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Mr. Fuller's letters to Mr.
Vidler on the doctrine



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MR. FULLER'S

LETTERS

TO

MR. VIDLER,

ON

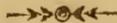
THE DOCTRINE OF

UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

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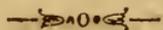
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ADVERTISEMENT.



A REVIEW of the controversy between Mr. Vidler and Mr. Fuller, on the doctrine of UNIVERSAL SALVATION, in twelve Letters to a Universalist, being prepared for the press, the Publisher judged it a fit opportunity for gratifying the wishes of many of Mr. Fuller's friends, to reprint his Letters to Mr. Vidler on that subject. He accordingly applied to the Author for permission to do so, and received the following answer:—"Mr. Vidler, in a Letter to me, signified his intention to reprint the whole controversy. As he has now, I should think, had sufficient time to fulfil his proposal, and has not done it, you are at liberty to publish that part of it which belongs to me."

The reader is requested to notice, that the first of these Letters appeared in the Evangelical Magazine for September 1795, and the seven following ones in the Universalist's Miscellany, between July 1799, and July 1800; and that owing to this circumstance, the first Letter in the present series was not numbered in that of the Universalist's Miscellany: but what is there called the *first*, is here the *second*; and so on throughout.

Those passages which relate to the article of "Birmingham news," are omitted, as irrelative to the point at issue.

The *Review* will be printed uniformly with the present publication, for the accommodation of the reader.

Clipstone,
Aug. 2, 1802.

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LETTERS TO MR. VIDLER.

LETTER I.

EXPOSTULATIONS WITH MR. VIDLER, ON HIS HAVING EMBRACED THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

My dear friend,

IT has afforded me some painful concern to hear of your having embraced the scheme of universal salvation. When you were at K——, you appeared to me to be of a speculative disposition. I have long thought such a turn of mind to be very advantageous, or very dangerous: persons of this description either make great advances in truth, or fall into great errors. I cannot, in this letter, enter deeply into the controversy; nor is there any necessity for it, as I am told that Dr. Edwards's Answer to Dr. Chauncey is in your hands. I earnestly wish you may read that piece with care, impartiality, and openness to conviction. I think you ought to have read it before you advanced your change of sentiment; and I greatly wish you had: for though I do not question your openness to conviction, any more than that of any

other person in your situation, yet I know something of what is in man: I know it is a very rare thing *when we have once openly disavowed a sentiment, to return to it, and openly avow it again.* There are many instances of people changing their principles, and there may have been instances of the other; but I do not recollect any. False shame, supported by mistaken pride, forms here a very powerful temptation. The dread of being accused of versatility and indecision, insensibly obtains such a dominion over the mind, as to blind it to one side of the argument, and to give efficacy to every thing that looks like an argument, or the shadow of an argument on the other.

It is certainly a very serious matter that we *do not err* in our ministrations. Error in a minister may affect the eternal welfare of many. I hope I may presume upon the friendliness of your temper, while I expostulate with you upon the subject. I will not be tedious to you, but let me intreat you to consider the following things:

First: Whether your change of sentiment has not arisen from an idea of endless punishment being in itself *unjust*. If it has, consider *whether* this does not arise from diminutive notions of the evil of sin; *whether* you be not too much infected by sin yourself to be a proper judge of its demerit; (a company of criminals would be very improper

judges of the equity and goodness of a law which condemns them;) *whether* you do not hold a principle, from which it will follow, that millions will be finally happy who will not be indebted to either the grace of God, or the death of Christ, for their happiness; and consequently must have a heaven to themselves, not being able to join with those who ascribe theirs to God and the Lamb. For if endless misery be *unjust*, exemption from it must be the sinner's *right*, and can never be attributed to *mercy*; neither could a mediator be needed to induce a righteous God to liberate the sinner, when he had suffered his full desert. In fine, consider whether you do not contradict your own experience. I think you have told me of your great distress of soul, arising from a consciousness of your deserving to be cast out of God's favour, and banished for ever from his presence. Can you *now* say, that you did not deserve this? Do you not deserve it still? If you do, why not others?

Secondly: Consider *whether the genius of the sentiment in question, be not opposite to that of every other sentiment in the bible.* The whole tenor of scripture saith to the righteous, *It shall be well with him; and to the wicked, it shall be ill with him:* But universal salvation saith not only to the righteous, but to the wicked, *It shall be well at last with him.* Do consider whether you can find any one scripture truth that resembles it in this

respect. What doctrine, besides this, can you find in the bible, that affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses; and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death? Instead of siding with God against a wicked world, as a servant of God ought to do; is not this a siding with a wicked world against God, and encouraging them to believe, what they are apt enough to believe without encouragement, that *they shall have peace, though they add drunkenness to thirst?* *Wo is me,* said an apostle, *if I preach not the gospel!* *If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel,* he is declared to be *accursed!* Do seriously consider whether the doctrine of universal salvation will not render your preaching *another gospel.* The gospel of Christ is *good tidings to the meek, healing to the broken hearted, and comfort to them that mourn:* but must not yours be good tidings to the proud and impenitent, and comfort to those whom the scripture declares under condemnation and the curse? The gospel of Christ is a system of holiness, a system entirely opposite to every vicious bias of the human heart; a system, therefore, which no unrenewed heart embraces—*he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God:*—But the good news which you must publish requires no change of heart, that it may be embraced; being just suited to the wishes of an abandoned mind.

Thirdly: Consider whether your ministrations, on this principle, will not favour of his who taught our first parents, *Ye shall not surely die*. If you should raise the hopes of the ungodly part of your audience, that though they should live and die in their *filthiness*, yet they shall not *be filthy still*; though they go down to the *pit*, yet it shall not prove *bottomless*; though the worm may prey upon them, yet at some period or other it shall *die*; and though they may have to encounter devouring fire, yet they shall not dwell in *everlasting* burnings: If, I say, you should raise such hopes, and if all at last should prove a deception; think how you will be able to look *them* in the face another day; and what is still more, how will you be able to look HIM in the face, who hath charged you to be *free from the blood of all men*; and to say unto the wicked, *it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him!*

My dear friend! do not take it unkindly. My soul is grieved for you, and for the souls of many around you. How are you as to peace of mind, and communion with God? Beware of the whirlpool of Socinianism. From what I understand of the nature and tendency of your principles, it appears to me you are already within the influence of its destructive stream. All who hold this sentiment, I know, are not Socinians;

but there are few, if any Socinians, who do not hold this sentiment, which is certainly of a piece with their whole system. It would greatly rejoice my heart to be able to acknowledge you, as heretofore, my brother, and fellow-labourer in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do let me hear from you, and believe me to be,

Yours, &c.

Feb. 14, 1793.

A. F.

LETTER II.

REASONS FOR NOT CONTINUING THE CONTROVERSY,
AND REPLIES TO MR. V.'S OBJECTIONS
TO THE FOREGOING.

Sir,

IN the year 1793, when I understood that you had imbibed the doctrine of Universal Salvation, I wrote you a private expostulatory letter, to which you returned no answer. You speak of this letter as being no secret in the circle of my acquaintance. I do not think it was shewn to more than two or three individuals. Some time after, as a request was made in the *Evangelical Magazine* for some thoughts on that subject, and as there was nothing private in the contents of that letter, I took the liberty to send it up for insertion. Accordingly it appeared in the Magazine for September, 1795, (p. 357) under the signature of GAIUS. To this letter

you have since written an answer, in the two first numbers of your *Miscellany*: I received from you a copy of those numbers at the time, and since then another of a second edition, for both of which I thank you. To this answer I made no reply. In your second edition you inform your readers of the case, and seem to wish much to know the reasons of my silence. Some of your friends in the country, possessing a little of the sanguine temper, perhaps, of your Birmingham correspondent, appear to have entertained a hope that it was owing to the impression which your letters had made upon my mind. If such be also your hope, I can only say it has no foundation.

