

* Dr. Hey.

be, in danger of becoming capricious, morose, and unattractive? Was the religion of Christ an enemy to reason, science, subordination, or human improvement? and where shall we find in it any analogy between spiritual love and carnal passions?

With respect to those who deny that the Almighty influences our minds, and yet acknowledge that his providence superintends events, and directs the course of nature, what do they but say that he acts less upon mind than he does upon matter? Wind and storm, stocks and stones, beasts and birds, are the agents of his will; yet they suppose man distinct, independent, and exempt from the original law of nature. Observation will no more confirm this idea, than it authorizes another conclusion of the infidel school; namely, that we are the absolute slaves of irresistible necessity.

sity. For, though they ridicule the Calvinistic tenet of the determining foreknowledge of God, they inconsistently invest Fate with the attribute which they refuse to the Deity. This is a most *impious doctrine*; and many of the dreadful books lately imported from Germany are founded upon the idea of an overwhelming impulse urging men to guilt. The sentence that I have quoted from Cranmer will shew you, how cautious the founders of our church were not to swerve into either of those opposite opinions, which lead either to blasphemy, or to a vindication of immorality.

The Eleventh Article treats of Justification, or the terms of our acceptance with God; which all Protestants, except the Socinians, are *unanimous* in ascribing to the merits of our Saviour. There are two senses in which this word is used.

used. The first means our being converted to Christianity from Paganism, Infidelity, &c. The second means eternal happiness. Whenever our church speaks of being justified by faith alone, it means that Christian faith which, you well know, combines belief and practice. In this sense it is proper you should consider the word faith; not as opposed to good works, but to irreligion, as a state of nature is opposed to a state of grace.

The Papists affirm, that man's inherent righteousness is the cause of his salvation. The Socinians say nearly the same thing; and they also deny the assistances of divine grace, which were treated of in the last Article. At the Reformation, our Protestant divines severely inveighed against the Popish doctrine of the meritoriousness of good works; by which that church chiefly

meant founding masses, pilgrimages, &c.; and they maintained the doctrine, comprised in this Article, which affirms that justification, in each sense of the word, is the free *undeserved* gift of God, bestowed upon us on account of the death and merits of Christ.

You will now refer to what I have before told you of sacrifices. You will recollect their earlier introduction, their universality among the ancient heathens, and their divine institution in the Mo-
saical law. You will also remember, that Pagan history, by the stories of Iphigenia, Decius, Curtius, and others, proves, that the idea of the immolation of one person to procure advantages to others, had been somehow diffused in the world. Supposing such an act sanctioned by the Almighty, and really meritorious, we cannot doubt that the Giver of Immortality may infinitely re-
ward

ward the innocent sufferer for the premature suspension of a transitory existence; and that the victim who is offered cannot in such a case be said to be punished. Human sacrifices, however, never were *commanded* by God, or offered to him by his chosen people, notwithstanding the pert scurrilous assertions of Voltaire: they are the devices of *Pagan* cruelty and superstition.

The moral character of God is not impeached by the voluntary sacrifice of Christ; for, by that, he most incontestably shews his creatures his irreconcilableness to sin. Our divines generally simplify this awful and important doctrine of the atonement, detailing it as revealed in scripture, rather as a matter to be *thankfully* accepted, than clearly understood. The sum of the doctrines there delivered is, that God will make sincere Christians eternally happy, notwithstanding

withstanding some imperfections of their own, on account of the sufferings, merits, and death of Christ. This is the Almighty's part of the covenant of grace. The conditions on our side are, belief and practice. The apostles insist most on the former, to *heathens* or *new* converts; and they most strongly enforce the performance of Christian virtues, to those who have been long enough received into the Christian church to *understand* the scheme of salvation.

The atonement and its dependent doctrines are admirably calculated to repress vain glory, self-importance, stubbornness, discontent, and all the vices which proceed from an arrogant idea of desert. When applied to practice, it excites humble watchfulness, devout gratitude, and pious submission; which qualities, joined to integrity and
charity,

charity, form the noblest character; in the world; I mean that of the sincere Christian. I have already remarked, that this doctrine is interwoven with the *whole tenor* of scripture.

The Twelfth Article was added, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, against those Antinomians, who, presuming on the latitude of the word "faith" in the last Article, supposed that our church held their doctrine; which separates the two vital parts of religion, belief and practice. I think they call the latter carnal. I do not comprehend what they mean by that term. The true scripture doctrine is, that good works are a *proof* of faith, and, though not the *purchase* of salvation, are indispensably necessary on our parts in order to obtain it. Bishop Burnet observes, "that *merit* is "too *daring* a term for a frail being to "use to his Infinite Creator." You

will observe how carefully our church endeavours to prevent the perversion of every doctrine, by guarding it with its correcting correlative. That of human depravity is followed by the assurance of divine grace; and, lest our justification through Christ's merits should induce us to suspend our own exertions, we are immediately after told, that virtue is the *fruit* which must prove the nature of our faith in our Redeemer; and that, without it, we shall be accounted to possess a true and lively belief. This Article also refers to the Ninth; for, though such a frail being as is there described can never be absolutely perfect, yet we are encouraged to use the most unwearied exertions, from the consideration that there are many degrees of happiness and glory to which we may aspire; the fruit on

the

the tree of faith may be scanty or abundant.

Bishop Warburton thus explains the course of Divine Providence in its dealings to man: He supposes that Adam was, under natural religion, without hope of a future state, till placed in Paradise. How soon that event followed his creation we cannot tell; but we know that he then received the injunction, "Eat not of that fruit." The reward of obedience would have been immortality; he fell, and thus returned into the state of natural religion. Then followed the preparatory dispensation of the Jews; and in fulness of time the Christian; when the *free* gift of immortality was, through the merits and death of Christ, again bestowed on faith and good works. I think this compendious explanation will assist you to a right comprehension of those texts of

scripture which treat of our being saved by faith alone, and which cannot be so interpreted as to contradict that description of the last day which proves that we shall be judged by our actions.

Dr. Priestley has confessed, that he *could not*, at the time of his writing, satisfactorily explain all the texts of scripture which obstruct his favourite design of reducing Christianity to a mere system of morals; and he strangely adds, "*that he hoped he should soon.*" Is not this owning that his aim was, to bend holy writ to his own opinions, instead of deriving his opinions from it?

Article the Thirteenth. Though the virtues of unconverted Pagans cannot place them in a state of salvation; yet, doubtless, they are a recommendation to God; as we know they were in the case of Cornelius; they may also deserve the esteem and applause of men; nor are we forbidden

forbidden to admire them. But in the Articles of our church we always speak of God's *covenanted* mercies, not of the justice and goodness which *natural religion* ascribes to him. Pursuing the former idea, we say, that as he has only *promised* to accept the obedience of believers in Christ, and to reward them for his sake, the actions of unbelievers remain as they were, partaking of that frailty which mixes itself with the best designs and actions of the human species; and as they do not proceed from the spirit of grace, or from a desire of pleasing God, they continue to retain their original taint of depravity. This Article, is pointed against those who, receiving the New Testament as a divine revelation, only cultivate morals and the doctrines of natural religion. Consequently, it denies the seemingly liberal, but really impious doctrine, that

all religions are alike in the sight of God. If this be true, the scriptures are forgeries.

I will quote the sentiments of two of our divines who have lately written upon the Articles, and to whose writings I owe so many obligations, that what I address to you upon these subjects may rather be termed an abstract than an original composition. The Bishop of Lincoln tells us, “ that this Article
 “ speaks not of actions as considered
 “ by men; for we must commend deeds
 “ of virtue, be the doer who he may;
 “ but as considered by God. Yet we
 “ are not to suppose, that the unen-
 “ lightened heathen is exposed to final
 “ reprobation. Millions, who never
 “ heard of the name of Jesus, but
 “ who have been a law to themselves,
 “ may be forgiven for the sake of their
 “ unknown Redeemer.”

Dr.

Dr. Hey observes, “ Christian good
 “ works, in the Twelfth Article, are
 “ pleasing to God in Christ: Heathen
 “ good works, in the Thirteenth, are
 “ declared to be not pleasing to him,
 “ as seen in themselves. We may ap-
 “ prove the great actions of Heathens,
 “ while that applause stimulates us to
 “ virtue; but let us expose their im-
 “ perfections, whenever their panegyrists
 “ teach us to substitute ideas of the in-
 “ nate love of virtue, and moral fitness,
 “ instead of the purer principles which
 “ Christianity supplies. Virtuous Hea-
 “ thens may be happy, and yet fall far
 “ short of that superlative bliss, which, as
 “ it is beyond the power of man to *de-*
 “ *serve*, Christ hath *purchased* for his
 “ faithful servants.”

I need not tell you that justification,
 in this Article, has not the *least* affinity
 to the call or conversion, to which many

pretend. All baptized persons are in that *first* state of salvation which consists in being called to Christianity. Who will be in the *second* state, or partakers of heavenly happiness, none on earth can determine. Be not, therefore, perplexed at being questioned respecting the time of your being converted, regenerated, or called. Such terms, though highly proper for the early times of our religion, when Jews and Pagans were flocking into the church, cannot properly be applied to the children of Christian parents, who early received regular instruction. Nor is there any reason for supposing, that a life of sin must *precede* a life of grace. “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth,” before vicious habits are formed; for, believe me, innocence is easier, more comfortable, and more acceptable to God, than contrition for
enormous

enormous sins. When you hear people speak of their crimes, as a sort of preparation for a new life; or when they talk of their experiences, and rank themselves among the elect; pity their weakness, if you think them sincere: if you know them to be hypocrites, despise them.

The Fourteenth Article is directed against that doctrine of the Church of Rome, which gave birth to the monstrous system of indulgences, and purchased pardons for sin. All Protestants abjure the idea that man can do more than what is required of him; and it is alike contrary to Scripture and to reason: for virtue is always circumscribed by vice; and the moment we aim at any extraordinary degree of goodness in one point, we either fall into the neighbouring offence, or transgress some duty to which we are equally bound. We must not, from love to our children, be-

come

come unjust to our neighbours; our liberality must not run into profusion; our charity must not intrench upon integrity. We must not be such patriots or philanthropists as to neglect our families. Do not aim at over-much righteousness: the attempt will betray your pride and folly. As to those sopperies which the Church of Rome dignified with the name of merits, I shall speak of them in the Twenty-second Article.

A person unacquainted with controversy would suppose, that the Fifteenth Article was unnecessary; for it asserts no more than what Scripture repeatedly affirms, the sinless perfection of Christ, and the sinful weakness of man. But the Socinians hold, that our Lord was peccable, and liable to sin, being merely a man; and the ancient Pelagians thought baptism a sort of charm, or talisman; after receiving which, men might live

exempted from offending. The Moravian Anabaptists declare, that they are free from sin; and therefore they omit the fifth petition in the Lord's prayer. I have said enough to convince you that this article is not unnecessary. The truth of the first position is so constantly affirmed in the New Testament, that none but those who *hope* to bend Scripture to their own opinions can deny it. As to those who affirm that they are free from sin, and appeal to their own inward feelings in proof of this assertion, they are rather to be pitied than confuted.

Article the Sixteenth treats of sin after baptism, and is highly interesting to us *frail* creatures. For, if every deadly (that is, enormous) sin which is committed after baptism were that unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost which Scripture mentions, where would
 many

many of us appear? This Article also denies the Moravian or Antinomian doctrine that is mentioned in the preceding.

The unpardonable sin is generally thought to be, rejecting the Gospel after the blessed Spirit had enabled the apostles to promulgate it with *incontestable* evidencies of its divine origin. We have no authority for affirming, that any species or degree of sin will exclude the truly penitent from the pardon of his God. But if we previously consider a breach of duty to be venial, and *resolve* to venture on transgression, we make slight offences presumptuous sins. After we have fallen into error, we should carefully review our conduct, and see if our fault proceeded from negligence, ignorance, or deliberation; proportioning our penitence to the degree of our offence.

No

No Christian is taught in Scripture that he can be *assured* of his own salvation. The texts, which seem to imply that a person may persevere in a state of sinless holiness; are of a lofty mysterious nature; those which deny it are clear rules of conduct; it is plain, therefore, that the latter must expound the former. Good Christians may die with more than hope of future blessedness: but this is very different from living with an assurance that they shall never sin.

The doctrine of predestination, though connected with the Tenth Article, is separately treated in the Seventeenth. This doctrine has caused infinite disputes; as must always be the case, when men seek to fathom what they cannot know. The founders of our church were not inclined to give a decided opinion on this abstruse point, but merely to guard

guard against the abuses that might arise from misconception.

This doctrine was one of the great causes of difference between Luther and Calvin. The latter affirmed, that the everlasting condition of mankind in a future world was, from all eternity, foreseen and unchangeably decreed by God. Luther held, that this decree was founded on a *previous* knowledge of their characters. Arminius, whose sentiments seem more correspondent with those of our church than any other of the German reformers, coincides on this point with Luther.

It is extremely false to say, that this article is Calvinistic: Cranmer and Ridley, who framed it, are known to have disagreed with Calvin in this particular. During Mary's persecution, many of our exiled clergy sheltered themselves in Geneva, were they imbibed the
strict

strict (and in my opinion dreadful) idea of predestination. The good sense and liberality of the majority of the Convocation, however, prevented this Article from being materially altered when they were revised, and again ratified, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The Predestinarians were politically discouraged by King James the First. In the time of his unfortunate son, they grew headstrong; while Archbishop Laud, who was an Arminian, discountenanced their tenets with more openness than prudence. You know that, after the Restoration, the church returned to the same state in which it has existed before the troubles, both with respect to worship and doctrines. Since that period, our churchmen have generally given that exposition of our Articles which best agrees with the opinion of Arminius, and which, indeed, if we refer back to the

the

the opinions of their venerable framers, is their true, just, and *original* sense.

The dissenters were formerly strict Predestinarians; they are now mostly Socinians. The Methodists are partly Calvinists, and partly Arminians. Those of the latter description can no otherwise be termed a distinct body from us, than by their professing a more rigid piety; and it is much to be lamented, that an aspiration to the praise of superior goodness should be a pretext for separation. The Romanists hold the same opinion as we do in this Article. Jansenism, a sort of schism in that church, adopts the sentiments of Calvin.

It is now necessary to prove, that this Article supports the tenets of Luther. By “ Predestination to life is meant the
 “ determination and decree of God, to
 “ deliver from curse and damnation
 “ (which here, as in the Ninth Article,
 “ means

“ means judgment or punishment) those
 “ whom he hath chosen in Christ out of
 “ mankind; and to bring them to ever-
 “ lasting salvation.” This includes the
whole Christian world, the justification
 of which the Almighty pre-ordained.
 It has nothing to do with *individual* ap-
 plication, which, in the latter part of
 this Article, is condemned with the
 utmost severity.

In the epistle to the Romans, and
 in that to the Ephesians, the election or
 calling of the Gentiles, and the repro-
 bation and rejection of the Jews, are
 most diffusely treated. Yet St. Paul, as
 if to guard against any particular appli-
 cation of his general doctrine, employs
 the latter part of these very epistles in
moral precepts, addressed to those very
 Gentiles whom he had styled “ elect,
 “ chosen, and predestinated to the adop-
 “ tion of children.” And with the most
 impressive

impressive earnestness he adjures these "elect" to flee from those vices which would, if persisted in, certainly *exclude* them from the kingdom of God.

No doctrine is more liable to breed disorder, and every immorality which Christianity condemns, than this principle of predestination, or election: we may, therefore safely affirm that it is not the genuine meaning of those texts on which it is founded; and, indeed, our divines, on examining those passages, have proved them to relate to the *general* state of the Church, and that they are by no means applicable to particular persons. "No instance," says the Bishop of Lincoln, "can be given of individual reprobation, or election, in Scripture. St. Paul's being a chosen vessel, relates to his being pre-ordained to the apostolate, and not to

“ to his own ultimate salvation, which
 “ depended upon his fighting the good
 “ fight of faith.”

“ The texts in Scripture,” says Dr. Hey, “ on which the doctrine of repro-
 “ bation is founded, are intended to
 “ humble the wicked, by shewing that,
 “ though they disclaim and throw off
 “ the authority of God, yet they are
 “ merely agents in his hands ; and that
 “ even their most rebellious actions are
 “ overruled by him for general good.
 “ What would become of the world, if
 “ God did not so regulate and govern
 “ it?”

In the third part of this Article, the *promises* of God are opposed to his *de-
 crees*, which are secret and unfathom-
 able ; and, while we are admonished not
 to search too deeply into the latter, by
 being warned that such a pursuit may
 lead us to that state of desperation into
 which

which the Devil thrusts over-curious inquirers, we are urged to receive the *promises* of the Almighty, and to do that will of his which is set forth in his holy word.

In this Article our Church may be said to declare no doctrine, except that Christ was pre-ordained to redeem those who believed in him. It merely recites texts of Scripture, and warns us against misusing them. It advises us to turn our attention from a subject which we cannot comprehend, and may terribly misapply; to look to our own duty, and to the promises which are made to those who discharge it. So far from asserting absolute election to life, it affirms, that men may fall from grace to sensual wickedness, or hopeless despair.

This is the only one of our Articles in which there is any allusion to the
agency

agency of that evil spirit who is so frequently described in scripture, as entertaining a restless enmity to God and man. The existence of this being is denied by many sceptics, as inconsistent with their ideas of an all-powerful Deity. They who entirely reject the authority of holy writ will admit of no reasoning taken from any passage of it. But, as these people, whatever they may term themselves, are really infidels, and without the pale of the universal church, we must leave them to fashion their God according to their own devices. To all who allow that a divine revelation has been made, we may say, that, as the spirit of God would not blend truth with falsehood, we must admit that there certainly are demoniacal beings, who delight in opposing the designs of God, and in tempting men to sin; for in various parts, of scripture

they are described as appearing, speaking, and acting in a manner which is never ascribed to allegorical or imaginary beings. How they offended God; why, though unfit for pardon, they are suffered to exist; for what reasons they are permitted to tempt us, and in what particular manner their suggestions are conveyed, is not necessary for us to know. We are only warned that we have such enemies, and told that we may know them by their works.

Dr. Hey observes, “ that to reject
 “ the agency of spirits is narrow-
 “ minded, and philosophy falsely so
 “ called. Former ages attributed too
 “ much to Satan; we now, from fashion,
 “ avoid naming him.” In this Article,
 our church ascribes to him an action
 most suitable to his nature; namely,
 inspiring such distrust of God, as ends
 either

either in despair, or in the most atrocious wickedness.

It is worthy of observation, that our sublime Milton supposes part of his fallen angels employed in searching into the doctrines which are contained in this Article. I conceive that he had it in view; at least, his ideas of the unprofitableness and danger of the discussion correspond with that of our church:

“ Others, apart sat on a hill retir’d,
 “ In thoughts more elevate; and reason’d high
 “ Of Providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate,
 “ Fix’d fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute;
 “ And found no end, in wand’ring mazes lost.
 “ Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy.”

The Eighteenth Article corresponds with the Thirteenth, to which I must again refer you. Conscious of the blessings which Christ hath purchased, and

indignant at those who place Christianity on a level with false religions, our church proceeds to anathematize those who presume to say that there is any other title to salvation, than that which our Redeemer hath given us. Scripture positively affirms that there is not; and our church casts from her bosom and condemns those who abjure this fundamental doctrine. That *accursed* means, in this and similar places, expulsion from Christian communion, may be observed by remarking, that the present tense, “are to be,” is used instead of the future, “will be;” therefore this sense of the word *accursed* corresponds with the first meaning of the term justification, and, like that, relates to the present life. But, as our Lord, in the commission which he delivered to the apostles and their successors, attaches high authority to the censures

fures of the church, let no one conceive them to be of *trivial* importance.

It is continually affirmed in scripture that Christ died for all men, and made atonement for the sins of the whole world. Our best divines believe, that the merits of his death may possibly extend, not only to those Heathens who never knew his name, but perhaps to the inhabitants of other worlds. This doctrine, of universal redemption, our church admits in the beginning of the Thirty-first Article; which, far from contradicting the present, confirms it. But, whoever shall enjoy future happiness, be they Jews, Turks, or Pagans, will owe that blessedness to the Redeemer whom they never acknowledged. What degree of glory they may enjoy, is not for us to inquire. No direct revelation is made upon the subject; and if there had, whenever it had been tendered to

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them,

them, they must either have believed in our Lord's divine mission, and thus have become Christians, or have subjected themselves to the *punishment* of *wilful* infidelity by rejecting him.

Our church does not anathematize those who hold her own doctrine of the *possibility* of universal salvation. She denounces that sentence on such as, with absurd presumption, contemptuous ingratitude, or profligate insensibility, neglect the proofs on which revelation is founded, and undervalue what Christ hath done for mankind; and this her *strong* denunciation is supported by the whole tenor of scripture.