Whether the reasons of my silence be “ cogent” or not, the reader will judge when I have stated them. If I do not consider them as requiring a *continued* silence, it is because you have compelled me to pursue a different conduct. To the best of my recollection, I had three reasons for not writing at that time:—

First: I did not know that it would be agreeable to you to insert in your *Miscellany*, what I might write upon the subject; and though I considered the *Evangelical Magazine* as a suitable work for the introduction of a single piece, yet it did not appear to be a proper vehicle for a continued discussion, unless what was said on both sides were introduced.

Secondly: Though I was not very deeply impressed with the force of your arguments, yet being fully persuaded, notwithstanding what you say of the holy nature of your doctrine, that it needed only to be read by a certain description of people in order to be imbibed; and not supposing your work to have a very extensive circulation at present, I thought it might be as well to let it alone. You may consider this, if you please, as an acknowledgment of the weakness of my cause.

Thirdly: Your two letters appeared to me to contain so many misapprehensions, and such a quantity of perversion of the plain meaning of scripture, that I felt it a kind of hopeless undertaking to go about to correct them.

I do not entertain a mean opinion of your talents; but they are perverted by a system. You write as though you did not understand the plain meaning of words. I should not have thought that by saying "I observed you to be of a *speculative* disposition," I should either have puzzled or offended you. I certainly did not mean, by that form of speech, either that you discovered a disposition "not to take the assertions of men as the rule of your faith" on the one hand, or any particular "want of respect towards the sacred writings" on the other. I should not have thought of using such modes of expression to

convey either of these ideas. If you choose to pay yourself such a compliment, or load yourself with such a censure, you are at liberty to do so; but do not attribute either of them to me. You might have supposed that I meant to exhibit no very heavy charge, nor indeed any charge at all, under this form of expression, seeing I added, that “such a turn of mind might be very *advantageous* as well as very dangerous.”

In suggesting that “it is a serious matter that we err not in our ministrations,” I did not mean either to take it for granted that you were in an error, or to prove that you were so; but merely to bespeak your serious attention to the subject. Your stumbling at the threshold in this manner, Sir, afforded but little hope that, if I wrote, it would produce any other effect than a wrangle of words, for which I had neither time nor inclination.

The three questions which I put to you, and “intreated you to consider,” were, it seems, totally irrelative to the subject, equally so as to “the doctrine of election:” yet you thought proper to offer answers to some parts of them, as well as to pass over others. Waving, for the present, the consideration of those parts which you have noticed, I shall remind the reader of a few things which you have *not* noticed, and

leave him to judge whether even they were totally irrelative to the subject.

You have not told us, that I recollect, whether you claim an exemption from endless punishment *as a right*; but seem to wish us to think that this is not your ground, especially as you ascribe it to the death of Christ: (p. 10) yet, in other parts of your Miscellany, I perceive the gift of Christ itself is considered as a *reparation for an injury*; (p. 69) which affords but too plain a proof that notwithstanding all you say of grace and love, it is not on the footing of grace, but *debt*, that you hold with Universal Salvation.

Under the second question you were asked, “What doctrine, *besides* that of universal salvation, you would find in the bible, which affords encouragement to a sinner, going on still in his trespasses; and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death?” To this you have given no answer. Was this question equally irrelative to the subject as to the doctrine of election?

Under the third question, you were addressed as follows:—“If you should raise the hopes of the ungodly part of your audience, though they should live and die in their *filthiness*, yet they shall not *be filthy still*; though they go down to the *pit*, yet it shall not prove

“ *bottomless*; though the worm prey upon them,
 “ yet at some period or other it shall *die*; and
 “ though they may have to encounter *devouring*
 “ *fire*, yet they shall not dwell with *everlasting*
 “ *burnings*: If, I say, you should raise such
 “ hopes, and if all at last should prove a decep-
 “ tion, think how you will be able to look *them*
 “ in the face another day; and what is still
 “ more, how you will be able to look HIM in
 “ the face who hath charged you to be *pure*
 “ *from the blood of all men!*” Was this equally
 irrelative to the subject as to the doctrine of elec-
 tion? Yet to no part of this have you given
 any answer, except your attempting to explain
 away the term *everlasting* may be so called.
 You represent the whole of this third question,
 as proceeding on the supposition of your denying
all future punishment. But is not this a gross
 misrepresentation? Does not the whole forego-
 ing passage allow that you admit of future pu-
 nishment of a limited duration; and hold up,
 though not in the form of arguments, several
 scriptural objections to that notion? I consider
 this, Sir, as a further proof of your talents for
 fair and plain reasoning, being perverted by a
 system.

You appeal to the *scriptures*, and contend
 that they no where teach the doctrine of endless

punishment; yet you are aware that they *appear* to do so, and are obliged to have recourse to a method of weakening the force of terms in order to get rid of them. It has been long the practice of writers on your side the question, to ring changes on the words *aion*, and *aionios*; pretty words no doubt, and could they be proved to be less expressive of endless duration than the English words *everlasting* and *eternal*, they might be something to the purpose: but if not, the continual recurrence to them is a mere affectation of learning, serving to mislead the ignorant. Be this as it may, this is an exercise which hardly becomes you or me. I shall only observe upon it, that by this method of proceeding, you may disprove almost any thing you please. There are scarcely any terms in any language, but what, through the poverty of language itself, or the inequality of the number of words to the number of ideas, are *sometimes* used in an improper or figurative sense. Thus, if one attempt to prove the divinity of the Son of God, or even of the Father, from his being called *Jehovah, God, &c.* you may reply, that the name *Jehovah* is sometimes given to things; as, to an altar, a city, and once to the church; therefore nothing can be concluded from hence in favour of the argument. Thus also, if one go about to prove the omniscience of God, from its being declared that *his understand-*

ing is infinite; you might answer, the term infinite is sometimes used to express only a very great degree, as when the strength of Ethiopia and Egypt is said to have been *infinite*. (Nah. iii. 9.) Again: If one endeavour to prove the endless existence of God, from his being called the *eternal* God, the *everlasting* God, &c.; or the endless duration of the heavenly inheritance, from its being called *eternal* life, an inheritance *incorruptible*, and that *fadeth not away*; you might answer, these terms are sometimes used to signify only a limited duration; and, that a thing in common language is said to be *incorruptible*, when it will continue a long time without any signs of decay.

The question is, *Could stronger terms have been used concerning the duration of future punishment than are used?* To object against the words *everlasting*, *eternal*, &c. as being too weak, or indeterminate in their application for the purpose, is idle, unless others could be named which are stronger, or more determinate. What expressions could have been used that would have placed the subject beyond dispute? You ordinarily make use of the term *endless*, to express our doctrine: it should seem then, that if we read of *endless* punishment, or punishment *without end*, you would believe it. Yet the same objections might be made to this, as to the words *everlasting*, *eternal*, &c. It is common to say of a loquacious person, He is

an *endless* talker: it might, therefore, be pretended that the term *endless* is very indeterminate; that it often means no more than a long time; and, in some instances, not more than three or four hours at longest. Thus you see, or may see, that it is not in the power of language to stand before such methods of criticising and reasoning, as those on which you build your system.

Admitting all that you allege in favour of the limited sense of the above terms, still the nature of the subject, the connection and scope of the passages, together with the use of various other forms of expression which convey the same thing, are sufficient to prove, that, when applied to the doctrine of future punishment, they are to be understood without any limitation.

If we read of a disease cleaving to a man *for ever*, the plain meaning is, *to the end of his life*: if of an *everlasting* priesthood, the meaning is, one that should continue *to the end of the dispensation* of which it was an institute: if of *everlasting* hills, or mountains, the meaning is, that they will continue *till the end of the world*: but if *after* this world is ended, and successive duration consequently terminated, we read that the wicked shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, and that in the same passage in which it is added, *but the righteous into everlasting life*; (Matt. xxv. 46.) wo be to the man who dares to plunge into that

abyss, on the presumption of finding a bottom!