It is a false assertion, proceeding from ignorance, mistake, or malevolence, that our church *exults* over those who sit in darkness, and *dooms* millions of souls to endless misery. She does not unwisely launch into speculative ideas
and

and curious inquiries respecting those who can never hear her censures, and to whom the holy law which she reveres has never been announced. She calls upon her own members, urging them, on pain of her malediction, not to return to that religion of nature, from which they have advanced to higher perfection. She addressès herself to deists, who in a Christian country reject Christ; to mere moral men, who think that they best know what will please God; to all who deem religion a matter of indifference; who trust in their own powers, who, in the language of inspiration, “build their house upon sand.” Such, repeating the express words of scripture, our national establishment ejects from her society; and this she must do, or renounce one of the chief characteristics of a true church, that of faithfully expounding the word

of God. But this is the only act of severity which she practises; not one of her tenets can be so construed as to countenance persecution.

We have now done with those Articles which treat of man as an individual, and explain to him the peculiar doctrines of our holy faith. The remainder relate to Christians, as a society, knit together in spiritual union.— They who look on this bond of friendly communion as of little consequence, would do well to consider that our Saviour's promises are chiefly addressed to a society or united body of Christians, and not to individuals; and that his more peculiar presence is vouchsafed to those assemblies which meet for the purpose of adoring his name.

But I must reserve the consideration of the remainder of our Articles till the next leisure interval. I trust that I
 have

have said enough to induce you to regard them with respectful attention; and, if my affection for you does not deceive me, I am persuaded that you will not consider this research into the principles of your religion to be dry or unimportant. Such censures may proceed from frivolous minds, vitiated by light trifling reading, and absorbed in the pursuits of the moment. We must leave them to their fate, either to plunge into thoughtless dissipation or to be tossed about by every wind of doctrine; now an infidel, now a fanatic. That you may ever remain a sincere, steady Christian, is the most earnest wish of your affectionate mother, &c.

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR SON,

THE letters that I addressed to you, on the characters and manners of our ancestors, were intended to excite in your mind an admiration of those marks of wisdom and piety which they have left in our religious and civil institutions; and I am persuaded that an attentive consideration of the subjects which I now recommend to your private studies will convince you, that I have spoken too coldly of their merits, especially of those who lived at the time of the Reformation. To the profound knowledge, piety, moderation, and discernment of those who were high in station, and to the good sense and prudent

dent subordination of the inferior orders, we owe the church of England. From what I have already said of her doctrines you will easily perceive that they are peculiarly inimical to that disorganizing spirit which has lately assumed the name of philosophy. The views of life, and the principles of conduct which they inculcate, are so diametrically opposite to natural perfectibility, human independence, and the propriety of admitting feeling and sentiment as a guide instead of principle, that we cannot wonder at the virulence with which they are attacked, nor at the gross misrepresentations of those who feel that their success depends upon the destruction of this formidable barrier. The indifference and negligence of people, who call themselves friends to the establishment, are more astonishing and more to be lamented.

The Nineteenth Article explains the meaning of the term Church. I have been told, that ignorant fanatics say, that we understand by this expression a pile of stocks and stones, because we give this name to the *building* where we assemble for religious purposes. On the contrary, we positively pronounce it to be “a congregation of faithful men, “in which the pure word of God is “preached, and the sacraments duly “ministered.” The nearer any church approaches to this definition, the more it resembles the true *infallible* church of Christ. We do not presume to say, that ours deserves this epithet; and we affirm, that the church of Rome does not, because it has erred in many points of morals, ceremonies, and doctrines. But yet we allow it to be a church, as were those of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria; and, by implication, we grant

grant the same title to those of Geneva, Denmark, Holland, and every other description of Christians who have formed themselves into a community. Nor do we exclude from salvation any detached *unconnected* Christians, who choose to try the dangerous experiment of solitary worship.

The idea which the compilers of our liturgy entertained of the Catholic or universal Church, may be gathered from the "Collect for all Conditions of Men." In this we pray for its "good estate, and that it may be so guided and governed by the good Spirit of God, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in the unity of spirit, and in the bond of peace." No comment is necessary on these admirable petitions for those Christian graces which should ever accompany

company true faith; but by these requests we plainly imply, that no infallibility or perfection is ascribed to a church, which, we confess, requires the guiding “ Spirit of God, to be *led* into “ the way of truth.”

The commencement of this prayer highly merits your attention, as it expresses the temper and disposition with which our church speaks of that part of the human race who are unconverted to Christianity; and which, as I before observed, continuing under the law of nature, are always spoken of as distinct and separate from those who have been admitted into covenant with God. For these, we address the common “ Creator “ and Preserver of all mankind; be- “ seeing him to extend the knowledge “ of his saving truth to all nations and “ conditions of men.” Thus, from a due sense of the value of those peculiar
benefits

benefits which we enjoy, we implore that our fellow-creatures may also possess the *inestimable* blessing of knowing the ways of God.

When we say, that we “believe in “the holy Catholic (that is, universal) “Church,” we affirm, that Christ meant to form all his followers into one society. This directly contradicts the popular, and seemingly liberal tenet, that religion is a point in which men are made to differ. For, if schisms and controversies brought no discredit on Christianity, why were those pathetic exhortations to unity, and strenuous censures of false doctrines, interspersed in the new Testament? But, lest our Christian charity should be violated by considering those who differ from us in *minute* points as false brethren, we hold that *such* differences may lawfully subsist. We believe, that the church of
Christ

Christ is diffused over the whole world, wherever there can be found *worshippers* of Christ and observers of his law; and, though their worship may be deformed by error, and their lives frequently disgraced by sin, they continue branches of the Christian church, notwithstanding this mixture of frailty. In outward profession, the entire church is holy, as consecrated to Christ, and distinguished from the rest of the world. In inward verity, they only are members of this church, who, by the use of its ordinances, do really improve in piety and virtue*.

We next affirm, in the Twentieth Article, that the church possesses power to decree ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith; provided it ordains nothing contrary to God's written word. The fifteenth chapter of Acts;

* Archbishop Secker's Lectures on the Catechism treat on this subject. See Lecture xiv.

the first epistle to Timothy, first chapter, third verse ; and the tenth verse of the third of that to Titus, will convince you that it possesses these powers: that is to say, its decisions make what is expedient and what is true *lawful*. Other united bodies possess a legislative power over their members. So does the church, as a united body, claim a restrictive and controlling authority over her children.

And, since this power was granted to the church at large, so it must be enjoyed by each particular branch of it; for, our Lord meant to adapt his religion to general use; and therefore, in things indifferent, it must have the power of accommodating itself to the habits and customs of each particular country and age. Immersion in water, which is extremely bracing and refreshing in hot climates, might here be dangerous to

new-born infants ; and baptism is therefore, with us, administered by sprinkling the face. The episcopal dignity, which so well accords with the magnificence of our aristocracy and monarchy, might have been found unsuitable to the republican system of Geneva or Holland. The scanty incomes and laborious lives of the early rulers of the church would not agree with the *present* habits of society ; and if such restrictions from temporal advantages were now enacted, we could not suppose that a *respectable* body of men would dedicate themselves to the service of the ministry.

With regard to a prescribed form of worship, and other ecclesiastical ordinances, our Saviour well knew that no society could subsist without specific laws. What is really important, he has instituted ; and, by leaving no rule in other particulars, he plainly implies,
that

that human judgment was equal to the task of appointing "all things to be done decently and in order."

Article the Twenty-first—treats of General Councils; which—if men were impelled to controversy by a real love of truth, instead of the desire of victory, and if argument could be conducted with candour, moderation, and conclusiveness,—might render the church in fact, what it is in theory, "holy and universal." The first four general councils were respected both by Protestants and Papists; they were held in the fourth and fifth centuries; and they determined several points respecting the Trinity, in opposition to the heresies of those times, and in conformity to the *ancient* doctrines of the Church. The last general council was that of Trent, held about the middle of the sixteenth century. It was summoned, in consequence

quence of the urgent appeals of the Protestants, to *purify* the errors of the church of Rome. Instead of which, owing to the machinations of the Pope, scarcely any but his own creatures were permitted to vote: the result was, that all the corruptions of which Christendom complained were confirmed, and the protestants, seeing no hope of reform, separated themselves from the Romish communion. The conduct of this and of several preceding councils has brought them into disrepute; but we should remember, that inspired apostles resorted to them, as a happy expedient to promote the interests of Christianity, to determine doctrines difficult of decision, and to regulate ceremonial concerns.

You perceive that a limited authority is given to councils in this Article. They may not meet without being authorized by the civil power; and,
when

when met, they are pronounced to be fallible, and that their decrees have neither strength nor credibility, unless confirmed by scripture.

In the Twenty-second Article, five Popish doctrines are condemned which arose from specious beginnings in the dark ages, either from the supineness of the rulers of that church, or through their connivance, if the popes during that ignorant period really were such profound politicians as to *foresee* the power and emolument which their successors would obtain from the wild excesses of superstitious zeal. I have already spoken of indulgences and pardons: this traffic was certainly continued till very lately; and they sold in some of the smaller Swiss cantons at so low a price as fourpence a-piece. I do not know whether it has survived the late degradation of the Papacy.

Another

Another advantageous doctrine of the Papists is also derived from those supere-rogatory merits of the saints, that have constituted the fund of spiritual wealth which that church claims the right of distributing; for this bank is rich enough to release souls out of purgatory, provided their surviving friends will *pay* for such a stipulated number of masses. This purgatory is a chimerical terror of their own invention, for which there is not the smallest authority in scripture. They say, that the death of Christ hath only obtained a remission of the *eternal* punishment which is due to our sins; but there is still a *temporal* chastisement which they have deserved, and which we must expiate in our own persons in another world, or else by pains and afflictions in this. It may, however, be commuted for prayers and good works, either of our own, or of
 3 some

some other person. Thus, if a truly virtuous person happens to die without having performed such a number of penances, &c. (which are what they term good works,) or without having suffered such a degree of bodily pain as may cleanse him from his offences, he will not go to Abraham's bosom, the peaceful receptacle of departed Christians, but to purgatory; where he is to be purified by scorching fires, till the church, by *purchased masses and numbered prayers*, procures his pardon. I need not tell you, that this doctrine is unscriptural. Our Shakespeare makes a beautiful use of it, when he describes the visionary appearance of the royal Dane; and he harrows up his reader's soul by the awful obscurity with which he envelopes "the secrets of the prison-house." I should be sorry to see purgatory banished from poetry, where
 I think

I think its "temporary bleaching fires" look equally grand, and are less painfully horrid, than those of the Grecian Tartarus. But Christianity must scrupulously reject every mixture of fable in her holy institution.

The adoration of images and relics is next condemned; and it is observable, that, to keep their ignorant members from knowing the guilt of this practice, the church of Rome had in one instance recourse to that practice of curtailing scripture which has been so daringly pursued by some protestants. They actually *obliterated* the second commandment from their missals; and, to preserve the number, divided the tenth into two. A recourse to the Old Testament, however, must have immediately discovered this culpable and daring fraud.

One

One great object of their worship was, what they called a rood; which was, a figure of our blessed Lord on the cross, with Mary and John standing by. When I tell you, that they certainly make images and pictures of the Deity, you will not ask why they erased the second commandment. It seems certain, that St. Paul, when rapt into the third heaven, or in some other moment of full inspiration, foresaw the future corruptions of Christianity in this particular; for he strongly warns the church of Colosse against the adoration of angels, and directs their worship to the only mediator between God and man. Yet *Christian* Rome has almost as many tutelar deities as her *Pagan* ancestor. Every city in Catholic countries has its protecting saint; every order of men, every trade, every monastery, nay almost every family, has its household patron;

through whom (horrible to relate !) they seek access to God the Father, and on whose intercession and merits they rely: that is, on the merits of mortals who like themselves, must have been, in the Scripture phrase, unprofitable servants. History gives such an account of many of these saints, that we must actually consider them as having deserved the epithet of enormous sinners; and even their own legends prove, that they were either fanatics or madmen.

At the head of this band of saints, the Romanists place the Virgin mother of our Saviour, whom they style the Queen of heaven; and they entreat her to *command* her son to save them. How would the meek and pious handmaid of the Lord have abjured these impious honours!

The worship of the relics of martyrs is combined with the adoration of
 4 images.

images. This superstition originated from the zeal and affection which the primitive Christians bore to the memories of those who perished in the bloody persecutions of the Pagans. It was the custom always to collect and inter the remains of these champions of the true faith ; and, in process of time, it became a practice to assemble at the spot where they were deposited, and there to address the common head of the militant and triumphant church ; from the persuasion that their prayers would receive greater energy from having such an interesting proof of courage and constancy before their eyes, as the grave of a martyred pastor or friend must necessarily present.

During the dismal period which followed the irruption of the barbarous nations into the Roman empire, this affectionate recollection, which was intended to encourage piety degenerated into an

idolatrous worship. Bones, rags, the most mean and worthless articles which credulity could in any way associate with a saint or martyr, were believed to work miracles, and to grant petitions. This absurdity was found to be *profitable* to the church; and, to the shame of the Roman hierarchy be it remembered, that it was retained at a very enlightened period.

Many Protestants attack these ridiculous subjects with wit and satire; but, however just the ridicule, I own that I prefer the grave decorous manner in which our church has rejected them, as “fond things vainly invented.” Fond (like accursed, damnation, wretchlessness, and some other words in our Articles) has a sense different from what we now give it in ordinary conversation: It anciently meant indiscreet or injudicious.

It would be unjust to the present Romish clergy, not to acknowledge, what

all candid Protestants allow, that they are much superior in learning and morals to their predecessors before the Reformation. The conduct of the French clergy, during the late awful events has been as exemplary as their sufferings have been unprecedented. The Archbishop of Arles meekly falling a venerable victim to the bloody assassins; the Bishop of St. Pol, and his clergy, quitting the refuge of the British forces, to comfort and absolve their dying countrymen at Quiberon, and willingly sacrificing their own lives in discharging that awful duty; will claim admittance into the records of religion's *true martyrs*, and demand the admiration of every heart that can feel the excellence of genuine virtue. To confound such men with the interested *inventors* of Antichristian doctrines is the grossest illiberality.

The Twenty-third Article treats of a regular order of ministers; and de-

declares, that no one ought to assume the office of public preaching, or administering the sacraments, without being regularly called and appointed to such office. In no circumstances are the precepts and practice of Scripture more evidently in favour of our ecclesiastical polity, than in this Article. You will recollect the divine appointment of a high-priest, priests, and Levites in the Old Testament; you will also consider our Lord's selection of the twelve apostles; of his sending forth seventy disciples; and of the express and distinct commission which he gives to each; the solemn election of Matthias; and the separation of Paul and Barnabas for the work of ministry. Even after the former had been distinguished by the honour of a miraculous conversion, he was not sent to preach the gospel to the Gentile world, till his fellow-labourers had laid their hands upon him by the express

express command of the Holy Ghost *. From the death of Christ, till the Reformation, a regular order of ministers subsisted in the church. At that time three ideas were started, beside that which the church of England has adopted. The Mystics hold, that any man may minister, and the Socinians agree with them in this opinion; the Presbyterians affirm, that ordination is bestowed by a college of presbyters; the Independents say, that it should be imparted by each particular congregation. We have had many disputes with the two latter, respecting the *priority* of the Episcopalian government. As they cannot prove that our form is *forbidden* in Scripture, we might safely adhere to it, merely on

* The following texts treat on this subject, Matthew xxiv. chap. 45 verse; xxviii. chap. 18 verse; John iii. chap. 27 verse; xii. chap. 16 verse; xxi. chap. 15 verse; Acts xiv. chap. 25 verse; and xx. chap. 28 verse.

the score of expediency, even if we could not prove that apostolic custom, and the practice of the church for fourteen hundred years, were in our favour. We do not affirm, that the church government which is adopted by these opponents is any where *forbidden* in Scripture: and some Presbyterian writers have had the candour to advise, that Episcopacy should be preserved in those nations where it could be assimilated to the genius of the civil government; which all dispassionate politicians agree is the case in England.

As to Mystics and Socinians, the doctrines of holy writ, and the usages which it records, are expressly against their notions. The Methodists had used to deem Episcopal ordination necessary for such of their preachers as exercised full power. But, from the immense numbers who *now* flock after men that are merely *licensed* by the civil magistrate

trate (which licence only exempts them from penal censures), I should fear that this decent restriction is no longer attended to, and that this denomination of Christians have entirely put themselves into the hands of illiterate enthusiasts.

The twenty-fourth Article needs no other comment, than that it properly condemns the unscriptural practice of the Church of Rome, who directs her services to be everywhere performed in a dead language, and who imposes such restraints on the use of *translated* Bibles, that vast multitudes of her communion never have read, or heard read, a single chapter of either the Old or New Testament in their native tongues.

The Sacraments are explained in the Twenty fifth Article ; the true idea of which is, that they are *covenanting* acts of religion : God, on his part, promising us blessings, and assistances of grace ;

and we, on ours, binding ourselves to obedience. They are not merely signs of our profession, but pledges of the divine beneficence, and of our obligations to obedience.

As their being instituted by Christ himself is, in the judgment of our church, a distinguishing and necessary mark of a sacrament, we admit only two; namely, *Baptism* and *the Lord's Supper*. The Church of Rome adds five more: *Confirmation*, which we retain as an apostolical usage; as a public ratification of the baptismal vow, proper to be made by the baptized person when arrived at years of discretion; as a pious solemn service, highly proper to imprint on every mind a sense of the important covenant into which they were early initiated; and also (by the examination which is previously required) as a security to the church, that her members shall be more than mere nominal Christians.

tians. We deny, however, that this office possesses the *essential* requisites of a sacrament.

Penance means some voluntary suffering, or privation, which the Romish priests have the power of imposing on their flock, in order to procure the pardon of those sins which they have privately confessed to them. The practice of auricular confession, as it is called, has been the source of many flagrant abuses; and, when united to its correlative penance, it acquires a power much too extensive to be safely entrusted to individuals, to be exercised at will over weak minds. This is one of the customs which our church condemns, as having grown out of “corrupt following the apostles.” It may be observed that, with this power of imposing penance, the Romish clergy claim that of absolution; not declaratory and ministerial, like ours, but full and

positive. We retain penance in our ecclesiastical canons as a public *punishment*, not as a means of procuring the forgiveness of our sins.

Orders and *Matrimony* are evidently two estates of life ; and, as both of them impose solemn duties on those who engage in them, it has been judged expedient, in one instance, to frame a solemn dedicatory service ; and in the other, to impress the minds of those who plight their mutual faith with a sense of the important engagement into which they have entered, by a most awful religious ceremony. But neither of these engagements possess any of the essential characteristics of a sacrament.

Extreme unction, or anointing the sick with oil, is a ceremony, which the Papists pretend to borrow from St. James ; though he obviously recommends it as an impressive manner of communicating
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the miraculous gift of healing, which the church of Christ *then* possessed, and not as a means of conveying to the sick man a remedy for his *spiritual* diseases. Miracles are supposed to have ceased in the third century; and, with them, this custom of anointing ought to have terminated; but the Romanists have retained it, and entirely changed it from its original use; it being now solely appropriated to people in the agonies of death, whom it is supposed to support in their final conflict with Satan. This also is very properly termed a corruption of apostolic customs.

The latter part of this Article points at the elevation and adoration of the host, or consecrated bread; which is practised by Papists, and which is both absurd and idolatrous.

Dr. Hey observes, “ that the ideas of
 “ our church on the subject of sacra-
 “ ments may be gathered, by observ-
 “ ing

“ing the extremes which she is solici-
 “tous to avoid; she denies that they
 “are merely *badges* of our profession,
 “and she denies that they have a *me-*
 “*chanical* effect upon the soul.”

In article the Twenty-sixth, our Church declares, that the unworthiness of the minister does not prevent the efficacy of the sacrament to the receivers of it. This is not a proof of her relaxed discipline, or any reason why corrupt wicked ministers may be retained in the service of God. It is pointed at a Popish tenet, which maintains that it is the intention of the minister that gives efficacy to the sacrament; that is to say, you are neither baptized, married, confirmed, absolved, nor can you receive the Lord's supper, unless the officiating priest *means* that you should do so. Nothing can prove more strongly the absurdities which ignorant people will adopt,

adopt, than this strange ascription of divine power to a fellow-mortal.

It being certain, however, that an irregular slovenly method of performing acts of public worship considerably weakens the impression which they were intended to make, our church very properly urges this as a reason for discarding negligent unworthy shepherds from attending on the flock of Christ.

In the following Articles, our reformers proceeded to state their opinions of the nature of those two sacraments which they retain as such. I need not tell you, that Baptism is the initiatory rite, answering to that of circumcision in the Mosaical law; and, like that, permitted to be administered to the new-born children of believing parents. By this act we are admitted into the privileges of the Christian covenant; and, on our part, bind ourselves to perform its obligations of faith and obedience.