The evidence which you offer of a *successive duration* after this period, is a proof of the scarcity of that article in the paths which you are in the habits of tracing. A plain unbiassed reader of scripture would have supposed, that the terms *day and night*, in Rev. xiv. 11, had been a figurative mode of expression to denote *perpetuity*; and especially as the same language is used by the inhabitants of heaven, chap. vii. 15. For my part, I confess I should as soon have dreamed of proving from what is said in chap. xxi. 24—"The *nations* of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the New Jerusalem,"—that mankind will maintain their present political distinctions in a future state, as of founding upon such language the idea of successive duration. Your expositions on other parts of the Revelations are of the same description, as frigid as they are puerile. It is a wonder the New Jerusalem *coming down from heaven* had not been supposed to have fallen into *the sea*, and to have filled it up; and an argument been drawn from its great dimensions, of its being large enough to contain the whole human race. You must not be surprised, Sir, if I do not perceive the force of these passages in proving that all beyond the last judgment is not *proper eternity*.

Yours, &c.

July, 1799.

A. F.

LETTER III.

DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING MR. V.'S SCHEME, AND ITS
INCONSISTENCY WITH SCRIPTURE.

Sir,

YOU complain, more than once, of my not understanding the subject against which I write; and here, for ought I see, I must fall under. I confess I do not, nor can I understand what it is that you believe. Having heard and seen so much of your professing to hold the doctrine of *universal* salvation, *universal* restitution, and that "all men will be finally benefited by the death of Christ," I really thought you had meant so; and could not have imagined that with these pretensions you would have avowed the notion of annihilation. Hence it was, that in my third question, though I did not as you allege, proceed upon the supposition of your denying *all* future punishment, yet I acknowledge I did proceed upon the supposition that you hold with no other future punishment than what should terminate in everlasting life. And who could have thought otherwise? After all the information you have since given me, I am still so ignorant as not to understand how all men are to be finally saved, and yet a part of them annihilated! Neither can I comprehend how there can come a time with sinners when he that made them will

not have mercy upon them, on the supposition that all punishment, of all degrees and duration, is itself an exercise of mercy. (p. 10.)

Neither can I comprehend how you reconcile many things in your scheme with the holy scriptures. I have been used to understand the terms *death* and *perish*, being opposed to everlasting life, (John iii. 16. x. 28.) as expressive, not of the loss of being, but of well-being. But with you they signify annihilation. (p. 42) The design of God, it seems, in giving his Son to suffer for us, was not to save us from suffering, but merely from becoming extinct, and to perpetuate our existence. And the *death* which those who keep his sayings shall never taste, (John viii. 52) means the same thing: they shall exist for ever; a blessing which your scheme makes equally applicable to many who do not keep his sayings, as to those who do. And where do you find the above terms used to convey the idea of annihilation on any other subject; and from whence was this notion learned? *

When we are told that *God will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth; for the spirit should sail before him, and the souls which he*

* The reader will perceive hereafter, that Mr. F. was mistaken in supposing Mr. V. to hold the doctrine of Annihilation; this he acknowledges in Letter VI.

hath made, (Isai. lvii. 16.) I supposed it had been meant only of them who in the context are said to *put their trust in the Lord*; and that in the present life, seeing it was promised them that they should *possess the land, and inherit his holy mountain*; of them who were of a *contrite and humble spirit*, and not of the *wicked*, who are likened to the *troubled sea*, for whom there is *no peace*: but you consider all these promises as belonging to the same people as the threatening in ch. xxvii. 16. *He that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour!*

I observe when such terms as *for ever* seem to favour your cause, they are to be taken in their utmost latitude of meaning. If it had been said of the divine Being, he *will* contend for ever, you would have introduced your sing-song of *aionas* and *aionon*,* as sometimes meaning only a limited duration; but seeing it is said he will *not* contend for ever, here the word must be understood of duration without end. You must excuse me, however, if I for once avail myself of your critical labours, and remind you that *for ever* in this passage refers merely to the present life, as the context plainly shews.

I never imagined, till I saw it in the writings of universalists, that *finishing transgression* and

* Alluding to Mr. V.'s quotation in *Univ. Miscel.* No. I. p. 8.

making an end of sin, (Dan. ix. 24) had any reference to what was to be done after the resurrection and the last judgment; and especially since what is there predicted was to be accomplished within *seventy weeks*, or four hundred and ninety years from the time of the prophecy.

I have been used to think that the mediation of Christ was not on behalf of fallen angels, whose nature he took not on him, of whose salvation the scriptures are silent, and whose own ideas are, that they have nothing to do with him, Matt. viii. 29. But according to your reasonings, they also must be either saved or annihilated; yea, they must have at least the offer of salvation, otherwise their present and future sufferings would not be in mercy, which you consider as belonging to all punishment whatever.

It had been usual with me to think that the triumph of mercy, in the day of retribution, as described in James ii. 13. Psalm lxii. 12. respected another description of people than those who were to receive *judgment without mercy*; namely, those that should *so speak and so do, as they that should be judged by the perfect law of liberty*: but you have found out a scheme, it seems, in which these opposites are united in the same persons; and in which the ungodly, while receiving *judgment without mercy*, have no judgment but

what is *in mercy*. (p. 10) Is it surprising, fir, that a man of plain and ordinary capacity should be at a loss to understand such things as these?

It would not have occurred to me that an argument could have been drawn from the threatenings of God to Israel in the present life, (Lev. xxv.) to what shall be done to the ungodly world in the life to come; yet so it is: (p. 43) and the ground on which the analogy is justified, is the *immutability* of the divine character. But what the immutable character of God requires to be done, must be done alike in all ages, and to all people: whereas, what was there threatened to Israel was not done at the same time to other nations, nor has it been done since to any nation beside them. (Amos iii. 2. Acts xxvii. 30.) There is nothing in it analogous to his dealings with mankind, unless it be the general idea of his “making use of natural evil to correct moral evil.” This being known to be the case on earth, you “cannot but think it must be the design of future punishment.” Such is the whole of your argument, which you recommend to my “serious consideration!” But how if, on the other hand, I should say, though natural evil be used on earth to correct moral evil, in society at large, yet it is not always sent for the purpose of correcting the parties themselves? We have no proof that the men of Sodom were destroyed by fire, or Pharaoh drowned in the sea, for their good: therefore, I

cannot but think there is a similar design in future punishment.

I always supposed that the sense in which God is said to be *the saviour of all men*, especially of them that believe, (p. 44) was that in which the apostle there puts his *trust* in him; namely, as the God of providence, whose care is extended to all his creatures, but especially to believers.

I have read of the *dispensation of the fulness of times*; but the idea never occurred to me that these times were to be understood of ages beyond the last judgment. I have no doubt but the “gathering together in one all things in Christ, which are in heaven, and which are on earth,” will be accomplished, and that within the limits of *time*. If it be done, as you allow it will, (p. 10) by the time “that he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power, and shall have subdued all things unto himself,” it will be done by the time he shall have raised the dead, and judged the world; for THEN is this work described as being accomplished. 1 Cor. xv. 24.

In reading the account of the *new heaven and new earth* in the xxi. chap. of the Revelations, I find amongst other things it is said, *there shall be no more death*, and afterwards *no more curse*; but I should not have thought of these things being applied to the universe at large, but merely to the

inhabitants of that blessed state; and the rather seeing it is said in the same chapter, that *the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators; and all liars, shall have THEIR PART in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* Neither could I have supposed it possible, from such a representation of the *second death*, to conclude that it consisted in annihilation.

By the *times of the restitution of all things*, (Acts iii. 21) I have been used to understand the times of the resurrection and the last judgment: for that till then, and no longer, will Christ be detained *in the heavens*. Whenever Christ descends from heaven, then, according to Peter, will be the times of the restitution of all things: but this will be previous and in order to his raising the dead and judging the world (1 Thes. iii. 16.) Consequently these are the times of which the apostle speaks. The utter overthrow which will then be given to the kingdom of Satan by the general conflagration, (2 Peter iii. 12) the destruction of the last enemy, death, by the resurrection, (1 Cor. xv. 23, 26) and the final adjustment of human affairs by the last judgment, (Matt. xxv. 31, 46) will be *a restitution of all things*; the empire of sin will be crushed, and the government of God completely restored.

But the *times* in which your scheme is to be accomplished, must be after the final judgment; for from that period there is an *everlasting punishment* for the wicked to endure, a *lake of fire* into which they are to be cast; (Matt. xxv. 46. Rev. xx. 15) and from which your restitution of all things is to recover them. Your restitution therefore, and that of the scriptures, are not the same.

You cannot conceive of a restitution of all things, and of sin being *made an end of*, unless all the individuals in the creation be either reconciled to God, or annihilated: but what authority have you for such a construction of these terms? Did the *restoring of all things* on the Messiah's first appearance, (Matt. xxvii. 11) include all individuals, so far as it went? When God said to Zedekiah, *And thou profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end*, did it mean that he should be either converted or annihilated? Ezek. xx. 25. And when the same language is used of the sins of the people, (chap. xxv. 5) does it mean that they should be either converted or annihilated? Rather is it not manifest that by *iniquity having an end* is meant, that the perpetrators of it were brought to condign punishment, shut up in Babylon as in a prison, and rendered incapable of doing further mischief? Such will be the case with all the ungodly at the second coming of Christ; and this will be the restoration of peace,

order, and happiness, to the rest of the universe.

The doctrine of endless misery appears to you to “confound all degrees of punishment, in giving infinite punishment to all.” (p. 42.) You, it seems, can conceive of no diversity of suffering, unless it be in duration. Will the reflexion of lost souls on their past life then be all exactly the same? The same in the objects reflected on, and consequently the same in the intenseness of their misery? How grossly absurd, sir, must be your notions of future punishment, to admit of such an idea! Besides, there is equal reason to believe that there will be different degrees of glory as of misery. If heavenly bliss bear any relation to the labours and sufferings of the present life on behalf of Christ, which the scriptures assure us it does, (Matt. v. 12. 2 Cor. iv. 17) these being diverse, that must also be the same. But according to your reasoning, there can be no diversity unless it be in duration: either, therefore, all degrees of happiness must be confounded in giving infinite happiness to all, or the inhabitants of heaven, as well as those of hell, must, after a certain period, be continually diminishing by annihilation.

Such, sir, are your expositions of scripture. Except in the productions of a certain maniac in our own county, I never recollect to have seen so much violence done to the word of God in so small a compass.

According to your scheme, all things work together for good to them that love not God, as well as to them that love him. Thus you confound what the scriptures discriminate.

Our Lord told the jews, That if they believed not that he was the Messiah, they should *die in their sins*, and whither he went they *could not come*; (John viii. 21.) but according to your scheme, they might die in their sins, and yet be able to go whither he went, and inherit eternal life.

The scriptures describe a sort of characters who shall be exposed to *a certain fearful looking for of judgment*: (Heb. x. 27.) but this, according to your scheme, can be nothing more than annihilation. For as the case of the characters described is suggested to be irrevocable and hopeless, they cannot be punished during ages of ages *in a way of mercy*, or with a view to their recovery: and as to their being punished during this long period, and in the end annihilated, this would be contrary to all your ideas of punishment, which must always have its foundation in mercy. Hence it follows, that all this fearful looking for of judgment, amounts to no more than what atheists and infidels generally prefer; death being to them an *everlasting sleep*.

Nor is your hypothesis less at variance with itself than with the holy scriptures. Your notion of *temporary punishment* clashes with all your arguments drawn from the benevolent feelings of a good man. You ask, “Doth not every good man
 “love his enemies, and forgive even the worst
 “of them? Is there a man living whose heart is
 “filled with the love of God that would not pro-
 “mote the best interest of his most inveterate
 “foe, if it lay in his power? And has not God
 “more love than the best of men? And are not
 “his wisdom and his power equal to his love?”
 (p. 74.)

In return I ask, Is there a man living whose heart is filled with the love of God, who would be willing that his worst enemy should be cast into hell for ages of ages, or for a single age, or even a single day, when it was in his power to deliver him from it? But God hath more love than the best of men, and his wisdom and power are equal to his love; consequently there will be no future punishment!

Your notion of annihilation will also contradict the greater part of your pretensions. You talk of *universal* salvation; but you do not believe it: for a part of the human race are to be given up as incurables to annihilation. You plead the fifth chapter to the Romans in favour of your doctrine, contending that *justification of life* will be as extensive as *condemnation*; but you believe no such

thing: for a part of those who are condemned, instead of being justified and saved, will be given up as incurables to annihilation. You think you see *times* beyond the last judgment, in which *all things*, or rather as you understand it, *all persons*, are to be gathered together in Christ, and reconciled by the blood of his cross: howbeit you mean not so, neither doth your heart think so; for a part of them will be struck out of existence, and who can therefore be neither gathered nor reconciled. You pretend to unite the opinions of calvinists and arminians: the former, you say, render the death of Christ effectual, but limit its design to a part of mankind: the latter tend it to all, but consider it as ineffectual; while you maintain that it is designed for all, and effectual to all. (pp. 70, 71.) But this is mere pretence: you believe no such thing; for a part of mankind are to be at last annihilated. By an anecdote which you have inserted in p. 65, of your Miscellany, you flatter yourself that you have fastened a difficulty on a Mr. R. from which he cannot extricate himself, but by embracing your doctrine. But neither could he, if he did embrace it; for you no more believe that God will save all mankind, than Mr. R.

You pretend to urge it as a difficulty on me, that “either God *cannot*, or *will not make an end of sin*”; that there is not efficacy enough in the

blood of Christ to destroy the works of the devil; or else that the full efficacy of the atonement is withheld by the divine determination:" (p. 44.) But it is all pretence. If it be a difficulty, it equally bears upon your own hypothesis as upon mine. If Christ died with an intention to save all, why are not all saved? Why must a number of them be annihilated? Is it because God *cannot* bring them to repentance and salvation; or because he *will not*? Is there not efficacy enough in the blood of the cross to destroy the works of the devil, without his having recourse to a mere act of power; an act which might have been exerted without that blood being shed? Or is the full efficacy of the atonement withheld by the divine determination?

Kettering,
August 9. 1799.

Yours, &c.

A. F.

LETTER IV.

REPLIES AND DEFENCES OF FORMER REASONINGS.

Sir,

I MUST be very weak, if, while writing in a publication of which my opponent is the Editor, I should expect to have the last word.—When I have said what appears to me necessary on any point, and on the whole matter of dispute, I shall leave it to the judgment of the candid reader.

From any thing I had advanced, you had no ground to conclude that I formed an improper estimate of my own reputation. Any man, who has been in the habit of writing, and whose writings have been at all regarded by the public, must be possessed of some reputation; and whether it be small or great, it is his duty not to make use of it for the propagation of what he believes to be pernicious error.

“ Truth (you say) courts the public observation of men;” and so may error. If it be true, that wisdom *crieth in the top of high places*, it is equally true, that folly *is loud and stubborn*. The advocates of infidelity, sir, are not less bold than yourself; nor less loud in their challenges of examination. Such challenges afford no criterion of truth; nor is it any proof of the goodness of a cause that its abettors court the public attention. They may be well aware that public prejudice is in their favour; or may entertain a much greater dread of sinking into insignificance by neglect, than of being overcome in the field of contest.

You have repeatedly reminded me of the favour which you confer upon me by permitting my papers to appear in your miscellany. Now, sir, I consider it as no favour at all; nor as affording any proof of your impartiality. If you think otherwise, you are at perfect liberty, after introducing this series of letters, to discontinue

them. If I wish to write any thing farther on the subject, I shall not be at a loss for a proper medium.

“ The prejudices of both professor and profane (you tell me) are in my favor.” Had you used the term *consciences*, instead of prejudices, you would have been nearer the truth. So far as my observations extend, the prejudices of the bulk of mankind are on the other side. Deists and libertines lead the way by an open or affected rejection of all future punishment. Socinians, who generally include universal salvation in their scheme, follow hard after them. Mrs. Barbauld, if I remember right, in her Remarks on Mr. Wakefield’s Enquiry, goes so far as to represent the ideas of access to God through a mediator, and of punishment in a bottomless pit, as originating in the ignorance and servility of eastern customs. Unbelievers, it is well known, rejoice in the spread of socinianism, as being favourable to their views; and socinians rejoice no less in the spread of universalism, as favourable to theirs. This is sufficiently manifest by the applauses which writers on your side commonly meet with in the Monthly Review. There are great numbers of nominal christians of loose characters, who would be glad to believe your doctrine of temporary punishment, and to proceed, by an easy transition, to that of no pu-

nishment at all; nor is there any bar which prevents their falling in with these views, but the remonstrance of their consciences. They fear it is too favourable to their vices to be true, and therefore are deterred from embracing it.—Such, sir, is the “description of people,” after whom you enquire; such is the company with whom you associate, and to whom you administer consolation; and such is the justness of your remark, that “the prejudices of both professor and profane are in my favour.” If you yourself had not been persuaded of the contrary, I question whether you would have given that title to my two first letters, which appears on the blue covers of your work.* The word *torments*, it is true, can give no *just* offence, as it is a scriptural expression; yet to persons who judge on these subjects merely by their feelings, the ideas conveyed by it are sufficient to prejudice them against every thing which a writer may advance.