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The practice of infant baptism has given rise to a dispute which has produced a schism in the church. In answer to the Anabaptists, who object to the propriety of admitting infants into a covenant, it has been observed, that if this ceremony be delayed till people are old enough fully to understand the nature of the obligation, numbers must die after they have committed actual sin, without being entitled to the terms of pardon which the Almighty has prescribed. We can hardly say, that a child can fully understand the Gospel-terms of salvation before that age when our church admits it to confirmation; and yet who is there that has not before that period committed some offence which Christian morality condemns?

The command of our Lord, to baptise all nations, of which infants certainly form a part, is in favour of our practice; and so is the frequent admission of whole families

families and households to this rite, which is repeatedly recorded in Scripture. Add to this the universal usage of the Christian church, and the divine command which the Jews received to circumcise children on the eighth day after their birth. The first teacher against infant baptism appeared in the year 1030. From all these circumstances, we may with propriety *obey* the exhortation of our church; and “ earnestly believe, that Christ will favourably receive the infants whom we charitably bring to partake of this holy sacrament.”

The Lord's supper is not merely a sign of union among Christians, or a bare recollection of the death of a benefactor, though these are essential parts of it; but it is also a feast upon a sacrifice; that is to say, a commemoration of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. “ If,” says Dr. Hey, “ we consider this sacrament

“ment merely as the Socinians do, our
 “Lord’s words, ‘this is my body, &c.’
 “are senseless, and the rite is contradic-
 “tory.” It was the idea of the great
 expiation which he laboured to impress
 upon the minds of his disciples; and
 their familiarity with the idea of a sacri-
 fice, and feasting on the offered victim,
 would enable them easily to understand
 the meaning of this institution. We
 are now unaccustomed to such immo-
 lations; but we may easily adopt the
 doctrine which the allusion was intended
 to illustrate, a grateful remembrance of
 the atonement for sin. This is that
 remembrance of the death of Christ
 which our catechism enjoins on all com-
 municants; and to this should be added,
 previous “examination of our lives,
 “true repentance, firm resolutions of
 “amendment, faith in God’s promises,
 “and universal charity and good-will to
 “our fellow-creatures.”

As

As I hope soon to hear that you have fulfilled another of the positive commands of our Master and only dear Saviour, by partaking of this holy rite, I would wish to warn you against expecting any immediate or extraordinary effect upon your mind from the bare act of receiving the sacrament. Miraculous gifts of the spirit have ceased; nor are we certain that they ever were associated with the participation of this holy ordinance. Of this we are assured, that at its first awful institution, it did not prevent Judas from betraying Christ, nor Peter from denying him. Receive it as an appointed means of grace, and as a proof of obedience. Let your understanding and your heart accompany you through the office; but forbear indulging in mystical reveries, or in that style of enamoured devotion, if I may so call it, which many (I believe well-intentioned) tracts tend to encourage,

rage, but which surely is a very improper way of addressing the Deity.*

But

* It is conceived that the young communicant cannot find a better guide to enable him worthily to discharge the solemn duty, than in the following judicious and most eloquent instructions of Bp. Taylor.

“ In the act of receiving, exercise acts of Faith
 “ with much confidence and resignation, believing it
 “ not to be common bread and wine, but holy in their
 “ use, holy in their signification, holy in their charge,
 “ and holy in their effects; and believe, if thou art
 “ a worthy communicant, thou dost as verily receive
 “ Christ’s body and blood to all effects and purposes
 “ of the Spirit, as thou dost receive the blessed ele-
 “ ments into thy mouth. . Dispute not concerning
 “ the secret of the mystery and the nicety of the
 “ manner of Christ’s presence; it is sufficient to
 “ thee that Christ shall be present to thy soul, as an
 “ instrument of grace, as a pledge of the resurrec-
 “ tion, as an earnest of glory and immortality, and a
 “ means of many intermedial blessings, even all such
 “ as are necessary for thee, and are in order to thy
 “ salvation. And to make all this good to thee,
 “ there is nothing necessary on thy part, but a holy
 “ life, and a true belief of the sayings of Christ;
 amongst

But I am now wandering from the subject under consideration; which is an explanation of the doctrinal part of the sacrament, on the substance of which there are three ideas. The Papists expound our Lord's words literally, and actually believe that the bread and wine *really* become his body and blood. This notion is nonsense; for the human form of our Lord cannot be in glory in heaven, as we are assured it is, and broken and eaten on earth. Yet, for denying this absurd assertion, many excellent men have undergone most cruel deaths. This doctrine is called Transubstantiation.

The Lutherans believe in what they call Consubstantiation; which is, that the

“ amongst which indefinitely assent to the words of
 “ institution, and believe that Christ in the holy Sa-
 “ crament gives thee his body and blood. He that
 “ believes not this is not a Christian. He that be-
 “ lieves so much needs not to inquire farther; nor to
 “ entangle his faith, by disbelieving his sense.”

body

body and blood of Christ are *really* present in the sacrament, together with the substance of the elements of bread and wine.

The Calvinists and our church are called Sacramentarians. We conceive the elements to be merely symbols; by receiving of which the worthy communicant truly receives whatever the scriptures intend by our eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ. With respect to our manner of receiving it upon our knees; in this we differ from the Calvinists: we profess that we do not mean any adoration of the visible elements, or of our Lord's supposed presence in them, by this posture; but to testify our humble reverence to our great benefactor, and for the sake of general decency and order. No trace of its having been received *sitting* can be found in any ancient rubric; it was taken either standing or kneeling by the primitive Christians.

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The adoration of the host, which is one of the superstitions to which transubstantiation has given rise, is again condemned in this Article.

The Twenty-ninth Article is also directed against the bad practices that have flowed from this fruitful source. For the Romanists, by holding the actual presence of Christ in the sacrament, attribute to it a mechanical efficacy, which they suppose extends even to the most sinful unbelieving communicants. This we deny; affirming, that, so far from such offenders receiving pardon of their sins by a formal outward obedience, in pressing forward to this sacred ordinance without the requisites of faith and repentance, they really increase their guilt by their unwarrantable presumptuous use of the most awful rite of our religion. We have apostolic authority for declaring, that irreverent receiving of the sacrament is liable to bring upon

us condemnation, that is, temporal judgments, and death. This denunciation is repeated in the exhortation preceding the communion; not to alarm the feeble-minded sincere Christian, who trusts that he has a good conscience, and in all things endeavours to live honestly; but to deter the audaciously profane, and to prevent all light, offensive, indecorous behaviour during the solemnization of the service. And in conformity to this opinion, that receiving the Lord's supper would aggravate the guilt of the impenitent, the minister has power to withhold it from all who live in the open practice of notorious vices, or who are at public enmity with their neighbours.

Another of the abuses of the Romanists is, their denying the sacramental cup to the laity. In the Thirtieth Article, our church declares, that this practice is unscriptural. At the institution
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of this rite, both kinds were administered to all; and "Drink ye all of it," is a more general expression than "Take, eat." And, lest we should suppose that the privilege of the cup was limited to the sacred college of the apostles, and their immediate successors the clergy, St. Paul has plainly given us to understand, that the bread and cup were indifferently administered to *all* the Corinthian converts. This is another of the "fond things" by which Rome built up her spiritual tyranny, and which is not only unscriptural, but directly contrary to the written word of God.

The Thirty-first Article is opposed to the doctrine of masses as it is supported by the same much-erring church. Transubstantiation is the parent also of this corruption; for, instead of affirming, as we do, that the sacrifice of Christ was once made, and all-sufficient, they

say, that every time the priest consecrates the elements, Christ is sacrificed and offered up anew. The Lord's supper, therefore, is not, with them, a memorial of a sacrifice, but an actual atonement, possessing inherent power to redeem souls out of purgatory and procure pardon of sin, with a thousand other wonderful effects. These kinds of masses, being valued by their number, not by the devotion of the communicants, are performed by the priest alone; and in most Romish churches there are several altars, at which these expiatory sacrifices, as they call them, are performed at the same time. A wide door is here opened for every species of immorality; for so much virtue is ascribed to them, as makes people negligent of moral and social duties; and they are so multiplied, to procure pardon for dead or living sinners, that they absorb

forb almost the whole of the public service.

Another circumstance in which the church of Rome differs from all the reformed churches is, in prohibiting the marriage of ecclesiastics. It is acknowledged, that this point was disputed in early ages, owing to the prevalence of a species of false philosophy, which was termed oriental; the distinguishing trait of which was, that matter was not originally formed by the Supreme God, but by an inferior, and, in some respects, evil spirit, who they believed, was the creator of this world, and the author of the Jewish dispensation. They taught, that the body should be humbled by the most rigid mortifications, that it might not interrupt the mind in its mystical communion with the Deity; and several heresies and abuses sprang out of this opinion; among which we may rank

their denying that our Lord really assumed a human form, or suffered upon the cross. All the austerities and privations upon which the church of Rome bestows so much commendation, their monastic institutions, and the seclusion of hermits, may be traced to the prevalence of these opinions, which are often alluded to and condemned in scripture.

As the early preachers of the gospel engaged in a most laborious and dangerous task, in preaching Christ to cruel and powerful persecutors, it seemed to be a matter of temporary expediency that they should not engage in family cares, lest their sufferings should be aggravated, or their general usefulness impeded, by the duties which the characters of husband and father imposed. But, after it had pleased God to grant quiet and peaceable days to his church, there seems no reason for a prohibition
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that certainly was not of divine original ; which is contrary to the known practice of the apostles and Jewish priests ; and so little warranted by the authority of scripture, that rules are actually laid down by St. Paul for the behaviour of the wives of ecclesiastics. The marriage of priests was first forbidden in the year 1085, from the political motive of more effectually *separating* their interests from the body of the community, and more firmly uniting them to that of the see of Rome.

Article the Thirty-third treats of Excommunication, of which there were anciently two kinds. The lesser, enjoined expulsion from the sacrament ; the greater, was a separation from all religious and social intercourse. By the exercise of this power, the Christian church, while not only unprotected by the magistrate, but struggling under the

terrors of proscription, preserved a degree of internal purity which extorted the admiration of her cruel persecutors. For, though the above punishments comprized no bodily inflictions, and were in reality nothing more than a suspension of Christian privileges, they possessed such an awful influence over the minds of the people, that, rather than incur them, they frequently endured with cheerful resignation all the torments which the Pagans could inflict: for, these ecclesiastical terrors were more particularly pointed at those who, through fear of bodily suffering, abjured the faith.

In process of time, the church called in the aid of temporal power, and perverted a usage which had so manifestly tended to preserve its purity, to the most disgraceful purposes of ambition and revenge: till, in the eleventh, twelfth,

twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, princes exposed themselves to the greater excommunication, and their kingdom to the interdiction of *every kind* of religious service, merely for disagreeing with the Pope, as a *temporal* sovereign. Nay, to such lengths did the Papacy proceed, that they even published crusades against the offending country, as if it had been inhabited by Pagans, or apostates, and aliens to the Christian faith.

Owing to these extravagant abuses of the Papacy, the minds of people since the Reformation have been so averse from ecclesiastical power, that the Protestant clergy are always extremely cautious of exercising even that spiritual authority which, from the testimony of Scripture, they *unquestionably* possess. As to the power of the keys, or opening and shutting the kingdom of heaven, which the church of Rome arrogates; though

it is evident that St. Peter possessed a personal superiority among the apostles, yet it is equally evident that no such distinction was intended to be transmitted to his successors; and even if it were, the right of the Pope to *inherit* it is too doubtful to be admitted. These powers, therefore, of "opening and shutting, of "binding or loosening," were given to *all* the apostles, and to their successors and *representatives* in the church, to the end of the world. We Protestants explain these powers to mean, that God will ratify the acts of those who do every thing faithfully, modestly, and conscientiously, as his agents. From the seventeenth verse of the sixteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans it appears, that a well-constituted church may with propriety, nay is absolutely commanded to take cognizance of those who cause divisions. But, in these times, a general

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ral indifference has so far supplanted the sense of religious obligation, that, it is to be feared, a renewal of ecclesiastical censures would have little effect in checking the course of infidelity and immorality.

The Thirty-fourth Article asserts, what I have already observed, that a diversity of ceremonies in different ages and nations is lawful; and that every particular church has power to ordain, change, or abolish them, and to claim the obedience of her members to her decrees, provided they are not contrary to the word of God. "It seldom happens," says Dr. Hey, "that ceremonies are rejected because *contrary* to Scripture; the reproach generally is, that they are not taken from it. And yet no meeting of Christians, even of such as most profess to *simplify* their worship, can be carried on with-

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“ out arranging many things not *specified* in scripture. Ceremonies,” he continues, “ should be few, simple, pleasing; calling into exercise our best faculties, and applying them to religion. They should pretend to no merit, require no study; be grave, rational, instructive, becoming, and clear from fanaticism and superstition.” Try the ceremonies of our church by the rule here laid down, and do not reject them unless your conscience plainly proves that they have transgressed it.

At the time when our Articles were composed, the minds of men were much agitated by the great changes that had taken place in religion. Many new doctrines were afloat, and many of our inferior clergy were ignorant and inactive. People were so much more likely to prefer the violent opinions of the puritans, to the moderate doctrines
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of the Establishment, that it became adviseable, not only to have a set form of prayer, but a series of discourses, sanctioned by authority; lest the devotional and the instructive parts of the service should not be in unison. With this view, and to assist those who were unable to compose sound judicious discourses, a volume of homilies was published in the reign of Edward the Sixth, and another in that of Elizabeth. The former has the recommendation of being principally framed by Cramer; the latter was the production of Jewel. I never met with the first; but Dr. Hey characterizes both as “evincing strong feelings, fine intellects, and great knowledge of the scriptures and mankind.” The use of them has been laid aside for many years; but it is to be regretted, that they have not been resorted to as *models* of that plain, clear,

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clear, authoritative, instructive manner, which is far more impressive than elegant morality, or affected pathos.

With respect to the Thirty-sixth Article; though it only professes to treat of the book of consecration, it also asserts the existence of the three clerical orders, of bishops, priests, and deacons; which were unquestionably instituted by the apostles. The church, being a society of men, must include human passions; and whatever is necessary to govern men in a civil capacity, must also be adopted into a religious system, or disorder and dissolution must ensue. As the church became more extended, the necessity of preserving subordination required the addition of intermediate orders; and to those of apostolical institution, archbishops and archdeacons were added fourteen hundred years ago. To the former was assigned a regular
supremacy

supremacy over a certain number of bishops; and the latter were made assistants to the bishops in their episcopal functions.

Those who insinuate, that our clergy should be reduced to the poverty of the early ministers of the Gospel, must be extremely deficient either in good sense or in good principle. For good sense would teach them, that in these times, the great, the learned, and the polite, would despise the admonitions of a mean, poor, ignorant, unpolished instructor; and that no comparison can be made between *ordinary* men, and those teachers who, full of the Holy Ghost, made Roman governors *tremble* in the seat of judgment.

The Thirty-seventh Article denies the power of the Pope in England, where his influence commenced at the Norman conquest, and rose, as you
well

well know, to a most enormous height. The supremacy of the King in all causes, civil and ecclesiastical, is asserted in this Article, which at the same time justly denies his right to exercise clerical functions; by which clause the regal and priestly offices are kept properly distinct, according to the example of Scripture, and the rules of political expediency.

As the former part of this Article opposes the pretensions of Rome, the latter part, and the two following, are pointed at those Puritans who, aiming at a perfection which cannot possibly be attained in this world, were not satisfied with applying religion to the end which its author assigned it, the purifying of the heart, and the regulating of general conduct, but made it an engine to overturn authority, and to breed commotion and discord.

The

The five particulars to which they especially objected, in respect to civil government, are, the power of the magistrate, the necessity of capital punishments, the lawfulness of war, the right of possessing private property, and the legality of oaths. All these circumstances certainly imply a state of imperfection; but, as this world is actually such a state, it remains to shew that Scripture admits that they are necessary, by giving us rules for our conduct in these very particulars.

The proofs that we should obey the civil magistrate are so numerous, that by selecting them we should almost transcribe the whole of Scripture. The primitive Christians were so influenced by these injunctions, that no excess of oppression or cruelty, in their persecutors, could induce them to rebel against what we should now justly deem illegal tyranny.

tyranny. Providence wisely ordained, that the *passive virtues* should in that age predominate, to a degree, which would leave the persecutors of the infant church without excuse; while its submissive conduct should gradually recommend it, even through political motives, to the attention of those who had no *better* inducement for examining its holy laws.

Archdeacon Paley observes, that
 “ While politicians dispute about the
 “ best form of civil government, Chris-
 “ tianity, as it tends to make men vir-
 “ tuous, obedient, quiet, and respectful,
 “ is alike friendly and applicable to all.”

The lawfulness of capital punishments is implied in the eleventh verse of the twenty-fifth chapter of Acts, and the fourth verse of the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. They were *commanded* by the Levitical law.

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If war was meant to be prohibited by the Gospel, would the apostles have made such frequent allusions to a state of warfare? and would not the great fore-runner of Christ have *commanded* the soldiers, who resorted to him for instruction, to abandon the military life? Instead of which, he gives them directions to assist them in conscientiously discharging its duties. Cornelius was not directed to resign his commission; and it is certain, that Christians in early times, actually served under the standard of Heathen emperors, even when they were engaged in offensive war.

With respect to defensive war, since it is impossible for any nation to maintain its independence if restrained from repelling aggression, and since the religion of Christ was not intended to cause or to countenance any change in civil governments; it becomes cer-
tain,

tain, that the strong language which is used in the sermon on the mount, against revenge and resistance, cannot be literally obeyed in this world. It was intended to reprove Jewish malevolence, and to form an opposite character. These injunctions are meant to regulate private conduct; and whenever they are universally adopted, all contention, whether public or private, will certainly cease. But that happy period will not be expedited by virulent attacks on lawful authority, or such an explanation of Scripture as may deprive the State of the assistance of weak but well disposed minds at a period of imminent peril. Nor can these attempts be referred to the agency of the Spirit of peace. Whenever they do not proceed from a pitiable defect of understanding, they strongly favour of that spirit of Antichrist, which it is predicted,

ted, shall tempt men in the latter days, to become "presumptuous, self-willed, "despisers of government, not afraid to "speak evil of dignities, nor even to "deny the Lord who bought them."

"To give up self-defence," Dr. Hey observes, "is impracticable. The "Pennsylvanians, after resolving to do "so, retook *by force* a sloop from a "pirate." Our blessed Lord was no weak enthusiast. He who formed the human heart knew its propensities. He who governed all the kingdoms of the earth understood their contingent relations. The wisdom of the Father could not, like the sophists of the present day, seek to perplex us by enjoining contrary duties, nor by introducing principles that are contrary to plain commands. "Obey them which have "rule over you;" and, "if he smite "thee on thy left cheek, turn to him
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“the right also,” are precepts intended to form the same kind of peaceable unoffending character. But this character is not applicable to those who *invert* the injunction, by resisting those who are invested with *lawful* power, and turning the *passive* cheek to the *enemies* of their country.

The lawfulness of possessing property is asserted in the Thirty-eighth Article. The same rash inconsiderate explanation of particular texts, separated from the context, and from all considerations of time, place, and occasion, which have done so much injury to the cause of truth, gave rise to an idea, that absolute poverty was required from all *true* professors of the Gospel. Every text that enjoins the *right* use of riches is a refutation of this absurd notion. The state of life in which our Lord appeared, and the humble employments from which
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he selected his apostles, are no proof of the superior advantage of poverty; for it was evidently intended, that the Gospel should receive a miraculous attestation, arising from the humble circumstances of its founder and first teachers. And, if the example of our divine Master may be pleaded to recommend patience and resignation, by his voluntary submission to want and poverty; his occasionally mixing among the great; his acceptance of invitations to splendid entertainments; his not forbidding Mary to regale him with the luxury of perfumes; and the valuable curious robe which he wore at his crucifixion; all prove, that he did not reject the use of the gratifications which riches offer, when such enjoyments did not interfere with the important duties of his sacred mission.