Your magazines, sir, I presume, would be less acceptable to many of your readers than they are, if, instead of employing so large a portion of them in attempting to prove that all will be finally happy, you were frequently to insist that some men would be tormented in hell without any mixture of mercy for a number of

* “Letter I. from Mr. A. Fuller, in defence of eternal torments.”

ages; and if you insisted on this doctrine also in your pulpit exercises, you yourself might possibly be considered as a "brawler of damnation."

You carefully avoid claiming universal salvation *as a right*, and are pleased to represent my inquiry on that subject as "a quibble." I am not surprised, sir, that you should feel reluctant on this head; that you should decline the defence of your friend, and that you should alternately compliment and reproach your opponent, as if to keep him at a distance from the subject. (No. i. p. 5. No. xxxiv. p. 309.) If I mistake not, this is a fundamental principle in your system, and that which proves it to be fundamentally wrong. There is no need of having recourse to the pieces of other writers; your own productions afford sufficient evidence that the salvation for which you plead is not that which arises from the free grace of God through Jesus Christ; and consequently, that it is no part of the salvation revealed in the gospel. You reject the idea of invalidating the divine threatenings towards sinners, (No. xxxiv. p. 310.) admitting "them in their full latitude, and the execution of them too;" maintaining that "God will deal with his creatures according to character;" and that sinners will be punished "according to their works." (No. ii. p. 42.) Now, sir, if there be any meaning in all this language, it

is, That *justice* will have its course on the ungodly; and that whatever punishment they endure, whether it be vindictive or corrective, endless or temporary, it is all that their sins *deserve*. If the threatenings of God mean no more than a punishment which is temporary, and for the good of sinners, their conduct can deserve no more: for we cannot have a more certain rule of estimating the just demerit of sin, than the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against it. But if sinners endure the full desert of their sin, there is no room for grace, or *undeserved favour*; nor is any place left for the work of mediation. A criminal who has suffered the full penalty of the law, has no right to be told that his liberation is an act of grace, or that it was owing to the mediation of another. Your universal salvation, therefore, is no part of that which arises from the grace of God, or the death of Christ; nor is it, properly speaking, salvation at all, but a legal discharge in consequence of a full satisfaction to divine justice being made by the sufferings of the sinner.

If you contend that the liberation of the sinner *is* owing to the grace of God, through the mediation of his Son, which mitigates and shortens his punishment, then you at once give up all you have before maintained; That sinners will be

punished *according to their works*, and that the threatenings of God will be fully executed upon them. You may have read of “instances of both punishment and pardon to the same persons, and for the same sins:” (No. xxxv. p. 337.) but this must be where the punishment has not been according to the desert of the sin, otherwise there had been no need of pardon.

You talk much of my dealing in “*suppositions* instead of arguments,” and of my “resting my conclusions on unfounded assumptions.”

I have carefully examined these charges, and am unable to perceive the justice of them in a single instance. Though the letter which appeared in the Evangelical Magazine was chiefly in the form of supposition, yet that supposition was not destitute of argument to support it. It is possible, sir, though it does not appear to have occurred to your mind, that arguments themselves may be conveyed under the form of suppositions. To convince you that this was the case in the above letter, I will put the very passage to which you object, into the form of argument.

The scriptures teach us that those who at a certain period are found *filthy, shall be filthy still*; that they shall be cast into that *bottomless pit* which was prepared for the devil and his angels; and that they shall dwell with *everlasting burnings*.—

But your doctrine teaches, that though they be filthy at death or judgment, or any other period, yet they shall not be *always so*; that though they be cast into the pit of destruction, yet it shall not prove *bottomless*; and that though they have to encounter devouring fire, yet they shall not dwell with *everlasting* burnings.—

Therefore your doctrine is antisciptural. But if your doctrine be antisciptural, it is of that nature which tends to deceive the souls of men; and you will not be able to look them in the face another day, and still less HIM who hath charged you to be pure from the blood of all men.

The first three positions contain the argument, and the last the inference.

I should think “the world,” or rather the reader, did not need to be informed what argument there was in this string of suppositions; if he did, however, I have attempted, at your request, to give him that information.

With respect to building on “unfounded assumptions,” for which I am accused of “betraying my ignorance of the subject I have written against,” (No. ii. p. 45.) you have given us two instances, which I shall briefly examine.

First: I had asked, What doctrine, *besides* that of universal salvation, will you find in the

bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses; and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death? What principle is it that is here assumed? Why, (you answer) that the doctrine of universal salvation *does* afford encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and *does* furnish ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death. And is this indeed a question? I took it for a self-evident truth, and supposed you must and would have acknowledged it. Whether you will or not, however, I appeal to the common sense of the reader, whether any position can be more self-evident than the following—If the scriptures teach that all men shall be finally saved, every sinner, whatever be his vicious courses, is encouraged to expect eternal life: and though he should persist in sin, till death, is warranted to hope and rejoice in the prospect of all being well with him at last. For any man to deny this position, is to deny what is self-evident, and there can be no farther reasoning with him.

To allege in answer, That it will be always ill with the wicked *while he continues so*, is trifling: for if the sinner be taught to believe at some future period beyond this life he shall be delivered both from sin and punishment—

whether the former branch of this deliverance afford him joy or not, the latter must.

The same question, you say, might be asked concerning the doctrine of election. It might; but I should readily answer, No sinner while going on still in his trespasses is warranted to consider himself as elected to salvation: therefore that doctrine affords no ground of hope and joy to persons of this description. Can you say the same of the doctrine of universal salvation? If there were the same ground for an ungodly sinner to conclude himself elected, as your doctrine affords for his concluding that he shall be eternally saved, the cases would be parallel; and both these doctrines would be alike subject to the charge of comforting those whom God would not have comforted: but as this is not true of election, your notion is still solitary, and your difficulty remains where it was. All the encomiums which you pass upon the universal scheme (No. ii. pp. 41—44.) furnishes not a single example of any other divine truth which gives encouragement to a sinner, while in his sins, to believe that in the end it shall be well with him. The question therefore still returns upon you, *What doctrine BESIDES that of universal salvation will you find in the bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and*

which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in them till death?

I do not say, "let the world judge" whether this question proceeded on any *unfounded assumption*, and whether it be equally applicable to election as to universal salvation, because I imagine it will be but a very small part of the world that will examine our productions: but I am willing to make my appeal to the intelligent and impartial reader. And with respect to you, Sir, the task which you have set yourself is before you; either to "confess it to be true," that your doctrine gives encouragement, hope, and joy to wicked men; or to "expose the falsehood of this supposition more fully."

In the second place, you charge me with "taking it for granted that your views invalidate the divine threatenings towards sinners;" and intimate that there is no "reason" in what I say, but upon the supposition of your denying "all future punishment." (No. ii. p. 45.) That I never supposed you to deny all future punishment, I have already proved; and that any thing which I advanced required such a supposition, you have not hitherto made appear. As to your invalidating the divine threatenings, so far as the doctrine of universal salvation appears to me to operate in that way, so far I must of necessity believe that you do; but whatever may

be my belief, the question is, Have I built any conclusion upon it as an acknowledged truth? If so, how came I to *entreat you to consider whether it was not so?* Is it usual to entreat an opponent to consider whether that which we take for granted as an acknowledged truth, be true? Undoubtedly I suggested this idea to you as being my judgment, which, however, I did not desire to impose upon you, any farther than as it was supported by evidence, and therefore at the same time intimated what was the ground of that judgment; namely, *the near resemblance between your labours and those of the deceiver of mankind.* If you cannot perceive this resemblance, I cannot help it. Other people can and will. He persuaded his auditors that though they should transgress, yet the evil they had dreaded would not come upon them: they believed—and were not afraid to transgress. You persuade your auditors that though they should die in their sins, yet the evil will not be *so great* as they had been used to apprehend—God hath not said, ye shall die eternally; and he means that you shall all come where Jesus is—If they believe, must they not be *less afraid* of transgression than before?

And now, sir, who is “ignorant,” and who has been employed in “raising dust to hide the truth,” are questions which I leave you to re-

solve. It is enough for me if I have proved your charges to be unfounded: for if this be accomplished, your work still returns upon your hands; as it will follow, that, notwithstanding all your challenges, and calling out for more to be written, you have not yet answered the first letter.

Yours, &c.

A. F.

LETTER V.

EVIDENCES OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

Sir,

YOU seem to wish to persuade your readers that the grounds on which I rest my belief of the doctrine of endless punishment are very slender. The truth is, I have not at present attempted to state those grounds. Considering myself as not engaged in a formal controversy, I only introduced a few passages; and to several of them you have hitherto made no reply. The principal grounds on which I rest my belief of the doctrine you oppose, are as follow:—

I. *All those passages of scripture which describe the future states of men in contrast.*

“ Men of the world, who have their portion in this life: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness—The hope of the

“ righteous shall be gladness: but the expecta-
“ tion of the wicked shall perish—The wicked
“ is driven away in his wickedness: but the
“ righteous hath hope in his death—And ma-
“ ny of them that sleep in the dust of the earth
“ shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some
“ to shame and everlasting contempt—He will
“ gather his wheat into the garner, and will
“ burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire—
“ Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that
“ leadeth to destruction, and many there be who
“ go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and
“ narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and
“ few there be that find it—Not every one
“ that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the
“ kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the
“ will of my Father who is in heaven—Many
“ shall come from the east and west, and shall
“ sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob
“ in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of
“ the kingdom shall be cast out into outer dark-
“ ness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of
“ teeth—Gather ye first the tares, and bind
“ them in bundles, to burn them: but gather
“ the wheat into my barn—The Son of Man
“ shall send forth his angels, and they shall ga-
“ ther out of his kingdom all things that of-
“ fend, and them that do iniquity, and shall
“ cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall

“ be wailing and gnashing of teeth: then shall
“ the righteous shine forth as the sun in the
“ kingdom of their Father——The kingdom of
“ heaven is like unto a net, that gathered fish of
“ every kind; which, when it was full, they drew
“ to the shore, and sat down, and gathered the
“ good into vessels, and cast the bad away.
“ So shall it be at the end of the world; the
“ angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked
“ from among the just, and shall cast them into
“ the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and
“ gnashing of teeth——Blessed is that servant,
“ whom when his Lord cometh, he shall find
“ so doing: but and if that evil servant should
“ say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his com-
“ ing, and shall begin to smite his fellow-ser-
“ vants, and to eat and drink with the drunken,
“ the lord of that servant shall come in a day
“ when he looketh not for him, and shall cut
“ him asunder, and appoint him his portion with
“ the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and
“ gnashing of teeth——Well done, good and
“ faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of
“ thy Lord. But cast ye out the unprofitable
“ servant, into outer darkness: there shall be
“ weeping and gnashing of teeth——Then shall
“ the king say unto them on his right hand,
“ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the
“ kingdom prepared for you from the founda-
“ tion of the world——Then shall he also say unto

“ them on the left hand, Depart from me ye
“ cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the
“ devil and his angels—And these shall go
“ away into everlasting punishment; but the
“ righteous into everlasting life—He that be-
“ lieveth and is baptised shall be saved; but he
“ that believeth not shall be damned—Blessed
“ are ye when men shall hate you for the Son
“ of Man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and
“ leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great
“ in heaven. But woe unto you that are rich!
“ for ye have received your consolation—He
“ that heareth my sayings, and doeth them, is
“ like unto a man who built his house upon a
“ rock; and when the flood arose, the storm
“ beat vehemently against that house, and
“ could not shake it; for it was founded upon a
“ rock. But he that heareth and doeth not, is
“ like unto a man who built his house upon the
“ earth, against which the storm did beat vehe-
“ mently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin
“ of that house was great—God so loved the
“ world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,
“ that whosoever believeth on him, should not
“ perish, but have everlasting life—All that
“ are in their graves shall come forth; they
“ that have done good unto the resurrection of
“ life, and they that have done evil unto the
“ resurrection of damnation—Hath not the

“ potter power over the clay, of the same lump
 “ to make one vessel unto honour, and another
 “ unto dishonour? What if God willing to shew
 “ his wrath, and to make his power known,
 “ endured with much long-suffering the vessels
 “ of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he
 “ might make known the riches of his glory on
 “ the vessels of mercy, which he had afore pre-
 “ pared unto glory—The Lord knoweth them
 “ that are his—But in a great house there are
 “ vessels to honour and vessels to dishonour—
 “ Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for
 “ whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also
 “ reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall
 “ of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sow-
 “ eth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life
 “ everlasting—That which beareth thorns and
 “ briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing,
 “ whose end is to be burned. But, beloved,
 “ we are persuaded better things of you, and
 “ things which accompany salvation.”*

I consider these passages as designed to ex-
 press THE FINAL STATES OF MEN, which if they
 be, it is the same thing in effect as their being
 designed to express the doctrine of endless punish-

* Psal. xvii. 14, 15. Prov. x. 28. xiv. 32. Dan. xii. 2.
 Matt. iii. 12. vii. 13, 14, 21. viii. 11, 12. xiii. 30, 40—43,
 47—50. xxiv. 46—51. xxv. 23, 30, 34, 41, 46. Mark xvi. 16.
 Luke vi. 23, 24, 47, 49. John iii. 16. v. 29. Rom. ix. 21—23.
 2 Tim. ii. 19, 20. Gal. vi. 7, 8. Heb. vi. 8, 9.

ment; for if the descriptions here given of the portion of the wicked denote their *final* state, there is no possibility of another state succeeding it.

That the above passages do express the *final* states of men, may appear from the following considerations:—

1. The state of the righteous, which is all along opposed to that of the wicked, is allowed to be final: and if the other were not the same, it would not have been in such a variety of forms contrasted with it; for it would not be a contrast.

2. All these passages are totally silent, as to any other state following that of destruction, damnation, &c. If the punishment threatened to ungodly men had been only a purgation, or temporary correction, we might have expected that something like this would have been intimated. It is supposed that some who are upon the right foundation may yet build upon it, *wood, and hay, and stubble*; and that the party shall *suffer loss*; but *he himself shall be saved*, though it be *as by fire*. Now if the doctrine of universal salvation were true, we might expect some such account of all lapsed intelligences, when their future state is described: but nothing like it occurs in any of the foregoing passages, nor in any other.