Two instances are urged, to prove that the sacrifice of temporal wealth is necessary, in order to procure that which is eternal. The first case is, that of the rich young man (in St Matthew's gospel, nineteenth chapter, and sixteenth verse), who hoped that he had already reached perfection. Our Lord, though he loved the amiable traits which he saw in his character, reprov'd the presumptuous conclusions of self-consequence, by requiring him to make that sacrifice which the circumstances of the early preachers of Christianity required. The answer might be thus paraphras'd; " If
 " you have indeed attained that high
 " degree of angelic holiness to which
 " you pretend, something is still want-
 " ing to complete your character. I
 " am founding a new religion; poverty
 " and sufferings must distinguish its
 " teachers;

“ teachers; the emergency of the case
 “ requires an extraordinary sacrifice.
 “ Sell thy possessions, and become my
 “ immediate follower.” Here was a
 plain command, which covetousness
 (the latent vice that the great Searcher
 of hearts saw in this promising youth)
 refused to obey; and there is nothing
 severe in our Lord’s affirming, that it
 would be extremely difficult.” for those
 “ who trust in uncertain riches, to enter
 “ into the kingdom of God.” The
 simile of the camel passing through the
 needle’s eye; is an illustration. Yet those
 who find in their bosoms a strong pro-
 pensity to that sordid, degrading, dis-
 abling vice, the inordinate love of
 riches, may be comforted with hearing
 that their condition is not desperate.
 “ With God, all things are possible.”
 His grace may render them victo-
 rious.

The parable of the rich man is plainly intended to inculcate the right use of riches, not to terrify us from possessing them. Indeed, as they are the means of extending our power of doing good, industry, application, and every honest method of acquiring wealth, are not only *permitted* as employments, but *enjoined* as virtues. The goods of this world are never scorned, except by misanthropes and fanatics; and the means of obtaining them are only neglected by the dissolute and the idle, who yet wish to riot on the labour of others. Wealth is an entrusted talent, which should be *sanctified* to the giver.

The Thirty-ninth Article affirms the lawfulness of oaths, when legally taken; and that neither our Lord nor St. James intended to condemn a practice which is so necessary to the administration of civil justice, is *incontestably proved* by our

Saviour's own conduct, who, in the sixty-third verse of the twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew, answers on adjuration. This species of oaths is so essentially distinct from the habit of blasphemous swearing, or rash vows, that nothing but a distempered judgment can confound them.

These five particulars, of which I have been lately treating, are not all rejected by the same sects of perfectionists. The Pelagians, who are mentioned in the Ninth Article, abjured oaths and riches. The Quakers, war, oaths, and the interference of the civil magistrate in religious matters. The Anabaptists, property and war. The Moravians hold the expediency of a community of goods. Objections to the lawfulness of war have lately proceeded from almost every description of dissenters; and, from the peculiar aspect of the

times, there is cause to suspect, that they have oftener sprung from political than religious motives.

We have now examined the doctrines of our national church. My veneration for her opinions may, perhaps, be increased by the serious attention that I have bestowed upon these subjects; but I do not fear incurring the censure of blind partiality when I affirm, that they are always, moderate, rational, and scriptural; without uncharitableness and without inconsistency. Perceiving in her the essentials of a true church, I might address her, as the disciples did our Lord, "Where else shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

Her articles of communion are not dry abstruse discussions, only attractive to theological disputants. Whoever is in danger of being assaulted by "the evil principle of unbelief," will find
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in them a well-arranged and perspicuous summary of Christian doctrines. The study of them might improve the suavity of a gentleman, and give a nobler impulse to the polite erudition of a scholar. A little candour, a little patience, and a little humility, are the only qualifications that are necessary to render every person, who is not extremely ignorant indeed, acquainted with the distinguishing tenets of our church. Such knowledge was formerly esteemed an essential part of education; and it is to the prevalence of that pestilential tenet which, while it affects great regard to religion, presumes to oppose the word of God by maintaining that forms of faith are unimportant;—it is to this most alarming doctrine, I say, and to the criminal, though fashionable, negligence of parents and instructors, that infidelity and indifference are indebted for their

rapid progress. Scarcely has one poison issued from the school of false philosophy, for which the Articles and doctrines of our church have not provided an antidote.

As the most important moral conclusion may be derived from those tenets which first apply to the understanding, shall we pretend to value virtuous conduct, and yet despise those salutary principles which would found that virtue on a firm steady basis? The enthusiast may talk of saving faith, and the deist of saving morality. We know, that the former without the latter is dead; and that the most splendid moral goodness, without religion, is but like the apples of Sodom, fair to the eye, and rotten at the core.

Having laboured to instil good principles in your mind, let us intreat the Almighty that they may bring forth the
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expected produce! Can I utter a wish more consistent with the feelings of an affectionate mother?

I remain, &c.

LETTER X.

MY DEAR THOMAS,

THOUGH the knowledge of our duty is the first step necessary to form a good character; yet it is only entitled to commendation, when it proceeds from a design of proving the excellency of our faith by the propriety of our practice. In vain do you profess that you believe in the Scripture, unless you regulate your conduct by the rules which it contains. Your studying the mysterious plan of salvation will not entitle you to claim its benefits; and your gratitude to the Redeemer of mankind will be best shewn by an irreconcilable enmity

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to sin, which imposed a necessity for his expiatory sacrifice.

The duties of your religious profession may be derived from two sources: you are a Christian, and a member of the church of England. We will discuss the *latter* distinction first, as it may be very summarily dispatched.

The ceremonies of our establishment are prescribed as *means* of improvement, not as *claims* to reward. Learn, from this consideration, to affix a proper importance to the external acts of religion, which derive their value either from their being the fruit of inward holiness, or from your performing them with a view of cultivating the religion of the heart. No sincere humble Christian will think the outward profession useless, since public worship has been divinely instituted, and sanctioned by all human laws.

Whoever glories in being a servant of the most high God will rejoice in every opportunity of treading his courts, and proclaiming to the world the sentiments that he really feels. The doctrine of the weakness of human nature, and the necessity of assisting grace, teaches us to apply to all those means by which that grace is ordinarily conveyed. We should be too doubtful of our own strength to trust to its unassisted firmness, and too diffident of our own judgment to rely upon it in matters of infinite moment; especially if any of our opinions tend to extravagance or singularity. But, when we have performed any act of public devotion, we should remember the errors of the Pharisee and the Roman Catholic, and beware of attributing merit to preparatory ordinances, or confounding the *means* of acquiring Christian graces with the actual *possession* of them.

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A person may repeat the prayer for charity with a rancorous heart, and be visible at divine service while his thoughts are pursuing his employments and his pleasures. Our Church attributes no merit to lip-service, and attaches no reward no formal professions. She does not rank among her genuine members those who put on piety for a Sunday garb, and drop it at the porch of the sacred edifice, where they attended to shew it to the world; or those who make religion to consist in heaping sermon on sermon, and prayer on prayer, regardless of the weightier matters of the law, and all the social duties which their families and their neighbours require. All those who fail to transfuse the spirit of her offices into their ordinary affairs, she considers as Papists in principle, and as superstitious as those who count their Ave-Mary's.

On the other hand, she does not admit that human nature can in this world acquire such a degree of perfection as to adopt the abstracted *mental* worship of angels. Feeling and sentiment are unsafe guides; and when assimilated to devotion, without a counterpoise of judgment, they are sure to produce enthusiasm. When once you admit *passion* into religion, you destroy its efficacy as a rule for the direction of the passions. In vain do you appeal to rapturous expressions, as a proof of your piety, if your actions testify that you do not know the true meaning of that term. If religion has neither made you more candid nor more sober-minded; if it has not enlarged your ideas, and made you, as our great Master intended, more useful in your calling, more social, more desirous to promote the welfare and happiness of society; you have *perverted* the

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the precepts, which ought to have softened the ills and corrected the errors of civilized life, into the rules of a monastic order; you separate yourself from those whom you ought to assist; you injure the noble cause which you pretend to support, by a needless austerity and an absurd fanaticism. Such are your errors and dangers, supposing your pretensions to piety are sincere; but if you have assumed it as a vizard, tremble, thou hypocrite, at the searching eye of thy God!

The mystics and pietists* of the present day decry the duty of attending at our parish church;—I hope without duly considering its high importance.

* By these terms the author would be understood to mean, those who appeal to inward feelings, who pretend to know their own lot in another world, and who affect an *abstracted mental* worship.

That religion is best learned from a regular preacher; that regular prayers are the best assistances and guides to devotion; that our liturgy contains most suitable addresses to the Deity, in which the sinner may supplicate his judge, the Christian bless his Redeemer, and the creature implore the aid of his Creator, is generally admitted. Yet many, who acknowledge these truths, from capricious dislike forbear from sanctioning public worship by always appearing where only they can possess the triple advantage, of performing their own duty; of attending to the conduct of that family which Providence has committed to their care; and of influencing their more thoughtless neighbours by the interesting and amiable sight of a whole household regularly paying the tribute of prayer and praise to the great Governor of heaven and earth.

Whoever neglects a duty so important to his fellow-creatures, and so evidently sanctioned by all those texts of scripture which enjoin family worship, or which commend the example of those patriarchs who commanded their households to keep the ordinances of God, because the style, or manner, or doctrine, of the sermon does not suit his taste or his opinions, sacrifices the essential part of public worship to private caprice, and prefers his *amusement* to performing his duty to his God.

Prayer, praise, receiving the sacrament, and reading the scripture, are all *instrumental* duties, “the religion of the *means*,” as Dr. Scott styles them; highly necessary and useful to us men; but useful only, in this sense, as they conduce to “the religion of the *end*,” which is, the practice of Christian virtue. Now, hearing of sermons is a
 duty

duty evidently far inferior to those which I have just enumerated; and when we consider the use that is often made of them, by those who pass from preacher to preacher, with a view of comparing the respective merits of each, and of furnishing conversation from the various incidents that occurred during the performance, am I uncandid in suspecting that such hearers mistake amusement for duty? They certainly sacrifice doing what they ought, to hearing what they ought to do; and, as their favourite orators are by no means unanimous in doctrine, may I not add, that a laudable useful practice is abandoned, to run a chance of being told some *gross* untruths, which must dreadfully mislead them in the way of salvation?

I would illustrate what I have said by an incident which happened within my own knowledge, in a church that was
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occupied by a clergyman who styled himself a gospel preacher. The congregation, by the time that the sermon began, might amount to twelve hundred persons. The idea that the auditors entertained of the service could be gathered from various circumstances. As the sermon occupied more than double the usual time, the prayers began half an hour sooner than at any other church; and I conceive that not one hundred people heard the *whole of the liturgy*.

During the communion service, multitudes flocked in; which was a plain proof that the sermon was their attraction. The earliness of the hour demonstrated that they could not have attended prayers anywhere else; and they did not come in families, but distinctly. How was the beauty of holiness here defaced! where were their servants, where their children? What scenes

scenes of riot and misrule, what strange profanations among inferiors, must, in all probability, disgrace that sabbath which the caprice, or the mis-directed piety, of the heads of these respective families deemed well employed, in listening to a tiresome repetition of mystical doctrines (I do not say mysterious, for I affix a sacred meaning to that epithet), delivered in a desultory verbose style, and rendered ridiculous by fanatic irreverent gestures! The scene was repeated in the evening. Can this be the religion that Jesus preached? Did this intemperate harangue resemble the discourses of our Lord and his apostles*? I dwell the longer upon this subject, because I have seen printed discourses published by preachers of this denomination, in which the pains that are taken to keep gospel preachers out

* Dr. Paley makes a similar observation.

of churches are enumerated among the "crying sins" of the nation. They say, the people are thus kept ignorant of *vital* Christianity, and that the doctrines which they teach are the same that our Articles enforce. But our primitive reformers did not hold the tenets of Calvin on grace, free-will, election, &c. they esteemed them *dangerous*; and if it be fair to expound a compendium of faith by the opinion of those who framed it, our Articles do not countenance any of Calvin's ideas on these points. But, granting these men to preach speculative truth, is the practice that I have just described, and which they evidently sanction, no evil? Can that be vital Christianity which diverts the attention from good works, that *fruit* by which the tree of faith must be proved to be *alive*? Do the guardians of the rising generation, do those who direct and influence

fluence the lower orders of society, fulfil the important duties of a Christian sabbath, when, neglecting the office of private instruction, or attention to the behaviour of their charge during public worship, they leave them uninstructed and unrestrained, while they follow the impulses of curiosity or contradiction? Can Christianity derive any benefit from having her sacred orders traduced, her ministers held up as objects of contempt, and publicly satirised, by men who *sur-reptitiously intrude* on their office? Would a good man pique himself on a popularity that tarnishes the reputation and invades the rights of another good man, and so renders the clerical office a contention for prize-fighters? Can either humility or modesty exist in that man's bosom, who triumphs at perceiving an importance annexed to his own crude extemporary effusions, which is denied to
the

to the most studied elaborate compositions of men as highly celebrated for wisdom and learning as any of whom the annals of our country justly boast? And if, from the instance which I have just given, it be fair to infer, that there is usually such a difference in the number of hearers at the lessons, and at the sermon, does that man *worthily* fill the priestly office who does not take some occasion to enforce on his auditory a respectful attendance while the word of God is recited? I should not scruple to ask even these gospel preachers, whether *they dare presume* to say, that there is more edification in their desultory declamations, than in any chapter of that book which is dictated by divine inspiration?

Sincerely lamenting, that a description of people who profess to have the happiness and reformation of mankind
at

at heart, should either openly attack or secretly endeavour to undermine an establishment, which, if purity of doctrine and wisdom of contrivance could ensure success, would produce the ends *avowedly* desired, by those who, while they rank among our brethren, often act as our enemies; do you, my dear Boy, shew the solidity of your religious principles by a steady, uniform, decent attendance on your *parochial* minister. And doubt not, that, if you bring with you a well-disposed mind, such attendance will procure you that comfort and information which itinerant wanderers often fail to enjoy. Though this practice is not so strictly obligatory as not to yield occasionally to expediency, it never must be interrupted by pique, caprice, or humour; especially when you come to fill such a station in life as to have others influenced by your conduct. I know of no
circumstance

circumstance more injurious to the piety of a family, than the master's estranging himself from public worship, through resentment to his pastor. Could inconsiderate petulance argue, it would be proper to ask whether attendance at church is an act of politeness to the officiating minister, a visit of ceremony regulated by the rules of *étiquette*, which may be suspended without infringing a higher law than that of civility; or, whether the clergyman is to reap the advantage of his congregation's punctual observance of those divine and human laws which recommend the use of these instrumental duties, as the most probable means of acquiring the Christian graces that are to make us happy in futurity? Surely, when we read the positive commands which enjoin forgiveness of injury, that person must be perversely rash, who dares

dares to close his eyes in sleep while his heart is at enmity with his fellow-creature. What then must be the temerity of the worm who, with rebellious folly, vows revenge against "the courts of the house of his God?"

If abhorrence of the officiating minister be a wicked excuse, dislike of his manner is a weak one. Our church abjures the Romish tenet; the rites do not derive their efficacy from the *merit* or *intention* of the priest. If his manner be faulty, the prayers, the lessons and the sacraments are not so. If the sermon does not suit your taste, gratify your particular humour at home after you have performed your public duty.

Our language affords many admirable compositions; study them in your closet: your judgement will be less liable to be misled when it is not warped by the graces of elocution, or prejudiced by an embarrassed

embarrassed delivery. Many of the *best* selections that we can boast were bequeathed to us by divines who gained *little* commendation in the pulpit.

Several clergymen who do not illiberally condemn their clerical brethren, or degenerate into any extravagance in doctrine or manner, are very solicitous to acquire the reputation of popular preachers. It is not for me to determine their motives. With some, it may be mere worldly interest; with others, I *trust*, it is a laudable zeal for the glory of God. They generally found their reputation on a graceful manner, and an impressive elegant style. I *trust*, my dear boy, that your good sense will prevent you from preferring these adventitious appendages to "the words of *sound doctrine*." When the latter is preserved in its pure state, the former are valuable additions. But the
embroidery

embroidery which embellishes a rich stuff, is injudiciously employed when it is bestowed on a flimsy material. We compare the worthlessness of the substance with the richness of the ornament, and regret the waste of labour. Some of these admired preachers, conscious that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are very much out of fashion, are as tender of their auditory's feelings as Pope's "soft Dean," who never "mentioned Hell to ears polite;" and, through their anxiety to avoid Jack's balm of Gilead and sulphur, which Swift tells us of*, they trim up a neat *moral* essay, which might have done honour to a *Pagan* philosopher. As the practice of omitting to enforce *Christian* motives of action in the sermon is a serious evil, which can only be counterbalanced by the excellency of the preceding prayers,

* Swift's Tale of a Tub.

I trust

I trust that you will never hazard the loss of this valuable part of the service, to gratify your curiosity, by running in search of preaching embellished by oratorical devices.

My wish to prevent you from setting up for a sermon critic, is another motive to dissuade you from acquiring a love of religious novelties. The great design of going to church is, to pay public homage to our Creator, and to solicit fresh assistances of grace, to enable us to act as we ought in the station in which God has placed us. We shall be called to account, whether *we* rightly discharge this duty; the wilful or natural defects of the preacher are circumstances for which *we* shall not be answerable. I have been extremely hurt at seeing children allowed to ridicule the sermon; and this licence is sometimes permitted *even* in well dis-

posed families. It must be your own fault if you do not reap some advantage from the most defective composition.

Before I quit the duties that are required from you as a member of the establishment, let me, with the most serious anxiety, entreat you to avoid a fault which, I am grieved to say, is spreading very fast among the middle orders of society; I mean, a general contempt of the clergy. I know, that in some initiatory clubs, which aspire to the praise of qualifying young men for the higher classes of infidelity, the trembling novice who fears to attack the Bible is permitted to rally his feeble powers, and to exercise his untried wit, by skirmishing against the pride, hypocrisy, sensuality, gluttony, and selfishness of the parson; with the hope that, when flattery has subdued his small re-
mains

mains of shame, he may rise to a more heroic warfare, and turn his weapons against priestcraft and bigotry. I never hear a *young man* adorn his discourses with the above style of invective, without setting him down for one who is as wicked as he *dares to be*, and in a hopeful way of receiving the full investiture of philosophism.

I do not mean to interdict you from condemning the bad conduct of any individual who may disgrace his holy function by a behaviour that is irregular, wicked, or profane. A well-wisher to the clerical function must mark with indignation the tainted sheep who brings disgrace upon the flock. I speak of that general indiscriminate censure, which, *pre-supposing* the useflessness, *infers* the depravity, of an order of men who, though not free from human infirmity, yet if their general character

were candidly examined, would be found to claim the esteem of their fellow-citizens for superior purity and holiness, as their persons are certainly entitled to respect on account of their sacred office. The abuse that is daily heaped upon them only disgraces the vacant heads and corrupt hearts of the libertines who utter it. It is too common-place to be termed wit, and too vulgar to be esteemed gentility.

The rest of our duty, as members of a church which professes to preach the true word of God, may be comprised in our obligations as Christians; and, indeed, what I have already enumerated are referable to the same high authority. Respect to the ordinances of our superiors; a just sense of the importance of instrumental duties; and a due regard to the minister who "watches over us in the Lord," are expressly enjoined

enjoined in Scripture. Whatever contributes to general improvement, to sound knowledge, to order, decency, and proper subordination, becomes an obligation, not merely owing to man or to our country, but also to God.

In attempting to enumerate what our Christian profession requires of us, I launch into an extensive field. For, considering religion in the light in which it ought to be viewed, as affording motives for conduct, the most indifferent action becomes a mean of performing or transgressing our duty. We must not be Christians merely at our devotions; but we must preserve in our minds such a sense of our Maker's precepts and omnipresence, as will not by starts, but regularly, not on stated occasions, but daily and hourly, determine our behaviour; making us not only pious but placable; not merely restrain-

ing us from vice, but prompting us to virtue ; not only just, charitable, and temperate, when the eye of public observation is fixed upon us ; but equitable in our most secret transactions, kind and uniform in our conduct amidst our family, and as cautious of indulging an evil propensity when we are alone, as among a thousand witnesses. And while, by such a course of behaviour, we study to do all the good that is *properly* in our power, and to avoid all the errors that we can escape, we are not to propose worldly advancement or reputation as our ultimate reward. If these should *fairly* offer, we may embrace them as unexpected advantages which have happily fallen in our way ; but the chief motive that should influence our minds should be, the sincere desire of obeying our heavenly master. This will keep us steady in our course ; and by continually

tinually having our eyes fixed on that holy perfect law to which we have vowed obedience, the farther we advance in piety and virtue, the greater will be our humility and fear of offending, because our views will continue to expand, and we shall discern degrees of perfection, and minute observances, which did not strike us when our consciences were less alive to the feelings of compunction. And while we thus proceed from grace to grace, the most encouraging prospects will open on our soul; for, be it remembered, that as there are infinite degrees of guilt and virtue, so there are infinite gradations of punishment and reward in that future, dimly discovered, but certainly existing region, to which we are travelling. You may recollect the words of the respectable instructor of your youth: “ We contend not only

“ for a crown of glory, but for the most
 “ glorious of immortal crowns.”