3. The phraseology of the greater part of them is inconsistent with any other state follow-

ing that which they describe. On the supposition of salvation being appointed as the ultimate portion of those who die in their sins, they have not *their portion in this life*; but will, equally with those who die in the Lord, *behold his righteousness, and be satisfied in his likeness*. Their expectation shall not *perish*; but shall issue, as well as that of the righteous, in *gladness*: and though *driven away in their wickedness*, yet they have *hope in their death*, and that hope shall be realized. The broad way doth not lead to *destruction*, but merely to a temporary correction, the end of which is everlasting life. The chaff will not be burned, but turned into wheat, and gathered into the garner. The tares will be the same, and gathered into the barn; and the bad fish will be turned into good, and gathered into vessels. The cursed, as well as the blessed, shall inherit the kingdom of God; which also was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. There may be a woe against the wicked, that they shall be kept from their consolation for a long time, but not that they *have received it*. Those who in the present life believe *not* in Christ shall not *perish*, but have everlasting life. This life also is improperly represented as the seed-time, and the life to come as the harvest, inasmuch as the seeds of heavenly bliss may be sown in hell: and though the sinner may reap corruption, as the fruit of all his present doings,

yet that corruption will not be the opposite of *everlasting life*, seeing it will issue in it. Finally: Though they *bear briars and thorns*, yet their END is not *to be burned*, but to obtain salvation.—To the foregoing scripture testimonies may be added,

II. *All those passages which speak of the duration of future punishment by the terms “ everlasting, eternal, for ever, and for ever and ever:”—*

“ Some shall awake to everlasting life, and
 “ some to shame and *everlasting* contempt—
 “ It is better for thee to enter into life halt, or
 “ maimed, than having two hands, or two feet,
 “ to be cast into *everlasting* fire—Depart ye
 “ cursed into *everlasting* fire—And these shall
 “ go into *everlasting* punishment—They shall
 “ be punished with *everlasting* destruction from
 “ the presence of the Lord, and from the glory
 “ of his power—He that shall blaspheme
 “ against the holy Ghost is in danger of (or sub-
 “ ject to) *eternal* damnation—The inhabitants
 “ of Sodom and Gomorrha are set forth for an
 “ example, suffering the vengeance of *eternal*
 “ fire—These are wells without water, clouds
 “ that are carried with a tempest, to whom the
 “ mist of darkness is reserved *for ever*—Wan-
 “ dering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness
 “ of darkness *for ever*—If any man worship
 “ the beast, or his image, and receive his mark

“ in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall
 “ drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which
 “ is poured out without mixture into the cup of
 “ his indignation: and he shall be tormented
 “ with fire and brimstone in the presence of the
 “ holy angels, and in the presence of the
 “ Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever*: and they have
 “ no rest day nor night—And they said,
 “ Alleluia. And her smoke rose up *for ever*
 “ *and ever*—And the devil that deceived
 “ them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet
 “ are; and shall be tormented day and night
 “ *for ever and ever.*”*

I have not mentioned Ifai. xxxiii. 14, because I wish to introduce no passage but what shall be allowed to refer to a future life. The hebrew word עַלְמָוּת, in Dan. xii. 2. answers to the greek αιων; and whatever may be said of the ambiguity of the term, the antithesis in this passage, as in Matt. xxv. 46, determines it to mean the same when applied to “shame and contempt,” as when applied to life.

As to the term αιωνιος, rendered *everlasting* or *eternal*, which you consider as proving nothing

* Dan. xii. 2. Matt. xviii. 8. xxv. 41—46. 2 Thess. i. 9. Mark iii. 29. Jude 7. 2 Pet. ii. 17. Jude. 13. Rev. xiv. 10, 11. xix. 3. xx. 10.

on account of its ambiguity, there is a rule of interpretation which I have long understood to be used on other subjects by all good critics, and which I consider as preferable to yours. In my next letter I may examine their comparative merits. This rule is, *That every term be taken in its* PROPER *sense, except there be something in the subject or connexion which requires it to be taken otherwise.* Now, so far as my acquaintance with this subject extends, it appears to be generally allowed by lexicographers, that *αιωω* is a compound of *αιε* and *ωω*, and that its literal meaning is *always being* ;* also that the meaning of its derivative *αιωωι* is *endless, everlasting, or eternal.* This term, *αιωωι* which is very sparingly applied in the new testament to limited duration, I always take in its proper sense, except there be

* Aristotle the philosopher, who lived upwards of three hundred years before the new testament was written, plainly tells us the meaning which the greek writers of his time, and those who in his time were accounted ancients, affixed to this term. Speaking of the gods, whom he considered as immortal, and as having their residence above the heavens, he says, " The beings which exist there, neither exist in place, nor does time make them grow old; nor undergo they any change, being placed beyond the motion even of those who are the farthest removed (from the centre;) but possessing an unchangeable life, free from all outward impressions, perfectly happy, and self-sufficient, they continue through all *αιωωα*, eternity. And this the ancients admirably signified by the word itself: for

something in the connexion or subject, which requires it to be taken otherwise: and as I do not find this to be the case in any of those places where it is applied to punishment, I see no reason in these cases to depart from its proper acceptation. Everlasting punishment is in some of them opposed to everlasting life, which, so far as an antithesis can go to fix the meaning of a term, determines it to be of the same force and extent.

To allege that the *subject* requires a different meaning in this case to be given to the term, is to assume what will not be granted. The *proof* that has been offered on this point will be considered hereafter.

With respect to the phrases *εις τον αιωνα*, for ever, and *εις της αιωνας των αιωνων*, for ever and ever, I believe you will not find a single example in all the new testament of their being used to convey any other than the idea of endless duration. You tell us that *εις αιωνας αιωνων*, for ever and ever, in Rev. xiv. 11. should be rendered "to the age of ages." Are you certain of this? Admitting the principle of your translation, some would

they call the time of each person's life his *αιων*, inasmuch as according to the laws of nature, nothing (respecting him) exists out of the limits of it; and for the same reason that which comprehends the duration of the whole heaven, the whole of infinite time, and infinity itself, is called *αιωνα*, eternity; taking its name from always being, (*αει ειναι*) immortal and divine."

have rendered it *to ages of ages*: but render it how you will, the *meaning* of the phrase is the same. You might render it thus in other instances, wherein it is applied to the happiness of the righteous, or the glory to be ascribed to God; but this would not prove that such happiness and such glory were of limited duration, or that the phrase in question is expressive of it.

To the above may be added,

III. *All those passages which express the duration of future punishment by implication, or by forms of speech which imply the doctrine in question.*

“ I pray for them: I pray not for the world
 “ —The blasphemy against the holy Ghost *shall*
 “ *not be forgiven unto men*, neither in this world,
 “ neither in the world to come—He hath *never*
 “ *forgiveness*; but is in danger of eternal damna-
 “ tion—There is a sin unto death: I do not say
 “ that ye shall pray for it—It is impossible to
 “ renew them again unto repentance—If we sin
 “ wilfully after we have received the knowledge
 “ of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice
 “ for sins; but a fearful looking for of judgment,
 “ which shall devour the adversaries—What is a
 “ man profited, if he shall gain the whole world,
 “ and lose himself, or be cast away?—Woe unto
 “ that man by whom the Son of Man is betray-
 “ ed: it had been good for that man if he had

“ not been born—Their worm dieth not, and the
 “ fire is not quenched*—Betwixt us and you
 “ there is a great gulph fixed; so that they who
 “ would pass from hence to you cannot, neither
 “ can they pass to us who would come from
 “ thence—He that believeth not the Son shall *not*
 “ see life; but the wrath of God *abideth on him*.
 “ —I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall
 “ die in your sins; whither I go ye cannot come—
 “ Whose end is destruction—He that sheweth no
 “ mercy shall have *judgment without mercy*.”†

If there be some for whom Jesus did not pray, there are some who will have no share in the benefits of his mediation, without which they cannot be saved. If there be some that never will be forgiven, there are some that never will be saved; for forgiveness is an essential branch of salvation. Let there be what uncertainty there may in the word *eternal* in this instance, still the meaning of it is fixed by the other branch of the sentence, *they shall never be forgiven*. It is equal to John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish*. If there were any uncertainty as to the meaning of the word *eternal*

* Several times repeated in a few verses.