There are many people who affect to set up morality against religion; and who, after having enlarged their own ideas of virtue by the sublime precepts that are contained in the New Testament, assert, that the pale planet which they have decked in borrowed splendor, would emit sufficient light to answer all our wants; even if the radiant sun of revelation were extinguished. The situation of the pagan world at the coming of Christ proves, how few discoveries human nature could make in what was most likely to promote the general welfare of society. You will recollect that our Lord appeared in the Augustan age, which concentrated all the learning of preceding times, and when philosophy had tried its utmost

to reform erroneous principles, and to introduce just ideas of moral obligation. Many of the horrid enormities which were then sanctioned, not only by general practice, but by public institutions, are better buried in oblivion. I will only mention two crimes which most of the Romans esteemed meritorious, and marks of a noble character; self-murder, and the thirst of vengeance*. Do not ask me, whether the pure and holy religion which expressly forbids these fatal causes of distress and discord has succeeded in eradicating them out of Christian countries. It is to be ever lamented, that our theory and our conduct so little correspond; but, if the

* Though the Romans held the lawfulness of revenge, it is not meant to ascribe the practice of duelling to them. This latter practice is of Gothic original. Revenge among the Romans appeared differently.

most awful motives that can be offered to our consideration will not prevent proud rebellious man from lifting up his hand against his own life or that of his fellow-creature in a private quarrel, will a sense of propriety, will regard to public good, check the self-murderer or the duellist, when his bosom boils with the frenzy of rage, madness, or despair? Public opinion unhappily urges him to the dreadful act; for it induces the thoughtless many to point with derision at the ruined gamester, at the broken speculator, and at the coward. If the thought of rushing uncalled into the presence of an awful Judge, recent from an act of atrocious rebellion, will not appal the criminal who meditates on such dreadful expedients, what has Morality to hope from her *cold* system of *beauty* and *propriety*? Can she convince the man whom want makes desperate,

perate, that poverty is noble? Can she teach indignant pride, or sullen hatred, that the approbation of our own hearts is a sure defence against undeserved contumely? She has no motives to urge attention, no rewards to stimulate an exertion so laborious as that of subduing ourselves. Her language is,

“ Exist in want, rather than brave an-
 “ nihilation; be disgraced and miser-
 “ able, rather than be nothing. It is
 “ most probable, that the present scene
 “ is your all. The world will shun you;
 “ there is no recompence for patience;
 “ meekness is thought to be despicable;
 “ but I can prove that patience and
 “ meekness are virtues; therefore prac-
 “ tise them. In the solitary corner in
 “ which you hide your sorrows, you
 “ will have the satisfaction of thinking
 “ that you do right during the few re-
 “ maining years of your existence. Per-

“ haps your reputation may be traduced
 “ after you are dead ; perhaps the true
 “ reasons for your conduct may then be
 “ ascertained, and posterity may justify
 “ and admire you ; but if you are sunk
 “ into nothing, this praise or censure
 “ will be alike indifferent.”

Such are the only dissuasives that morality can urge, to turn the suicide from his dreadful purpose. For, if she affirms the certainty of another life, or urges the rewards which suffering innocence may there hope to enjoy, she steals the arguments of that celestial advocate whose office she arrogantly claims. It is the *peculiar* occupation of religion to succour and console the unfortunate. In the most calamitous afflicting situation, the Christian will not dare to offend an omniscient all-powerful God, who can either punish or reward him throughout all eternity ; who can in-
finitely

finally overbalance the temporary chastisements which it is good for him to endure, or pursue his rebellious contumacy through every period of an eternal existence. How must the mind of the true believer be soothed, while suffering under the pangs of oppression and calumny, by considering that God will avenge his cause, and that his innocence shall one day be proclaimed before men and angels!

Suicide is an offence to which, from constitutional melancholy, the English are remarkably addicted. If the general returns of inquests may be depended upon, the desperate deed is most commonly preceded by some evident mark of disordered intellect; and, with respect to the dead, it would be charitable to suppose that it is *always* the case. But regard to the living compels us to assign another cause for the present alarming
and

and unprecedented frequency of this tremendous offence. We need not search far; those abominable doctrines of human independence, of being accountable to none but ourselves for our conduct; that false pride, which spurns at every restriction; that ridiculous affectation of importance and self-desert; that wild expectation of visionary happiness, and all the mad schemes of our impious perfectionists, drive their deluded followers at the *first disappointment* to the desperate resource of death. In proof of my assertion, look at France, which is not the region of gloom and despondency, but the once celebrated abode of luxury and thoughtless mirth. What is become of those philosophers who changed her national character, who confirmed her love of dissipation, and stole from her the virtues which she once possessed, loyalty, generosity, and

and cheerfulness? Many fell by the guillotine; many more by their own hands; and suicide, once scarcely known in that gay land of sunshine and revelry, is now the general termination of the guilty career of extravagance, vice, and impiety.

I have wandered from my design of shewing you how little of true morality was known in the world, to prove that, supposing it possessed discernment to *see* what was right, it wanted energy to *enforce* obedience, whenever the feelings of human infirmity strongly opposed its precepts. The latter view of the subject is best adapted to the present state of things; for, enlightened by the dispensation which they abjure, the few moral men who have read their bibles can pretty well discover what mode of conduct is most likely to promote the general interests of society. But, when
 this

this discovery is made, nothing is gained, unless they can induce others not only to think with them, but to act as they advise. Penalties and punishments, sanctioned by legal authority, will only deter people from guilt when there is danger of detection; and coercive restrictions will only stimulate them to act well when their actions are exposed to observation. But, unless you can introduce principle into the soul, where is the legislator who can devise restraints that shall influence the solitary in his cell, or the tyrant in his fortress? When want presses hard upon the poor cottager, and he sees an opportunity of purloining what would relieve him, how will you prevent him? You may multiply laws against theft, and erect gibbets; but every day's experience will tell you, that private depredation oftener escapes with impunity, than becomes a
victim.

victim to offended justice. What prevents a man who burns with revenge from sallying forth, when every eye is closed, and setting fire to the dwelling of his sleeping adversary? No system of police, however vigilant, could prevent a thousand acts of secret enmity. Add prudence and foresight to the character of a determined villain, which is no uncommon composition, and he may be guilty of almost every crime, and yet escape the vigilance of the best framed laws, and the most upright administrators of justice. These evils, which cannot be prevented by human means, would be annihilated by an universal observance of those holy precepts which make every man a witness and an accuser against himself. When the soul is impressed with a just sense of its Maker's constant presence, and its own awful responsibility, the temptations of
 want,

want, the incitements of revenge, and every other evil passion, solicit in vain. Man cannot fly from himself, and therefore dares not commit an action which his memory must painfully record. Every idea of offending with impunity is removed. The best concerted plan is as sure of future exposure, as the most clumsy process. Punishment, however delayed, is known to be inevitable : and how transcendently awful is *that* punishment ! Daring desperadoes have often braved the utmost horrors of temporal tortures ; but who can *seriously believe* the threatenings of God, and yet *defy* his omnipotence ?

The necessity, indeed, of restraining the lower orders of society by the curb of religion is so generally acknowledged, that even deistical and atheistical reformers have had sufficient wisdom to allow, that it is a good state-engine,
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a convenient bugbear, very proper to terrify those who are incapable of acting on more sublime and disinterested motives. Would to God the conduct of the higher classes of society were such as to justify the expediency of trusting them to *unassisted* morality! But while the honest gamester, the honourable seducer, and the generous duellist, are frequently found among those who pique themselves on their admiration of moral fitness, may we not boldly assert, that prosperity and learning have as much necessity for the curb of religious principle, as poverty and ignorance; and that without it no conduct can be steady, no virtue safe? For myself, I should place as much confidence in the honour of a highwayman, as in that of an atheist, whatever his rank and station. I know that they both pretend to a species of this quality. The former, if he has the

good

good breeding of his profession, will not injure your person if you quietly surrender your property. Selfishness is the stimulant of the latter, whether it appears in the shape of the love of pleasure, of praise, of wealth, or of power. If you do not stand in the way of his ruling passion, he may not be so diabolical as to ruin you without any incentive; if you can promote his designs, he will serve you; but if you are an impediment to his views, and he can privately remove you, without endangering his reputation or his safety, you have no security. He acknowledges no bond, no reciprocal obligation, to deter him from taking undue advantages, for he derides the expectation of a future audit, at which the accuser and the accused must finally appear. Trust not to his sense of natural justice; depend not on his commiseration; such motives will
yield

yield to expediency. A moral humane man must reluctantly and with difficulty tear from his bosom the consolatory belief of a future recompence for virtue; but, when once he has done it, the motives which urged him to take refuge in infidelity are sufficient to steel his heart against every sentiment that would prevent him from making the best advantage of his little all of existence.

But may not deists be moral men? I would answer by asking, What is deism? A belief in the great truths which Nature discovers, or rather pretends to discover, now that she has been assilted by revelation. I mean the belief of a God, and of a future state. The God of the deist is decked with such attributes as either best suit the *fancy* of the speculatist, or are most *convenient* to his own faulty character. And his world to come is made of the same ac-
com-

commodating materials, and peopled with most engaging company; for it is the resort of the liberal, that is to say the unprincipled; the generous, *videlicet* the extravagant; the good-hearted, alias the dissolute. None are excluded, but bigots, tyrants, and oppressors; that is, all who dare not indulge in such a latitude of invention, all who aim at preserving wholesome restrictions, and all who prevent insolence and turbulence from escaping with impunity.

The morals of the deist generally correspond with his God and his paradise: We have examined one of his principles, that modes of faith are things indifferent; that is to say, that *private* opinion is the standard of right: and if in faith, why not in morals? If restrictions upon one species of actions are wrong, why not on others? If we claim a full licence for our ideas of truth,

truth, why not for our notions of justice? If we choose to appeal to the general voice of mankind, it is not more determinate in virtue than religion; and sophists will invent pretexts to elude the force of moral obligation, as often as sceptics will frame objections to a received revelation. The deist doubts the *credibility* of Christianity, yet he acknowledges it to be on the whole a *beneficial* institution. I will have *my* doubts too. I will *suspect* the utility of those legal institutions on which he founds his right to the estates that he inherits from his ancestors. He deems our holy records forgeries; may I not question the validity of his deeds and testaments? He talks of the law of honour; where is this law enrolled, that I may also appeal to it, and judge how far his actions correspond with the pretended rule of his conduct? Alas! this
law

law is only the *fluctuating* opinion of the depraved part of the world. Fashion presides in this unstable tribunal; and virtues and vices change sides, as she enjoins. To-day, inebriety is a low vulgar vice; to-morrow, she sanctions it by example, and makes it a mark of spirit. This year, a decency of exterior is high ton; next year, it may be voted quizzical, and you must dash in a bold style, or be nobody. So capricious is fashion, when, leaving her proper occupation, of being the arbitress of dress and equipage, she presumes to interfere with those points which are only determinable by the *invariable* rules of religion.

A deist, who composes his own religion, is a dunce, or a novice, if he does not adapt it to the whim of the day, and make it correspond with the most *newly* invented code of morality. Why should

should he scruple to improve the fabric which he has himself formed? He has nothing to do with consistency; he need not examine testimony; learning is of no use; and he must be very puerile if he attempts to strengthen his system by such adventitious aids. Indeed he cannot; for they have all declared in favour of that Christianity which he is determined to reject. He has moulded his belief by his imagination; his morals are adjusted by his feelings; and, if *fancy* and *sentiment* can produce any thing firm, stedfast, and inflexible, we may then *depend* upon a deist's virtue. But if "airy nothings" are the production of the one, and the other "trembles at every breeze," beware, my dear son, of trusting to pompous declamations. If morals are to be learned from those French and German sophists, who have lately talked so much of vir-

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tue, we shall soon see that there is not a vice which may not ask for encouragement and reward. Beside, the God of the deist is too good to punish; why then need he subdue any wicked propensity, from the fear of offending a righteous Judge?

It has often been observed, that the conduct of the middle ranks of society is, in general, the most orderly, correct, and praiseworthy. They are it is true more remote from those temptations which generally beset the extremes of poverty and affluence; but another reason may be assigned for their propriety of conduct; they are most regular in the observance of religious duties. Till of late years, a free-thinking tradesman was a prodigy; and, though a lamentable imitation of the worst part of the great world has introduced an affectation of impiety, equally wicked and contemptible,

contemptible, among many weak people; yet the mania has not so far spread, as to justify a satirist in representing them as *polished* into infidels. The vast change of manners, however, that has recently taken place; in particular, the pains taken to weaken the religious principles of the rising generation; and the many mournful proofs which the manners and conversation of our young men afford, that these endeavours have not been unsuccessful; tend to justify a fear, that the distinction which was so honourable to the middle ranks of life will soon disappear, and that they will either assimilate with the deistical indifference of high life, or sink into the gross immorality of the lower orders. Need I describe the consequences of such a calamity? All who know the advantages that England has derived from her gradation of ranks,

and from the firmness and propriety of those who have filled the enviable station of mediocrity, will join me in supposing that such an inversion of character must accelerate national destruction.

Yet could this happen if Religion appeared in her genuine beauty, stripped of the misrepresentations of her enemies, and of the disguises of her pretended friends? How false and *insidious* are those who contrast her with morality! She is morality herself, acting upon firmer motives, and from surer hopes; not, indeed, that meretricious morality which alters with the humour of the day, which delates and contracts in order to shelter this vice, and to exclude that virtue; but genuine morality, which uniformly tries to promote the true happiness of mankind; which endeavours to make us wise and good; to repress insubordination and strife, to redress injuries,

injuries, to relieve misfortunes, to promote order, and peace, and justice, and mutual benevolence. Let this amiable principle be acted upon from a desire of pleasing God, and with a hope of being approved by him, and it becomes religion.

Whatever attracts our admiration in the true hero, whatever deserves our praise in the enlightened statesman or the judicious philosopher; the graces that embellish, and the virtues which ennoble the gentleman; all that soothes and endears in private life; all that elevates the human character in the arduous exercise of a public station; whatever is great, good, or amiable, is consistent with Christianity.—Consistent, did I say? Unless the consecrating principle hallows the oblation, it must not be presented at the altar. The good works of the deist cannot be acceptable

ceptable to *our* God; for, either he is a rebel, or the Deity whom *we* worship has no existence.

The bitterest enemies of our holy faith have acknowledged its claim to virtue. Even Heathens admitted the purity of its precepts, while they censured it as a *mean, degrading, unsocial* superstition. It seems extraordinary, that at this time several *real* friends to its success should, by their manner of speaking and acting, revive the accusations with which pagan persecutors sought to overwhelm the infant church.

Indeed, if the epithet *great* is justly bestowed on those actions which have for their basis self-aggrandisement, or the applause of men, Christianity is so far from inducing us to perform them, that it assures us they will only obtain the *temporal* reward to which they aspire. Our religion is the irreconcilable enemy
of

of selfishness: but is selfishness really great? Is self-denial mean? Are not the love of God and the love of our neighbour transcendantly nobler motives than the desire of our own exaltation? When you contemplate the actions of the great men of antiquity, on whom do you bestow your warm affectionate praise? Not on Coriolanus, vowing destruction to his country because a frantic mob had undervalued his deserts; not on Sylla, exterminating the adherents of his exiled rival; not on Cæsar, vanquishing the little army of Cato; not on Antony, indulging in luxurious excess with the dissolute and treacherous Queen of Egypt. No: leaving such characters to enjoy the rewards of revenge, ambition, and dissipation, your approbation and esteem follow Regulus to exile and death. You approve the firm caution of Fa-

bius, who saved Rome by despising calumny. You follow Scipio to his retirement, and admire in the conqueror of Carthage that forbearance which even ingratitude could not subdue: Your esteem rests upon the watchful father of the Roman people, while he detects the dark devices of Catiline, and discloses to his deluded countrymen the machinations of a wretch whom they cherished in their bosoms. In all these instances, you see human nature acting with true dignity and self-command. The fortitude, the perseverance, and the disinterestedness that such actions require are the very *principles* which our holy faith endeavours to cultivate in our souls, when it teaches us to subdue revenge, to do to all as we would they should do to us, to labour for the general good, and to suffer reproach with patience.

It

It has been asserted by some, that Christianity is hostile to active courage, to patriotism, and to peculiar friendship. If by the first is meant a brutal indiscriminating ferocity, which delights in acts of unprovoked aggression, it is certain that this quality is as repugnant to the spirit of the gospel, as it is destructive to the happiness of the world. It must also be granted, that our Lord and his disciples principally aimed at forming a patient, meek, passive character; and whoever looks at the nature of human society must confess, that, if we would wish to preserve order and tranquillity, such a disposition must generally predominate.* The more a peaceable quiet temper prevails, the more will earth resemble heaven: yet, as high heroic virtues are necessary in a state of imperfection, they cannot be forbidden

* See Paley's Evidences, &c.

in a dispensation that is admirably suited to our *present* existence. While there are oppressors on earth, it must be laudable to defend the oppressed. While there is wrong, justice must pursue coercive measures. While there is cruelty and fraud, it must be the duty of all who feel themselves properly authorized, to detect and punish. Whenever we are called upon to exercise the character of a protector and defender, we must either obey the call, or "leave undone that which we ought to have done." The doctrine of non-resistance was never intended to go farther than to prevent us from having recourse to private revenge, and to forbid our indulging implacable enmity. St. Paul thought so, or why did he plead his cause with such manly energy before the Jewish populace, and at the tribunal of Festus? Why did he resist the illegal punishment of scourging,

scourging, and appeal from inferior judicatures to the supreme award of his Sovereign? On various occasions this apostle manifests much of that indignation at vice and folly, which the world has agreed to term generous, and to associate with the brightest ideas of truth and virtue. It did not coincide with the design of the inspired historian, who has preserved some particulars of the interesting life of the great Teacher of the Gentiles, to give *frequent* instances of his exerting *active courage* on civil occasions; but in his Epistles we see him supporting the dignity of the apostolic character, reproving and chastising offenders, condemning pernicious doctrines with vehemence, and defending the faith with all the awful solemnity of conscious authority.

The conduct of St. Peter is similar both in his life and writings: and even

the beloved disciple, he who warms our hearts by his pathetic and sublime exhortations to universal good will, speaks with similar severity against the opposers of the truth. The inference is plain; the same measures that error has made necessary in the church, must be pursued in the state; and as redressing injuries, and resisting injustice, is a duty which we owe to our fellow creatures; so active courage, when under the guidance of religious principle, must be a valuable quality. It, indeed, implies the imperfection of the world in which we live; but in this respect it is like many other virtues which are suited to a preparatory state. It will cease at that happy period "when nation shall not lift up its spear against nation; when they shall learn war no more," and when *private* as well as *public* contention shall cease. Whether this rapturous description

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tion relates to earth or heaven, I will not pretend to decide; but we know, that in a state of full beatitude many of the fairest graces which now form the Christian character, will have no opportunity of being exercised. Faith and hope will be absorbed in certainty; patience cannot suffer; nor benevolence relieve, where there is neither calamity nor want.

With respect to the love of our country, or particular friendship, it might suffice to say, that our great Exemplar has sanctioned them both by his own practice. No one can read the gospels without observing, that a regard for the Jewish nation, which their injustice and contempt could not annihilate, glowed in the bosom of our divine Master. His repeated pathetic addresses to that rebellious people; his declaration that he was sent to the lost sheep of the
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house of Israel; the strong reluctance with which he pronounces the terrible sentence of their rejection; his prayer to his heavenly Father to forgive them, uttered while he was suspended upon the cross; all breathe so much affection to his *native* country, that it seems extraordinary that any one should doubt of the propriety of such sentiments glowing in a Christian's bosom.

And in this respect the heroic mind of St. Paul resembled that of the great Captain of our salvation. Can any thing be more strikingly expressive of the most lively national attachment, than the beginning of the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans? With what a solemn adjuration does it open! "I say the
 "truth in Christ; I lie not; my con-
 "science also bearing me witness in the
 "Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness,
 "and continual sorrow at my heart." This
 sorrow,

sorrow, as he goes on to tell us, proceeds from the rejection of the Jewish nation ; and it so far affects the patriotic apostle, that he forms the wish which Moses had before done, that himself " were accursed," (that is, deprived of the advantages of the Christian covenant,) " that his brethren, his kinsmen, " the seed of the faithful Abraham, the " once chosen, privileged people," might be accepted in his stead. He does not here speak under the influence of individual attachment ; it is the fate of the whole nation that he bewails. Not to that nation does he address his lamentation ; he shews no *suspicious* design of softening their resentment against him. He speaks to the Gentiles, to whom his mission was peculiarly addressed. To them he avows *his* strong predilection for a people whom *they* hated and despised. To them he bitterly

terly bewails, that his countrymen have forfeited those privileges which he now, by divine command, offers to Heathens, who once were aliens to the true God. Can you find more *indisputable* marks of the *amor patriæ* among the impassioned eloquence of Greek and Roman orators?

It is true, if love for our country be supposed to include any injustice to another, Christianity does not warrant us to act upon such a principle. St. Paul would not have been a faithful minister if, from attachment to the people of Israel, he had forborne to spread the glad tidings of the gospel in other lands. But is such an idea of patriotism a correct one? Was the elder Cato a real well-wisher to the Roman state, when his ferocious resentment against Carthage urged him to insist upon the annihilation of a nation which had been previously

previously too much humbled to endanger the safety of his own country? You know that, when this dreaded enemy was destroyed, civil wars and factions ensued in Rome; which, being no longer repressed by a dread of that *foreign* foe who had often imposed the necessity of domestic union, at length overturned that merciless republic which wanted forbearance to spare a prostrate rival: a just punishment for that system of rapacity and aggrandisement which she had for some time pursued. To vindicate base immoral actions, under the pretence that they were performed for public good, would be as absurd as to call Guy Fawkes a patriot, Oliver Cromwell a disinterested lover of his country, and the young Frenchmen who betrayed their parents and friends, and, reeking from their slaughter, approached the tribunal of democracy, and demanded

manded *honourable mention*, heroes. In fine, let us not call selfishness or injustice patriotism; and, instead of that virtue's being forbidden in Scripture, we shall see instances of its appearing there in the most genuine splendour.

A similar observation extends to friendship, which can only be condemned when individual affection is suffered to supersede the general good-will that we owe to the whole human race. We certainly cannot be justified, either to God or man, if we suffer private individual attachment to supersede your observance of those great laws by which societies are bound together. If it be unlawful for us to promote our own interests at the expence of justice, it is no less so to take indirect means for serving a friend. If we may not vindicate our own cause by acts of revenge or enmity, neither may we adopt such an unwar-

unwarrantable course of proceeding in the cause of those whom we love. But can the great law of charity, which enjoins universal benevolence be supposed to imply that this benevolence is to be meted out by one common measure to all mankind; to the good and the bad; to those who are near to us, and those who are afar off; those who have done us acts of kindness, and those from whom we have received cruel treatment; those who depend upon us for support, and those to whom we are no otherways bound than by the tie of a common nature; those whose temper and sentiments most accord with our own, and those who are wide as the Antipodes from our ideas?

No such ignorance is discernible in the gospels. This tenet corresponds with that notion of *universal citizenship*, which amplifies benevolence till it de-
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destroys the effect; which sends you on a Quixote scheme to Prester John's country, to relieve some unknown sufferer, while your neighbour famishes under your eye unregarded; which attaches you to some fantastical ideas of virtue and excellence that have no existence, and renders you fastidious to the merits, and cold to the claims of those who, by affinity and local situation, have an indubitable right to your chief regard. "If thou lovest not thy brother, whom thou hast seen," says St. John, "how canst thou say thou lovest God, whom thou hast not seen?" And may we not ask by a plain analogy, since personal knowledge is allowed to be a foundation for regard, can any confidence be placed in *universal philanthropy*, which owns neither country, kindred, nor friend; which is busy where it can do no good, and sluggishly inactive where

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its exertions would be useful? Is not this apathy disguised in the garb of tenderness; and self-love, solacing itself with every gratification; yet claiming cheap praise for lip-humanity and declamatory benevolence?

Let us, my dear boy, leave those who have too much general feeling to have one friend, to amuse themselves with such an intercourse with the *representatives* of the *human race* as is most agreeable to their wild imaginations; but let not us be talked out of the practice of a solid virtue. We know that the same principles which give rise to *general* benevolence, must also form the stronger ties of distinct *peculiar* affection. It is absurd to talk of loving every one alike: if so, one inducement to a wise and virtuous conduct would be wanting, —I mean the esteem of the virtuous and the wise. It is highly blameable
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to *profess* the same sort of interest for strangers as form those with whom we are nearly affected: no one ever did so, but those whose frigid breasts never felt the melting thrill of social regard. Where there is a mutual interchange of those good offices, and mutual assistances, which we frail dependent creatures so much require, there must some sentiments arise which are stronger than general good-will, or we shall be cold ingrates, not philosophers. Where there is a reciprocity of taste, occupation, or habits, a wish for frequent intercourse must follow; or we shall be more dull and earthly than those domestic beasts who, from inhabiting the same field, contract a visible degree of attachment.

Religion has not opposed any of the innocent propensities of our nature; and who can deny that virtuous friendship

ship is of this description? Can we forget that our Lord selected St. John from among his immediate followers, and distinguished him by those strong marks of preference, peculiar intimacy, tender endearment, confidence, and trust? So determinate, indeed, was this preference, that he was styled "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It was so well known, that the other apostles applied through his interest to their master, when they sought for the favour of a fuller explanation of his sublime instructions. Nor was this the only instance that our Saviour gave of individual *peculiar* affection. He, who so loved the world as to lay down his life for its ransom, treated Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, with distinguished tenderness; and admitted Peter, James, and John, to those privacies from which the rest of the disciples were excluded. Can
Christianity

Christianity be said to stifle the feelings of friendship, or obliterate the ties of nature? Look at the blessed Jesus in his dying moments, and see how the Captain of our salvation eminently fulfilled the duties of a son, while he breathed the lively language of heartfelt confidence and esteem, in recommending his aged mother to the care of his *best beloved* friend.

In this instance also does the conduct of the great apostle of the Gentiles correspond with that of his Master. The affectionate style of his epistle to his "son Timothy," and the manner in which he speaks of "Luke the beloved physician," plainly expresses the degree of estimation in which he held those favoured converts.

To conclude these subjects: We have received Christianity from a wise beneficent, unchangeable Being, whose ways
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are always equal. He enjoins grateful attachment to himself, as a tie to connect his creatures to him; and universal good-will, as a general bond of social union. Whatever inclination interferes with this great outline of duty must be repressed, whatever corresponds with it must be encouraged.

Examine your friendships by the above criterion. If they be the rash associations of vice, if they proceed from the weak dotage of partial folly, if they be carried to such excess as to intrench upon the positive duties which you owe to others, or, above all, on your Maker's rights, you must renounce them; they are unhallowed, nay dangerous. But if the affection which reciprocity of taste, or other local circumstances, have excited is sanctioned by virtue, and restrained by discretion, enjoy *fearlessly* one of the most innocent and most

soothing delights which this world can afford. But enjoy it, as you should all other blessings, with pious acknowledgement to heaven. Let me say with the temper of Addison, who thus addresses the Deity :

Thy bounteous hand with worldly gifts

Has made my cup run o'er,

And in a kind and faithful friend

Has doubled all my store.

Ten thousand thousand precious gifts

My daily thanks employ ;

Nor is the least a cheerful heart,

Which tastes those gifts with joy.

I wish you, my dear son, to cultivate in your heart such a spirit of piety as that which pervades the writings of this admirable author. You know the celebrated account of his death-bed behaviour. Few seem to have felt Christian sentiments with more force, or to have expressed them with greater propriety.

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We need not wonder, therefore, at the composed resignation which marked his last moments. But to return.

So far is our religion from being inconsistent with the feelings of true heroism, genuine patriotism, and sincere friendship, that, if we wish to describe those qualities in full perfection, we must find them on those superhuman motives which Christianity supplies, to make what is both amiable and pleasing estimable and solid. The mere moral man, who is called to a painful exercise of any of the above properties, soon becomes disgusted with the caprice and ingratitude of the world, and he pleads them as excuses for retreating from his arduous post. The Christian well knows the weakness and folly of the common nature in which he shares. He is neither surprized nor discouraged that his designs are mistaken, and his good evil

spoken of. He knows that revenge is strictly forbidden, and that misanthropy is hostile to the genius of his religion. He has received a command not "to be weary in well-doing," and he looks to a recompence which man cannot bestow.

Let us suppose that success crowns "the hero's or the patriot's toils." The moral man receives it as the natural consequence of his own address, talents, and exertion; the Christian welcomes it as the gift of God. May not the effect of these different dispositions be thus briefly characterized? "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." No wonder that all enlightened statesmen should agree in allowing the utility of religion considered merely in a political light, since it operates as a curb in prosperity, a support in adversity, and a sure steady

rule to preserve consistency and general regularity of conduct.

In extolling the virtues of patience, meekness, placability, and humility, which our Lord so powerfully inculcated both by precept and example, some have gone so far as to insinuate, that he meant to enforce them at the expence of vigour, firmness, resolution, and activity. But he was no ordinary instructor, who doubted where to draw the line between vice and virtue. He was no rash enthusiast, who sought to build up his own system of morals at the expence of those preceding deductions which were really estimable. He knew that man, though born to suffer, was also born to act; and he never designed that those passive qualities which promote peace and good-will, should supersede the active energies, when the interests of mankind required that the

latter should take the lead, to support the feeble, or to defend the oppressed. Are not power, justice, activity, and unvariableness, faculties which the Scriptures attribute not only to the most estimable of men, but to the all-perfect Source of our existence? Were they not all exemplified in the life of Jesus? And did not his apostles, martyrs, and confessors, give the most astonishing and unparalleled proofs of them, when they engaged in the noblest design that ever exercised the powers of man, that of reforming an idolatrous corrupted world, and bringing it back to the knowledge of the true God? And whenever we embark on any virtuous and laudable design, with a sincere intention of doing our duty, are not perseverance, fortitude, and activity, necessary to our success? or rather, let me ask, could any public or private enterprize be brought

brought to a happy termination without them?

The tendency of Christianity evidently is, to make all the evil propensities passive, and to invogorate all the beneficial qualities. The very respectable characters who have seemed to countenance the conclusions which we have just controverted, appear chiefly to have fixed their attention on implacability as opposed to gentleness; and they considered firmness, vigour, and resolution, rather as annexed to inexorable resentment, than as directed to the attainment of something great and good. Yet is not the character of the true hero a compound of courage and gentleness, of enterprize and patience, of philanthropy and self-denial? And when did we ever associate the ideas of magnanimity and revenge? In condemning the abuse of the stronger qualities of the mind, let

us beware of using such *indefinite* terms as might seem to censure their proper exertion.

In all instances of human action, Christianity looks to the motive, and by that determines her censure or her praise. If we prosecute a man who has injured us, with a view to satisfy public justice, and deter others from the like offence; if we arrest the oppressor in his course, to prevent him from reiterated acts of violence and wrong; or if we detect falsehood, from our reverence to truth, we are, doubtless, acting commendably and laudably. But the same actions, if they proceed from revenge or vain glory, are most assuredly highly criminal. See in what an awful state of responsibility we are placed by the obligations which our religion imposes; and of what infinite importance it is, that we should daily scrutinize and
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examine our hearts, lest the actions which present the imposing face of virtue to admiring spectators, and for which we are actually receiving the applause of short-sighted mortals, should cause our condemnation at the final audit! How just is the thought contained in the following stanza! It is ever upon my lips; treasure it in your memory:

—Oft, alas! amidst our fairest aim,
 The busy passions mix their fatal art,
 Perplex defective virtue's genuine scheme,
 And sily warp the unsuspecting heart.

To conclude this subject. If to desire the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures be great; if it be noble to seek to promote those ends by all our thoughts, words, and deeds; Christianity inspires such sentiments. If selfishness, in all its various forms of revenge, craft,

dissimulation, sordid covetousness, cruelty, and oppression, be mean, Christianity forbids that meanness. To true glory she promises a crown: not a dim, transitory, trifling crown, such as can neither alleviate distress, nor satisfy the wishes of the soul; but an incorruptible, glorious, eternal crown, a crown of righteousness and beatitude. To selfishness, and all its degrading correlatives, she denounces a punishment, the more terrible from the awful obscurity in which she has enveloped it. The terms by which she describes it are the most tremendous that the imagination can conceive, for she calls it "the wrath of God."

I have enlarged on this subject, from my anxiety to prevent any misconstruction of the pious labours of those who wish to recommend the neglected, despised, but truly valuable *passive* virtues,

to that high station which they ought to hold in the estimation of all faithful followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. As these virtues are certainly the most difficult to practise, so are they most forcibly recommended in Scripture; and to them is promised the brightest reward. But, since this probationary state manifestly enjoins the practice of other duties, let us beware of giving a handle to infidelity, by permitting it to represent Christianity as an *impracticable* system. To prove the contrary, as I have before observed, let us only correct our ideas of the *active* qualities by the criterion of her righteous laws, and we shall find true greatness and real goodness to be in fact the same.

There is another description of casuists, who, while professing themselves to be the friends of piety, seek to deprive her of all her *amiable* attractive

features; but I must reserve for another opportunity my observations on those injudicious defenders of a sacred cause: and, with the sincere hope that you may live to be truly great, I conclude, &c.

LETTER XI.

MY DEAR SON,

THOUGH our Christian course, as proposed to a life of irreligion, may properly be called the way of pleasantness and the path of peace; yet the inspired writers, by terming it a “a warfare, a contest, and a race,” evidently meant to imply, that much difficulty is annexed to it, arising from the assaults of that spiritual enemy whose agency and existence is so plainly affirmed in Scripture; from the allurements of the world, that is, from the depraved part of our fellow-creatures; and from the natural proneness of our own hearts to evil, which is the scripture doctrine of original

ginal sin, as far as our belief in that point is intended to influence our conduct. From these three causes, innumerable temptations hourly arise; not, perhaps, seducing us to commit great crimes, but urging us to those lesser provocations of anger, envy, hatred, evil-speaking, covetousness, vanity, and various other vices, which form the habit, and steel the heart to the sense of virtue; and yet seldom attract our attention, unless they rise to some enormous breach of the *positive* laws of God. Yet it is evident, that we can never become so guilty as to commit an action on which human censure can fasten the reproach of guilt, without having many times transgressed that pure and holy rule, which enjoins us to guard our thoughts and to watch the issues of the heart.

Unremitting

Unremitting attention and watchfulness are necessary, in order to eradicate (or, such is the weakness of our nature, that I should rather say repress) the germ of wickedness: for, the doctrine of unavoidable frailty, which our religion confirms, should never be pleaded as a *forethought* excuse for any transgression. It is designed to encourage imperfect but sincere obedience to persevere in the path of duty, and to reconcile penitence to itself; not to encourage presumptuous guilt to indulge its depraved appetites with impunity. If we have leisure to consider that we shall offend by any particular action, the fault, which might have been casual and venial, will become premeditated and intentional. Do not say, that the law which is given us confesses an impossibility of our full compliance with its precepts; ignorance, surprize, and negligence,

negligence, will occasion frequent breaches, and sometimes the force of a *strong* temptation will overpower *firm* virtue. With a wish and endeavour to stand, we shall frequently fall. This is all that is meant to be allowed, by acknowledging that we must come short of that pattern of perfection which we are enjoined to imitate, or by affirming that the best of us are weak sinful creatures. If we never exert our strength, we cannot prove the nature of the warfare; if we never labour, we know not whether our strength might not have been equal to the task that is required from us. Every happy inhabitant of the kingdom of glory (and we are assured that it will consist of an innumerable multitude,) will be an irrefragable witness that the Almighty proportioned the powers of his creatures to the nature of the service which he required; for
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the potter has not, as infidels pretend, assigned his vessels to uses of which they are naturally incapable. We are at once guilty of falsehood and impiety, when we affirm that we are *irresistibly* impelled to offence. The conscience of every sinner at the last day will bear him witness, that obedience was as possible as rebellion.

A constant sense of the immediate presence of God, will be the happiest means of impressing on your mind that watchful regard to your most secret words and actions, nay to your very thoughts, which religion so positively requires; and it will also tend to imprint his precepts on your memory, and lead you to compare your conduct with that rule by which you will hereafter be judged. With this view, while you were a child, I taught you the hundred and thirty-ninth psalm, in which the
awful

awful doctrine of divine omniscience and omnipresence is inculcated, and adorned with the sublimest graces of Christian poetry. I would ask the admirers of the flippant profane Voltaire, (who attempted to sink the Mosaical institution beneath the wild reveries of Pagan mythology,) whether they can find an *equal* to this single composition among those most *celebrated* productions of Greek and Roman song, which appeared at a later period, and in a more polished age and nation? Let them match the loftiness of its ideas, the beauty and strength of its expressions, and the accuracy of its descriptions; and when they can do *all* this, let them *scoff* at "the muse of Sion."

If in your early youth you accustom yourself to these habits of consideration, you will find them easy to be retained; and, by thus checking all sinful dispositions

fitions while they are immature, you will not only find your labour considerably accelerated, but you will proceed to that enviable state of which the Psalmist speaks when he says, "Great peace have they which love thy law." The evil spirit is not only kept out, but the house is peopled with pure and happy beings. The moment you have subdued envy, you become benevolent; vanquish anger, and you are peaceable; eradicate covetousness, and you are contented. Thus the duty carries with it an indefeasible reward. An excellent divine* of the last age has proved, that the blessedness of heaven must chiefly consist in the holy spirit which will actuate its inhabitants; who, practising every virtue, will, by attaining to the perfection of their nature, enjoy supreme felicity: while the state of

* Dr. Scott, in his Christian Life.

punishment, to which the wicked are doomed, will owe its most extreme horrors to the raging passions and criminal deeds of those who exist in those dolorous regions, tormenting and tormented. His notion is just; morally impressive; admirably suited to withdraw our minds from fixing on the ideas of a material paradise, or bodily torture, and to stimulate us to make such use of the awfully obscure discoveries of the other world, as will induce us to perform our parts most *correctly* in this. For it is certain, that the dreadful vices which St. Paul enumerates* will not only disqualify us from entering into the kingdom of God, either with respect to his kingdom in this world, by not permitting us to be true Christians; or as it refers to the future kingdom of glory, by making us objects of divine abhor-

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

rence ; but they also so debase and corrupt the mind, as to render it *physically* unfit for holy employments, or for that kind of happy fellowship which will subsist in the regions of the blessed. I need not tell you that *place* cannot constitute happiness. You have often read and admired Satan's soliloquy, who, even in Paradise, bore about with him a hell in his own bosom.* I know you do not degrade the Christian heaven, in your imagination, by supposing that its robes, its crowns, and its palms, were intended to convey a *real* description of its ecstatic rewards. You know that they were meant as allusions ; and, like the eye or right hand of the Deity, they illustrate things that are inconceivable, by comparing them to *sensible* images.

Many illiterate people, who are inclined to mysticism, have run into ab-

* Paradise Lost, book iv, line 75.

furd, I might say impious excesses, by interpreting these similitudes *literally*. Confusing in their extravagant imaginations, the unnatural association of adoring gratitude, or, as they term it, divine love, and sensual attachment; they give such a description of heaven, that if, instead of the names of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we were to substitute Fatima and Zara, it would do for Mahomet's voluptuous paradise. What an infinity of inconsistency do these people admit into their religion! None are so violent in their invectives against pomp, splendor, pleasure, nay against indulgences which others deem innocent and allowable; and yet they make the felicity of the blessed to consist in an unbounded enjoyment of whatever they were deprived of upon earth! Forgetting that this world really is prelusive and preparatory, intending to enable us

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to acquire those habits which will fit us for a more exalted existence, and to subdue those evil propensities which will exclude us from heaven; must they not suppose that the Deity prohibits us various things, not because they are in themselves *prejudicial*, but because he will *satiate* us with them hereafter? Thus, instead of our living in order that we should cultivate habits suitable to a state of glory, we are to prepare for that state by weaning our minds from those inclinations which will then be gratified, and by acquiring propensities that death will for ever annihilate. Can such interpreters of scripture be said to know Christ? Are they aware that they ascribe caprice and tyranny to the most unchangeable, wise, and beneficent of beings?

This leads me, my dear Thomas, to the subject that I intended principally to

to enlarge upon in this letter: I mean the erroneous zeal of those who seek to straiten the strait gate, and who, in an age so remarkably inclined to love and pursue what is termed *pleasant*, endeavour to strip religion of all its amiable graces; to make it austere, misanthropic, and querulous; the enemy of innocent mirth and elegant amusement. Is this being indeed her friend? Can we hope thus to facilitate her triumphs over her insidious enemy vice, who courts pre-eminence by the gentlest blandishments, the most insinuating allurements, and attractive manners? This were entirely to reverse the practice of the great apostle, “who was all things to all men, that he might by any means gain some.”

If Christianity were to be tendered to a nation just emerging from barbarism, how would a judicious missionary act?

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He would, by pathetic appeals, endeavour to interest the affections; he would captivate the imagination by striking images; and, avoiding argumentative discussion, he would aim at *penetrating* the heart. We need not ask how the same important message should be announced to an assembly of sages; an instance has been given us, which may serve for a model. St. Paul, preaching at Athens, exhibited a style of manly freedom and close reasoning which must affect every reader; and it is supposed, that this admired piece of eloquence extorted the unwilling commendation of Longinus, a Syrian philosopher, who lived about two hundred years afterwards. He places our apostle among the most celebrated orators in these words: "Add to these Paul of Tarsus, the patron of an opinion not yet fully proved." This is a clear attestation,

that the graces of composition were not deemed inapplicable to the cause of truth; and that those graces had been sufficiently exerted in its support, to attract even the applause of heathens.

We live in a period in which refinement has been carried to an extreme of fastidious delicacy; in which amusement is the reigning pursuit, not only of the great world, but even of its numerous imitators. Every quality, as an excellent moralist * observes, has been sacrificed to the essential requisite of pleasing. Talents, worth, genius, sense, every degree of moral and mental superiority, must be humbled at this *idol's* shrine. It is very desirable that the world should be taught to appreciate merit by a different standard; but, in order to make it do so, you must argue with it in a language that it can under-

* Mrs. More.

stand. It will be in vain that you shall address yourself to the social affections; they are blunted by dissipation and indulgence; nor can you attract an imagination that has been exhausted with creating selfish temporal enjoyments, by expatiating on the rewards and punishments which religion announces. They are *future*; how faintly, therefore, will they interest people whose whole souls are engrossed by the events of the *present* moment! Though *certain*, they are *awfully obscure*; can they be expected to influence those who allow themselves no leisure for consideration; who systematically fly from those *awful* objects of sorrow, disease, and death, which are intended to remind thoughtless mortals of the concerns of eternity? The votaries of fashion profess only to live for amusement; they pass on from delight to delight; eternally busy, and

forever idle; constantly seeking pleasure, and never pleased; deciding on every thing, and examining nothing; pretending to knowledge, yet hating investigation. By what method can the grave theologian, or sound divine, hope to secure the attention of hearers who are "every thing by starts, and nothing "long"?"

I do not pretend to decide for the official labourers in God's vineyard: their superior learning and judgment qualify them for their arduous important task; and it seems as if their efforts, aided by the melancholy and portentous appearance of the times, had awakened, if not the *contrition*, at least the *apprehension* of those "who flutter life away." But let me recommend, to all sincere Christians, a mode of conduct which would materially assist the labours of our spiritual pastors, and confirm every
salutary

salutary impression. Let those who have the interests of religion really at heart, instead of secluding themselves from the world, or affecting to despise its opinion, appear before it as “ a burning and shining light.” Let them carefully guard against acquiring any unnecessary peculiarities. The art of pleasing is the prevailing science; let them study to acquire all those amiable graces which the forms and habits of polite life require. They will adopt them from a nobler motive than the mere wish of pleasing, because they will make exterior accomplishments *subservient* to the noble aim of correcting the conduct and improving the principles of those whom their engaging manners have attracted. So perverse is human nature, so superficial are the reflections which a life of dissipation will allow, that every possible excuse is seized as

an apology for inattention to the welfare of our immortal part. If it can be pretended, that, in order to secure the concerns of another world, we must entirely give up this; if it can be proved, that we must encounter all the ridicule which general opinion attaches to singularity, preciseness, and needless scrupulosity; if it can be pleaded, that, in order to be serious Christians, we must be unamiable men; if piety can be shewn to consist in a continual routine of acts of devotion, in incessantly hearing sermons, in thrusting religious topics into ordinary discourse, in forbidding innocent mirth and allowable gratifications; if Christianity does indeed wear such a forbidding aspect, can we wonder that the young, the gay, the witty, and the beautiful, defer religion to a more convenient season; that they prefer the syren's strains to the awful voice
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of divine truth; and, resolving to devote the morning of life to the enjoyment of pleasures for which they have such an exquisite relish, postpone all considerations of futurity till they are old and ugly and dull, because they can then afford to be disagreeable?

But why should that which is most lovely in itself be cramped and disfigured till it is rendered odious? What is religion, but the care of our own souls? Wherein consists that care, but in doing our duty? What is that duty? Love to God and our neighbour; “eschewing evil and doing good; seeking peace and enjoying it.” Cannot this be done without distorting the countenance? Is religion a monastic order? Must we adopt the sackcloth and ashes, the cowl and the beads? Are not the worshippers of God and of Belial sufficiently distinct, unless the former con-

stantly hold in their hands a visible crucifix? Was Joshua less terrible to the enemies of Israel because he and his household had determined to serve the Lord? Did Abraham, the father of the faithful, neglect to find proper pasturage for his herds and flocks; or did he refrain from arming his household to rescue his nephew Lot from captivity, because he frequently communed with God? The wealth of Job was celebrated through the east: did he restrain his children from enjoying it? No: he hallowed the festivals of fraternal affection; and, whenever his sons and daughters assembled to indulge in the delights congenial to their age, the pious parent offered the deprecatory sacrifice, lest the lively sallies of youth should inadvertently degenerate into criminal excess. Nor was the holy patriarch deprived of his large possessions,

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sions, and plunged into unexampled misery, to punish him for the *misuse* of riches; but in consequence of the power which the supreme Governor of the universe most *justly* claims to try his servants; to prove if that piety which affluence could not corrupt could withstand the chilling blasts of adversity; and thus to render the virtue which repelled temptation, worthy of more exceeding happiness.

I have before told you, that it is the opinion of our church, that it is not the lawful enjoyment, but the *misuse* of riches, that will exclude us from the kingdom of God. In like manner may we interpret all those precepts which relate to the renunciation of the world; we “are not to follow or be led by it
“to do evil.” When compliance includes no sacrifice of principle, singularity is unadvisable, even upon motives

of worldly policy, for it draws every one's attention, and makes them in some degree our enemies. I question whether it is defensible in a religious sense; for it certainly implies a degree of vanity and self-sufficiency which plainly speaks a contempt of that world whose general customs you refuse to adopt. Besides, are the duties which you have *sworn* to perform nothing? Will not attention be sufficiently exercised in preserving the *consistency* of the religious character? Then why impose voluntary restrictions which have no intrinsic merit, neither tending to make us wiser nor better; but rather, by diverting our regard from our main concern, manifestly impeding our Christian course?

But, say some, amusement and relaxation lead us into temptation; we are no longer safe than while we abide in the courts of the sanctuary. It were well

well if we were safe there. The Pharisee was in the house of God when he fell into the offence of boasting of his own righteousness, and of despising the humble publican. Let me, my dear child, stop one moment, to suggest to you how much this excellent parable proves that its relator knew what was in the heart of man, and had witnessed its most secret aspirations. Where shall we go to be safe from temptations, when we carry them with us in our own bosoms? If the temple proves to be no fortress, can the closet defend us from our enemy? Do not treachery, malice, envy, and revenge, love to brood in secret over their dark designs? Are we ever less sensible of our own defects than when we are alone? Is not retirement the place in which self-delusion and discontent employ their busy suggestions; the one telling us what won-

ders we could atchieve, and the other exclaiming against the base neglect that we experience? It was a desert, a scene of complete seclusion, that the prince of darkness chose for his insidious attack on the Captain of our salvation; and the circumstances of the temptation shew, that he had been too successful in his assaults on the frail sons of Adam, not to know how to suit his suggestions to the circumstances of solitude; for he evidently considers it as a likely situation to excite inordinate ambition and confident presumption.

Though a complete immersion in the pleasures and pursuits of this world, must cause a dangerous forgetfulness of that which is to come, yet it by no means follows, that an estrangement from society will make us wise unto salvation. To affirm it, would be to renew the exploded follies of the church
of

of Rome, which were derived, as I before told you, from the unmeaning austerity of the oriental philosophy, the source of most of the early heresies that infected the church. I have already treated of its *theological* absurdities; respecting its morality, I will only here tell you, that they placed virtue in rest; the early Christians, in action. They taught an abstracted mystical devotion; the Christians, a social reasonable worship. They peopled the deserts of the east with anchorites, who led a life useless to man, and, may we not thence infer, unacceptable to God? while the true church of Christ furnished missionaries, confessors, and martyrs, who travelled to every region of the known world, and in the courts of princes, among the crowded haunts of men, preached a pure and holy religion, no less by their example than their precepts;

cepts; compelling the idol, by their miracles, to fall from its base; and gaining the hearts of its sensual worshippers, by their bright display of every amiable quality. Thus did they mix with the world, without being conformed to it; thus did they extend their pious solicitude beyond an anxiety for their own individual salvation; and thus did they realize the most elevated ideas of that charity "which seeketh not her own."

In those periods when the church of Christ is exposed to peril and persecution, her members must suffer with her; and then they are commanded to exercise magnanimity, fortitude, patience, and self-denial; but when it pleases the Almighty to give repose to his people, the same virtues assume a different cast, as they are called upon to exercise themselves in different circumstances. While our Lord was on earth, his disciples did
not

not fast. Their social character and easy manners, marked by no austere peculiarities, offended the Jews, who applied to their Master to know why he thus suffered them to be like other men. "Can the children of the bride-chamber fast," replied he, "when the Bridegroom is with them? The time shall come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast in those days." Severe, indeed, was the fast which our Lord predicted, and his disciples nobly sustained the trying period of calamity. It has now pleased God to terminate those conflicts. His church, in this land, has been peculiarly favoured with a long course of prosperity. We are not called to lamentation and woe, but to religious joy and grateful exultation. The enmity which the world now bears to the gospel is the antipathy of vice to virtue,

virtue, the abhorrence which passion harbours against principle. The arm of temporal power is no longer employed in crushing the religion of Jesus. The persecutions which we have to dread are, the clamours of unruly passions and turbulent desires. Blessed be God! the kingdoms of this world have long since become the kingdoms of Christ, in the sense predicted by the angel in the Revelation; for they have long given Christianity the support of temporal power, and every advantage which can be derived from coercive institutions. Aliens from the faith of God have not (at least in this nation) an opportunity of persecuting believers; and, since the mild spirit of toleration has been diffused in the present century, Christians of one sect or denomination cannot be injured by those of an opposite persuasion, so long as they *avow* their
obedience

obedience to the *civil* judicature of their country by reverencing its *existing* laws. Why then should Jack* (by whom I understand no particular description of dissenters, but every person who deviates into fanatic habits, by whatever persuasion he calls himself) still continue to court persecution, and, when he can no longer provoke the cuts and personal indignities of his contemporaries, contrive to make himself ridiculous by affectation, or disgusting by sour austerity? Is this fulfilling the law of Christ, or the apostolical precept of "giving offence to no one? Supposing such demeanor in itself perfectly innocent, is he not tempting others to sin? And can he be blameless who, instead of endeavouring to "prevent his good from being evil spoken of,"

* Vide Tale of a Tub.

glories in provoking censure? This is one of the erroneous practices that have arisen from separating texts of Scripture from their context, and applying what *personally* and *individually* relates to the apostles, or the first founders of the Christian church, to all following generations of believers, who are very differently circumstanced. St. Paul might talk of the perils which awaited him in every city, and speak of his willingness to be "offered up for the truth of the gospel;" but the perils which await our itinerant apostles (as they style themselves) arise either from their own turbulence or folly. He was continually accused and persecuted by his revengeful restless countrymen, for proclaiming the mission which he miraculously received; yet he persevered in his calling with conscientious zeal and unwearied energy.

They

They who do not blush to apply his well-deserved encomiums to their own trivial concerns, have no *mission*, no *supernatural* call: They have zeal, indeed; but it is generally zeal without knowledge; and they have energy, but it is the energy of enthusiasm. Their sufferings are *voluntary*, I should say *solicited*; and, though calamity of every kind is entitled to commiseration, it does not of itself deserve admiration. Before we bestow that mark of applause on the sufferer, we must enquire, not merely *how* he suffers, but *why*; and if we find that prudence would have avoided the misfortune, he is only entitled to that pity which the weakness (and folly is a weakness) of our fellow-creatures requires.

Be it your aim, my dear Boy, not only to cherish the flame of religion in your heart, but to let its lustre appear in your
 most

most indifferent words and actions. I do not mean by that continual reference to "the Lord," and frequent introduction of Scripture phrases, which constantly, and I may say justly, subjects the adopters of such manners to the censure of canting; but by speaking, even on common subjects, in such terms as may convince your acquaintance that you have an *inbred* reverence for your Creator, and a respect for his laws. His name is too sacred for familiar discourse; but familiar discourse must be regulated by his precepts. Let no profaneness, no immorality, no light immodest expression, no ludicrous degrading allusion to sacred subjects, escape from your lips. Be regular, decent, sober, and correct in your conduct. Let no proposed pleasure tempt you to neglect a known duty. If you are overcome by a temptation, do not assume
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the air of a bravo in guilt; but let all who hear of your offence hear also of your contrition and shame. If your companions act wrong, reprove them by your example; or, if the degree of intimacy will permit, by your admonitions. Be not severe in your reprehension of their inadvertencies; and in things indifferent, aim at complaisant conformity. The stand which you are commanded to make against vice will be so much the more conspicuous and influential, if you can shew that it does not proceed from pertinacious obstinacy, but from principle, which you can never sacrifice either to interest, inclination, or persuasion, without committing an offence in the sight of God. When you have done all this, do not fear but it will be known that you are truly religious. Go regularly to the house of your God; but do not blow a trumpet

trumpet before you ; nor think that you can add to the lustre of your own piety by railing at those who unhappily have a less lively sense of the homage which they owe to their Creator. Be not eager in proclaiming your religious principles, unless they are attacked ; confine them to the sacred intercourse of confidential friendship. I do not mean by this to discourage you from talking seriously. I only enjoin you not to talk disputatiously ; for that is throwing down the gauntlet of defiance to your enemies ; and you must be an experienced, skilful disputant if you can at all times escape unhurt. If neither your faith nor your charity suffer in the conflict, (one or other of which can rarely fail to happen,) it is treating the mysteries of our religion indecorously, to haul them into table conferences and club disputes. If you think of them

as you ought, you will feel that they are too awful and too elevated to be *lightly* discussed. You may injure the cause that you undertake to defend, by your hasty expressions and unbecoming explanations. Besides your character will not be improved by adopting the style of the polemic; and do not hope to make converts; for the expectation would only prove your own ignorance of human pertinacity.

Should the infidel or the sceptic dare to attack you, notwithstanding the assurances which your conduct gives them that you steadfastly adhere to the faith of your forefathers, rather endeavour to *silence* them by your *firmness*, than to *refute* them by your *eloquence*. Gravely tell them, that you have deeply considered the subject, and that your opinions are fixed. Do not smile at their irreverent wit, nor give them cause to suspect that your heart and your tongue
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are at variance. Avoid all affectation, and the charge of bigotry and obstinacy must refute itself. Unless they are very abandoned, or very unprincipled, they will soon desist from perplexing you on a subject where the triumph is all your own. If they are completely profligate, avoid their society as you would a dangerous pest; if they retain any remnant of virtue, the modest propriety of your behaviour is more likely than violent opposition to produce their reformation. I need not tell you, that I am now speaking of general acquaintance. It would be unnecessary to urge *you* against giving the right hand of fellowship to those who are rebels to your God.

I have most earnestly recommended it to you, to ground yourself thoroughly in the principles of your religion; as the best means of defending yourself against those assailants who, under the

pretext of improving moral virtue, absolutely encourage the most depraved licentious conduct. I have observed (while recommending this species of knowledge), that the virtue which does not rest upon a firm foundation is a mere *animal* quality, and that the most exalted principles are likely to produce the most exemplary conduct. But I would wish you to reprobate false and absurd notions for yourself: that is to say, in such a degree as to induce you to *hate* and *reject* them, without hating those who unfortunately adopt them. For you must know by your own heart, that there is a vast deal of vice and folly mixed with virtue and wisdom in the human mind; and the sceptic and enthusiast may excel you in *some* particulars, though your belief is more correct and rational than their's. You must not even pass *individual* sentence on those

who sit in the darkness of deism while the Sun of righteousness shines in full splendor; for, as the Bishop of Lincoln observes, "The searchers of hearts
 " alone knows the circumstances which
 " may diminish the guilt of infidelity;
 " and to his uncovenanted mercies let
 " us leave the rejecters of his laws."

That *may* be pardonable in the uninstructed or prejudiced person, which would in you be *inexcusable*. But, whatever may be the *final* condition of our neighbour, *our* duty to him in *this* life is plainly prescribed and determined by *positive* laws. The parable of the good Samaritan proves, that no actual dislike, no difference in religion, is allowed to dissolve the bond which binds man to man. We must assist whoever wants our assistance, we must bestow pity wherever pity is required; and, as nothing is so destructive to the spirit of
 Christian

Christian charity as a contentious disputatious humour, especially on religious topics, I would entreat you, whenever you know a person's opinions to be opposite to your's, to avoid *provoking* an argument. My wish in advising you to obtain a competent knowledge of these subjects is, to *prevent* controversy, not to equip you as an able disputant. The restless anxiety which deists and separatists of all descriptions express for gaining converts frequently proceeds from their own doubt and anxiety, which prompt them to wish that the arguments which influenced their own acquiescence may prove their validity by perverting others. The Romish Church may excuse her zeal for conversion, because she believes that there is no salvation beyond her own pale. But the deist, who thinks that all religions are forgeries alike, and all equally unimportant

with regard to another life, can have no other motives for obtruding his monstrous system on all companies, than the secret compunctions and misgivings of his own heart, or the mean pride of shewing his supposed superiority. I am persuaded, that if he more frequently found his attacks *repelled* by well-informed Christians, he would desist from his offensive practice; and, baffled in the pursuit of an impious triumph, shame might awaken reflection, and humbled vanity lead back the recreant to the throne of Mercy.

You are too well acquainted with the outline of your duty, to render it necessary for me to enumerate the vices which your religion forbids. They are all equally forbidden by those principles of natural religion which we call morality, and by those political institutions which we term law. You will
also

also find, upon examination, that such practices are equally repugnant to private happiness and public tranquillity; Christianity, therefore, has enjoined no new or unnecessary restraints. All that she has done is, the *superadding* of such motives to dissuade us from making ourselves or our fellow-creatures miserable, and such inducements to pursue the path which reason and experience recommend, as no human moralist or legislator could impose. In some instances, her divine original has enabled her to penetrate farther than the finite capacity of man could proceed; and she has laid a check upon those first principles of evil which were too minute for the observation of any one, except of that Almighty Being who framed our minds. This restraint, however, as it is intended to prevent future guilt, cannot be conceived to be an act of unnecessary severity,

verity, but a most wise and merciful precaution. I have not been alluding to that rude imperfect system of morals which exists among savage nations; nor even to the highest state of improvement which they received from philosophy in the most shining period of the Heathen world. I have considered them in that degree of perfection to which deism has brought them, by borrowing every advantage from the revelations of God's will, and then pretending that the discovery was self-evident. Though it is manifest that, previous to the promulgation of Christianity, very erroneous ideas of right and wrong prevailed in several instances in which our infidels now think correctly; and since it is certain that they are not wiser than the ancient sages of Greece and Rome, we can no way account for this justness of sentiment, but by referring it to the illumination

mination of divine wisdom, whose distant splendor penetrates even to their dark abode.

But while these casuists erect their system on deductions and arguments, Christianity preserves her sacred *pre-eminence*, as a religion that penetrates to the inmost recesses of the heart, and supplies such *motives* to influence our conduct as nothing but the Deity could impose. The certainty of a future retributive state; the assurance that we are accountable beings; that we are all brethren, subject to the same calamities, and heirs of the same glorious inheritance; and the conviction that an invisible eye is ever over us, are surely irresistible incentives to virtue, charity, and piety. Add to this, that we are commanded to preserve the same curb and restraint over our thoughts and intentions which we do over our actions,

as they will equally be the subject of that awful inquiry which is to take place on the conduct of every human being; and we are assured that, unless the motive of our conduct is a desire of obeying God, our deeds, however splendid, have no essential worth. Find me, if you can, any other inducements to sincerity, integrity, and consistency, equally powerful. Equally did I say? how poor, how short sighted, are all the precautions that human wisdom can suggest in this particular!

Recurring to the principal topic that I wished to enforce in this letter, I would ask you, whether it is possible for the imagination to suggest an idea of any thing more pure and amiable than a character that is formed upon such a model? And I must continually enforce it on your consideration, that our religion is not intended for particular occasions,

occasions, but for daily use. It is not to be called out on important rare occurrences, like the magnanimity of the hero, or the wisdom of the statesman; but it is to influence our most ordinary actions, our common intercourse with our families, nay even our familiar conversation; which are all to be conducted by the rule of "doing to others as we would have them do to us," and by the desire of approving ourselves to be faithful servants of the Lord.

This divine law is not only intended to govern the heart, but likewise to regulate the temper. It does not merely influence morals, but manners also. Innumerable precepts in the Gospel relate to that disposition of mind which we call sweetness of temper. "Be kindly affectioned to all men; love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous. Render not railing for railing, but, contra-

“riwise, blessing.” I could multiply texts on this subject; but surely they cannot escape the most common observer who peruses the sacred volume. Such must know, that unreasonable anger, pettishness, querulous discontent, capricious disgust, fullness, irritability, and all those descriptions of ill-humour which embitter the peace of families, and cause perhaps the greatest part of our unhappiness, are absolutely *contrary* to the spirit of the Gospel. Such is human infirmity, that the best of us cannot occasionally avoid these provocations; but the oftener we resist them, and the sooner we overcome them, the more worthy are we of our Christian profession.

This species of offence, as it certainly militates against the comfort of society, is uniformly forbidden by the laws of politeness; and the chief advantage which

which polished conversation possesses is, that every one is attentive to decorum, urbanity, and complaisance. What the laws of civility require, from the motive of being agreeable to our fellow-creatures, Christianity enjoins, on the *enlarged* principle of obeying God. And if we exclude a few ceremonious forms, which are in reality variable and unessential, the best Christian will in reality be the best-behaved person in any circle; for he will really feel the influence of that benevolence and urbanity which courtiers only affect; and his courtesy will be uniform to all, because his rule of conduct makes no distinction between "people who live in the world" and "people whom nobody knows;" between those "who *may be useful*" and those "*who may ask favours.*"

I have taken some pains to convince you that the only singularity which our

religion enjoins is, to do that which is right and to abstain from all evil. Let me give an instance in which its divine Founder attended even to propriety of manners. Nothing certainly can be more indicative of vulgar breeding and illiberal sentiments, than a contention for place and precedency. It has been happily banished from the higher circles of society, by plain specific rules, which have determined every one's degree of rank and correspondent situation. The bustle which these ridiculous disputes often cause among pretenders to gentility, is a frequent and fair topic of satire. It is, however, a folly that has been long prevalent; for it strongly characterized the Jews in our Saviour's time; and the sovereign Ruler of the world proved, by his admonitions on this head, that he intended that his religion should not only purify us from

grosser errors, but should also form and refine our behaviour, and introduce (may I not say) a *polite* engaging carriage. “When ye are bidden to a “feast,” says the divine Wisdom, “strive “not for the uppermost seats.” He does not say, “Do not go, lest ye “should fall into sin, or abuse the blessings which Providence bestows;” but “Go, and behave amiably. Shew “your condescension and humility, by “choosing an inferior place; and the “master of the feast, observing the propriety and decorum of your conduct, “shall give you honour in the presence “of your companions, by the injunction “of, “Friend, go up higher.” A similar disposition is intended to be cultivated by those rules which prohibit a desire for every kind of distinction that is inconsistent with the just claims of our fellow-creatures. “The chief seats
“in

“in synagogues, and the greetings in “market-places,” if explained by those ideas which are familiar to us, may be supposed to indicate that love of insignificant distinction by which weak minds discover the turbid restlessness of petty ambition. The broils and turmoils, which this desire of local superiority occasions, are more prejudicial to the comforts of the lower orders of people, than the aspiring schemes of princes and statesmen can be to the general repose of the world. The most obscure village, the humblest walks of humble life, afford daily instances of pride stimulating contention to an impatient pursuit of some wretched trifle, which seems to indicate a degree of consequence beyond what their neighbours possess. And with so much avidity is this fancied good aimed at, that the mutual offices of charity and all social intercourse

intercourse are suspended, either from pique at some supposed neglect, or from vexation at the successful rivalry of some envied opponent.

Now Christianity strikes at the root of this evil, not only by positive precepts, but by its general purpose and tendency, in making charity or benevolence, an obligation paramount to all other pursuits, and by giving us the most enlarged idea of our nature and end. Those who feel that they are acting upon an ample theatre, subject to the observation of men and angels, and to the omniscient eye of their great God and future Judge, can never attach such importance to the opinions of those few contemporaries whom they term their acquaintance, neighbours, or (even to use a more comprehensive phrase) the world, as to take any indirect means to procure applause. They dare
not

not be unjust to others, in order to acquire a premature or undeserved distinction; for they know, that if they receive any moral taint by gaining a temporary advantage, their degradation must be proclaimed before all the generations of men, and every order of spiritual beings, at the last day. If that awful event has its due weight upon our minds, we shall never be in any danger in attaching undue importance to things that are of a transitory nature; and all the bustle for consequence and pre-eminence, which disturbs frivolous minds, will rather provoke our laughter than our spleen. We shall take the lowest seat at the nuptial feast, and the public assembly; no less through humility than from disregard. Our minds will be occupied by nobler aims; and the first greetings in the market-place will be given to others, without

without our *lamenting* or even *perceiving* the preference.

I have said, that even good-breeding would receive considerable advantages from being practised upon Christian principles; and I observed, that the real good man would naturally be the best-bred person; except that he might be ignorant of some ceremonious forms, which are in themselves variable and unessential. Now, though in reality they are so, yet, as general opinion has agreed in the expediency of adopting them, it would be as unwise to affect a contemptuous neglect of them, as it would be for you to walk the street in the trunk hose and short cloak of your ancestors. You would justly deserve ridicule for affecting superior wisdom; and if you really are virtuous and religious, you are depriving those valuable qualities of due consideration by fixing
a fool's

a fool's cap and bells on the head of true piety. Let me adjure you, by your regard to your own welfare, as well as to that of your fellow-creatures, to give your good qualities *due* consideration in the eyes of all around you, by studying to be agreeable, and by adopting that style of behaviour which obtains the commendation of judicious observers. In some future letter, I shall say more on this subject: in this I will only observe, that, though the approbation of God is to be our *ultimate* aim, we are not forbidden from admitting well-deserved praise as a *secondary* consideration, never to supersede the first, never to be principally pursued; but when honestly obtained, and valued with qualified regard, we are allowed to admit it as a *subordinate* incentive to the performance of what is good, and as a fair reward for having done our duty.

For

For it is unnatural to speculate upon Christian charity with such metaphysical subtlety, as to suppose that you are to devote yourself to the most arduous duties of benevolence, and to spend your life in serving a set of beings about whom you are totally regardless, or whom you consider as too depraved, and unworthy of notice in any other light than as vehicles of your Christian graces. I have known many worthy people lean towards this error. They have conferred favours as if they were reproaching you with unworthiness; and, while doing you all the good they could, their manner has indicated that you possessed no portion of their esteem and good-will. This method of fulfilling the great law of charity, though it may proceed from a sincere desire of obeying God, has nothing in it of the *amiable* features of that first of Christian graces,

graces. She “ who seeketh not her
 “ own; who hopeth all things, believeth
 “ all things; who thinketh no evil;
 “ who suffereth long, and is kind,”
 cannot have subdued the baleful spirit
 of pride, misanthropy, and suspicion in
 their bosoms. “ We cannot love as
 “ brethren,” unless we labour to assist
 each other in our mutual wants because
 we really *sympatbize* in the afflictions of
 others, feel an attachment to their per-
 sons, and are anxious to maintain an
 interest in their hearts, as well as
 from the motive that our Maker has
commanded us so to do. The offices of
 charity, on this latter principle, must
 extend to our enemies, to strangers, and
 to all mankind; and the occasions on
 which we are called to practise it are
 comparatively rare. But whoever is
 bound to us by any ties of situation,
 dependence, kindred, affinity, or affec-
 tion,

tion, has a claim upon us for those more endearing expressions of this sublime virtue, which may be denominated brotherly love; and which, if diffused through all the relations of life, would make us good masters, sincere friends, loyal subjects, peaceable citizens, kind neighbours, dutiful children, affectionate kinsmen; and let me add another character, which very much conduces to our comfort on earth, agreeable companions.

If there be a vice which the law of Christ *especially* condemns, it is selfishness. That law pursues it through all its strong-holds; and, in whatever shape the Proteus appears, it restrains its baneful efforts. Be it indolence: A positive command enjoins us to labour to get our own living; and apostolical example seconds the precept of "he that will not work neither let him eat."

Is

Is it covetousness: We are not only told of the perishable nature of worldly possessions, but are assured that a sordid attachment to them will exclude us from the possession of the kingdom of God.

Is it sensual indulgence: The veil is removed from the world to come; and the rich man (who allowed himself every gratification, while he neglected to relieve the extreme necessities of his fellow-creatures) appears, requesting that the beggar Lazarus might bring a drop of water to cool his parched tongue.

Extend your inquiries to revenge, oppression, cruelty, and every other expression of this contaminating principle; and you will find it every where condemned, and every where counteracted, by that gospel which inculcates the spirit of universal good-will to all mankind.

In your endeavour to fulfil the holy law, by which you are required to guide
 your

your steps, you will find no precept more instructive than that comprehensive rule of "doing to every one as you would they should do unto you." This precept extends to every possible situation; be the person with whom you have any dealings an enemy, a stranger, a dependent; however mean and despicable, however worthless and vile, it holds in full force. It has only this restriction in its definition, that you must not explain it by the *extravagant* desires of *romantic* views which selfishness might make you form, were the relative situations reversed, but what you might then *reasonably* and *justly* expect. And you must shew your neighbour such treatment as, if you were in his place, you would conceive to be fair and equitable. It is impossible to enumerate the advantages which society would derive from the observance of
 this

this one rule, thus modified. We will only conceive its effects in the case of master and servant. There would be, on one side, no arbitrary commands imposed from the mere bravado of authority; no selfish injunctions which sacrifice the essential comforts of another to our own capricious variable humours; no intemperate abuse, no undeserved anger, no cold disregard of the wants and feelings of those who minister, not only to our necessities, but to our luxurious indulgences. On the other hand, fraud, falsehood, disguised hate, and every varied form of duplicity, chicanery, and scurrility, would disappear: the servant would consider his master as his benefactor and friend, as one whose interest was intimately united with his own: the very idea of eye-service would be obliterated; and, instead of that servile flattery, that cringing assiduity, which
 equally

equally debases the idol who receives and the knave who offers it ; we should see a faithful, affectionate, respectful service, flowing from principle, and actuated by real esteem. What perplexity, confusion, and complaint would be removed by conformity to the gospel precepts in this *one* instance ! Well may we believe, that a *complete* obedience to them would constitute heaven ; for, if this world were only peopled by those who are Christians indeed, the physical evils to which it is subject would but, partially interrupt general happiness. The conflicts of the elements, unfruitful seasons, casual misfortunes, pestilence, nay, death itself, would be found *comparatively* trivial interruptions of universal felicity. Let me refer to your own experience : Whence does your uneasiness most frequently arise ? from natural or moral disturbances ?

Of what do you hear others most commonly complain? Is it of accidental losses, of the pressure of bodily disease; or is it of the ingratitude, perfidy, folly, extravagance, unkindness, malevolence, or prejudices of their fellow-creatures? I am convinced that, if your recollection is accurate, you will find that the ills which man is subject to, either from the wrongs and mistakes of his "fellow men," or from his own folly, rashness, or guilt, infinitely outweigh, not only that part of "the penalty of Adam which relates to the seasons' difference," but even the introduction of the king of terrors, and all his ghastly train of diseases and misery, into this world.

The calculation will be infinitely in favour of my opinion, if we look a little deeper, and consider that "the wages of sin is death." Not only eternal

death, in the sense of scripture, but temporal death, prematurely hastened by the inroads which several vices make in the human frame. Examples are not wanting of the violent indulgence of hatred, anger, or revenge, bringing on epilepsy, palsy or apoplexy; and if, stimulated by *such* passions, two men meet in a private quarrel, the personal hurt which either of them receives cannot be ascribed to any defect or unavoidable injury of the organs of nature, but to sin, which is in every sense the "*mother of death.*" You cannot walk the streets without seeing some pale spectre creeping slowly along, whose warrant of *early* dissolution has been signed by Inebriety. The bloated cripple, nailed to his chair, raves at his hereditary disease and plethoric constitution; but he has generally more reason to ascribe his pangs to gluttony.

Indolent Indulgence lolls upon her couch, regardless of the impending lethargy which will soon totally deprive her of those faculties which she *voluntarily* suspends. Dissipation protracts the long-exhausting vigils of incessant festivity, at the certain hazard of “*pin-
ing atrophy*”, and all the long train of hectic diseases. I will not suggest to your imagination the more loathsome vices, whose victims endure severer torments than those which procured the martyrs their crowns of eternal glory. And why endure? Alas! for a momentary gratification, they purchase shame, remorse, disgrace, and misery in this world; perhaps also the loss of fortune and of friends; but in the world to come, most *assuredly*, that “*wrath of God*,” which is *expressly* and *repeatedly* denounced against every species of uncleanness.

If

If you ask why, as such blessed effects flow from Christianity, it was not earlier introduced and rendered more universal? I can only answer, that this, and many other instances of God's government, must be referred to his own unchangeable will, which, from a consideration of his other attributes, we conclude to be *most* just and wise. From the circumstance of our holy religion being proclaimed at a time when mankind had reached their greatest pitch of natural cultivation, and from its being best understood where the human mind is most improved, it seems as if some degree of civilization was necessary previous to its introduction into any nation. But, as the effects which I have ascribed to it are certain and indisputable, we shall all perform a service acceptable to God, if in our individual capacities we not only pray "that his kingdom may

“ come;” but endeavour to *enlarge* its extent. Whenever, either by precept or example, we discourage vice; whenever we inform the ignorant, and labour to remove the prejudices which are entertained against a religious course, we expedite the coming of that glorious kingdom. Without the smallest design of discouraging the pious labours of those who seek to enlighten the regions which lie in darkness, I would suggest that, as it is in the power of every one of us to promote the growth of religious knowledge and the practice of Christian graces in our own country, it is our bounden duty so to do. Wisdom, strength, courage, understanding, and every natural advantage of mind and body, are not scattered by Providence with indiscriminating liberality. Yet, though sparingly bestowed, we must acknowledge them to be valuable endowments.

dowments. Those who have not received them have no right to complain, because they are not called to practise the duties which are imposed upon the possessors of them. In like manner we are assured, that God will not require Christian perfection from those to whom he has not extended a knowledge of his revealed will. They live under the law of nature, and by that law they will be judged: mercifully, we hope; righteously, we are assured. But for ourselves, to whom the glorious light of truth is revealed, for us who have entered into covenant with God, who are called to a more perfect obedience, encouraged by higher promises, and purchased by an inestimable ransom, the *purity and holiness of Heathens* will not be sufficient. Shall a man be deemed strong who possesses only the force of a child, or wise if he merely attains to

the understanding of an infant? Life was the free gift of God, so is immortal life; and much more immortal happiness. Are we angry that he has not called more of the human race to the hope of glory? have we not equal right to complain that the blessing of existence has not been more widely extended?

And if God has a right to create, doubtless he has a right to punish. We are assured that, when the awful secrets of his government shall be fully disclosed, all the world shall be struck dumb, and assent to the justice of his decrees. While it is his pleasure that they should remain obscure, it would be presumptuous in us to attempt to lift the veil. We are told all that is necessary for us to know; for our path of duty is clearly prescribed. On the principles of our belief the rules of our practice plainly depend. By observing them,

them, we shall obtain endless happiness; by neglecting them, we shall awaken the "wrath of God."

If these inducements cannot overcome the sollicitations of youthful passions, if they cannot counteract the allurements of vice, I know of no other considerations that can for one moment restrain you. But do not excuse your rebellion against your God, by saying that obedience is *impracticable*. It is acknowledged, that sinless perfection is beyond the reach of human frailty; but every saint in heaven was once a sinner upon earth; not a hardened, presumptuous, incorrigible offender; but an humble, watchful, sincere penitent; conscious of transgression, but solicitous to obey.

Say not that, to secure eternal life, your temporal pursuits must be relinquished. The path of true piety and
virtue

virtue is *most likely* to lead to worldly advancement. When you are employed in honest labour, you are serving God in your vocation. Your diligence, your attention, your ingenuity, will all be considered as virtues, provided you *ballow* them by religion.

Do not even plead that the character of a Christian is either mean or unamiable; for, if truly understood, it comprises all that is *great* or *lovely*. It represses arrogance; but will any one admit that arrogance has just pretensions to be esteemed noble? It forbids selfishness; but can that be termed an endearing, engaging quality? If fortitude, perseverance, magnanimity, and the most elevated views of our nature and destination, are noble, the Christian is noble. If a friendly generous disposition be amiable, he is most amiable.

Unhappily,

Unhappily, this blessed law, which appears so resplendent in the sacred page, diffuses but a faint radiance when viewed in the lives of its professors. But shall we, because human depravity overpowers every restraint, level the barriers that divine wisdom has framed, and lift up the flood-gates of iniquity? Even considered in a temporal view, Christianity has been found to have ameliorated the condition of mankind. Without it, we might by this time have degenerated into demons: it is our own fault that it has not exalted us to angels. I will not here enlarge on the mad systems and horrible actions of those who impiously wish to overturn the church of Christ. Happily, we know that it is *invulnerable*. But, since it is the only safe hiding-place from the storm, let us (especially at this time, when the judgments of God are poured
upon

upon the earth in a *visible, alarming,* I might almost say unexampled, manner) take shelter in its protecting shade; and with all the powers of our mind, with all the faculties of our soul, cling fast to the rock of our salvation!

I will conclude this letter with guarding you against a mistake into which I may perhaps have led you, from the want of using very correct and definite terms; a fault of which I fear I am often guilty. In insisting on the superiority of *inward* religion, I may chance to have spoken somewhat in derogation of the *outward* observances of devotion. It certainly was not my intention to depreciate those means of improvement which divine and human authority have *positively* enjoined. I only censure those who suffer their religion to rest in these instrumental duties, instead of adopting it as an universal rule of conduct. By
 confining

confining them to the rank which they undoubtedly hold, I do not allow you to infer that I think they may be safely omitted. They are to religion, what aliment is to the body; it cannot subsist without them. If you withhold the support of the morning and evening orison and the Christian sabbath, your piety will become feeble, languid, and unable to resist worldly temptation. The lamp must be continually trimmed, or it cannot burn with fervour.

We have been so long engaged on the most awful subjects, that every other will appear comparatively flat and uninteresting. But since I esteem it to be a fundamental principle, that religion is not merely an occasional form, but a constant motive, which should even influence the smallest minutiae of our conduct, I shall not be inconsistent if I endeavour to give importance to the
 lesser

lesser duties, by often referring to Christian precepts. We will consider manners principally with respect to the estimation of the world, but at the same time take the liberty to correct its decisions whenever they militate against superior authority. I need not tell you how much my heart is in all the instructions which you may *occasionally* receive from your most affectionate mother, &c.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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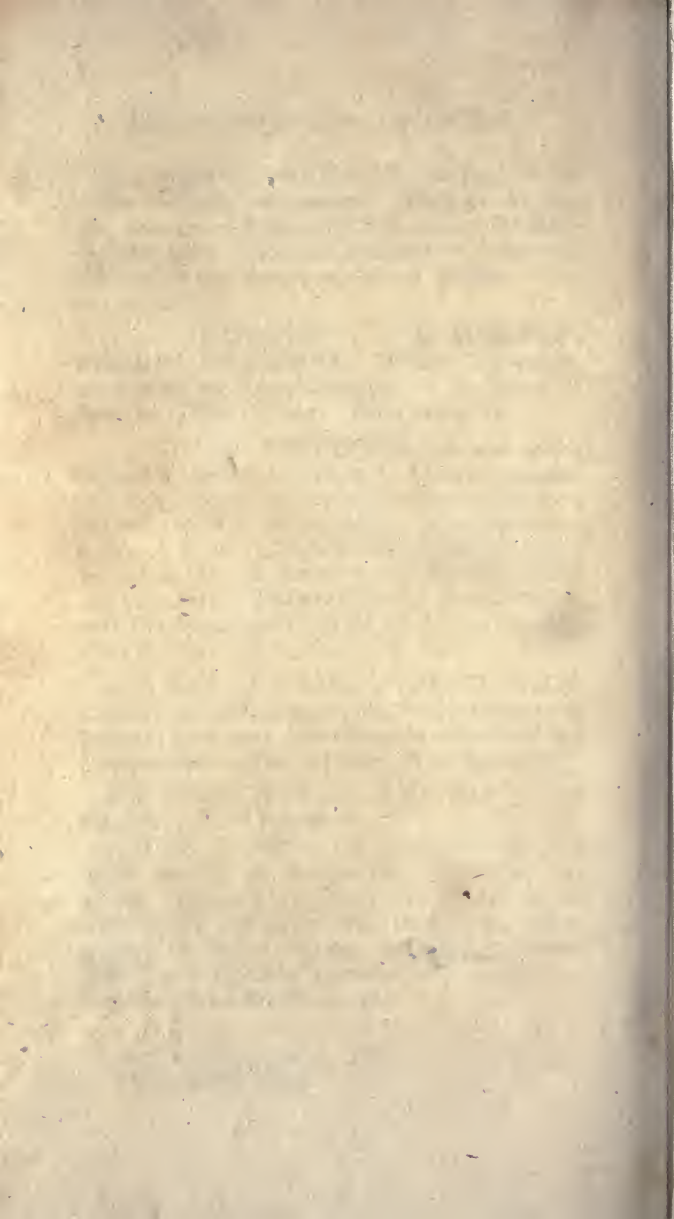
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