† John xvi. 9. Matt. xii. 31, 32. Mark iii. 29. 1 John v. 16. Heb. vi. 6. x. 26, 27. Luke ix. 25. Matt. xxvi. 24. Mark ix. 43, 48. Luke xvi. 26. John iii. 36. viii. 21. Phil. iii. 19. James ii. 13.

in this latter passage, yet the other branch of the sentence would settle it: for that must be endless life which is opposed to their *ever perishing*; and by the same rule, that must be endless damnation which is opposed to their *ever being forgiven*. If there be a sin, for the pardon of which christians are forbidden to pray, it must be on account of its being the revealed will of God that it never should be pardoned. If repentance be absolutely necessary to forgiveness, and there be some whom it is impossible should be renewed again unto repentance, there are some whose salvation is impossible. If there be *no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment*, this is the same thing as the sacrifice already offered being of no saving effect: for if it were otherwise, the language would not contain any peculiar threatening against the wilful sinner, as it would be no more than might be said to any sinner; nor would a *fearful looking for of judgment* be his certain doom. If the souls of some men will be *lost*, or *cast away*, they cannot all be *saved*; seeing these things are opposites. A man may be lost in desert, and yet saved in fact; or he may *suffer loss*, and yet himself be saved: but he cannot be lost, so as to be cast away, and yet finally saved; for these are perfect contraries. Whatever may be the precise idea of the *fire*, and the *worm*, there can be no doubt of their expressing the punish-

ment of the wicked; and its being declared of the one that it *dieth not*, and of the other that *it is not quenched*, it is the same thing as their being declared to be endless. It can be said of no man, on the principle of universal salvation, that *it were good for him not to have been born*; as whatever he may endure for a season, an eternal weight of glory will infinitely outweigh it. An *impassable gulph* between the blessed and the accursed equally militates against the recovery of the one, as the relapse of the other. If some shall *not see life*, but the wrath of God *abideth* on them; if those who die in their sins shall not come where Jesus is; if their *end* be destruction, and their portion be *judgment without mercy*; there must be some who will not be finally saved.

To these may be added,

IV. *All those passages which intimate that a change of heart, and a preparedness for heaven, are confined to the present life:—*

“ Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found*;
 “ call ye upon him *while he is near*: let the
 “ wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous
 “ man his thoughts; and let him return unto the
 “ Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and
 “ to our God, for he will abundantly pardon
 “ —Because I have called, and ye refused;
 “ I have stretched out my hand, and no man
 “ regarded I also will laugh at your cala-

“ mity, and mock when your fear cometh.
 “ When your fear cometh as desolation, and
 “ your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when
 “ distress and anguish come upon you; then
 “ shall they call upon me, but I will not an-
 “ swer; they shall seek me early, but shall not
 “ find me—Then said one unto him, Lord, are
 “ there few that shall be saved? And he said
 “ unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait
 “ gate: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to
 “ enter in and shall not be able—When *once* the
 “ master of the house hath risen up, and shut to
 “ the door, and ye begin to stand without, and
 “ to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord,
 “ open unto us; he shall answer and say unto
 “ you, I know you not whence you are
 “ Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity
 “ there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth
 “ —While ye have the light, believe in the
 “ light, that ye may be the children of light—
 “ While they (the foolish virgins) went to buy,
 “ the bridegroom came; and they that were
 “ *ready* went in with him to the marriage, and
 “ *the door was shut*—We beseech you, that ye re-
 “ ceive not the grace of God in vain . . . Behold
 “ *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of sal-
 “ vation—To-day, if ye will hear his voice, har-
 “ den not your hearts—Looking diligently lest
 “ any man fail of the grace of God lest
 “ there be any fornicator or profane person, as

“ Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-
 “ right. For ye know how that afterward, when
 “ he would have inherited the blessing, he was
 “ rejected: for he found no place of repentance,
 “ though he sought it carefully with tears—He
 “ that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he
 “ that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that
 “ is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he
 “ that is holy, let him be holy still.”*

According to these scriptures there will be no successful calling upon the Lord after a certain period; and consequently, no salvation—Whether there be few that shall ultimately be saved, our Lord does not inform us; but he assures us that there will be many who will *not be saved*; or, which is the same thing, who will not be able to enter in at the strait gate. None, it is plainly intimated, will be able to enter there, who have not agonized here. There will be no believing unto salvation, but *while we have the light*; nor any admission into the kingdom, unless we be *ready at the coming of the Lord*. The present is the *accepted time, the day of salvation*, or the season for sinners to be saved. If we continue to harden our hearts through life, he will swear in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest.

* Isai. lv. 6, 7. Prov. i. 24—8. Luke xiii. 24—29.
 John xii. 36. Matt. xxv. 5—13. 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. Heb. iii.
 7, 11. xii. 15—17. Rev. xxii. 11.

If we turn away from him who speaketh from heaven, it will be equally impossible for us to obtain the blessing, as it was for Esau, after he had despised his birthright. Finally: Beyond a certain period there shall be no more change of character; but every one will have received that impression which shall remain for ever, whether he be just or unjust, filthy or holy.

In this letter I have endeavoured to state the grounds of my own persuasion: in the next I may examine the reasonings and objections which you have advanced against it. The greater part of this evidence being taken from our Lord's discourses, who knew the truth, and was himself to be the judge of the world, renders it peculiarly interesting. If a preacher in these times delivered half so much on the subject, you would denominate him "a brawler of damnation."

Yours, &c.

A. F.

LETTER VI.

REPLIES TO OBJECTIONS.

Sir,

IN a former letter I suggested, That whether the Scriptures teach the doctrine of endless punishment, or not, they certainly *appear*

to do so. Whether this suggestion was unfounded, the evidence in my last letter must determine. You attempt, however, to discredit it, by alleging the few instances in which the terms *ever*, *everlasting*, &c. as connected with future punishment, are used in the scriptures.

“ *Everlasting*, as connected with the future
 “ punishment of *men*, (you say) is used only *five*
 “ times in the old and new testament; and yet
 “ this same word is used in the scriptures at least
 “ *ninety* times, very generally indeed in relation
 “ to things that either have ended, or must
 “ end.”—You proceed, “ As to the word *eternal*,
 “ which is of the same meaning, it is used in the
 “ text and margin upwards of *forty* times in
 “ the whole bible; out of which there are only
 “ *two* which can be supposed to relate to future
 “ punishment.”* You should have proceeded a
 little farther, sir, and have told us how often
 the terms *ever*, *for ever*, and *for ever and ever*,
 are applied to this subject; as the distinction
 between them and the words *everlasting* and
eternal, is chiefly English, and as you have
 allowed that it is from the use of the one, as
 well as the other, that I suppose the scriptures
 must “ appear” to teach the doctrine of end-
 less punishment. As a candid reasoner, you
 should also have forbore to mention Jude 6.

* *Univ. Mis.* No. xxxv. p. 328.

with a view to diminish the number of testimonies; as it is not to the endless punishment of *men* only that you object. By these means, your number would at least have extended to *eleven*, instead of seven.

But passing this, I shall offer a few observations on your reasoning.—First: If the term *everlasting* be applied to future punishment five or six times out of ninety, in which it is used in the scriptures, this may be as large a proportion as the subject requires. It is applied in the scriptures to more than twenty different subjects; so that to be applied five or six times to one, is full as frequent a use of it as ought to be expected.

Secondly: If the application of the term *everlasting* to future punishment, only five or six times, discredit the very *appearance* of its being endless, the same or nearly the same may be said of *the existence of God*, to which it is applied not much more frequently. You might go over a great part of the sacred writings on this subject, as you do on the other, telling us that not only many of the old-testament writers make no use of it, but a large proportion of the New; that Matthew never applies the word to this subject, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John; that it is not so applied in the Acts of the apostles; and though Paul once uses it

in his epistle to the Romans, yet he closes that and all his other epistles without *so* using it again; that James did not use it, nor Peter, nor John, either in his three Epistles, or in the Apocalypse. And when you had thus established your point, you might ask, with an air of triumph, "Is this a proof that the scriptures *appear* to teach" the eternal existence of God? Truly, sir, I am ashamed to refute such trifling; yet if I were not, your readers might be told, that doubtless I had "cogent reasons" for my silence.

Thirdly: If any conclusion can be drawn from the number of times in which a term is used in the scriptures, that number should be ascertained from the languages in which they were written, and not from a translation, which on such a subject proves nothing; but if this had been done, as it certainly ought, by a writer of your pretensions, we should have heard nothing of number *two*, nor of number *five*.

Fourthly: You tell us not only that "the word everlasting is used very generally indeed in relation to things that either have ended, or must end," but that the word which is so rendered, was by the Old Testament writers "most generally" so applied.* By "the word which we render everlasting," I suppose you

* *Univ. Mis.* No. xxxv. pp. 328, 329.

mean עולם, though there are other words, as well as this, which are rendered everlasting, and this word is not always so rendered. I have carefully examined it by a Hebrew concordance, and, according to the best of my judgment, noticed, as I went along, when it is applied to limited, and when to unlimited duration; and I find that, though it is *frequently* used to express the former, yet it is *more frequently*, even in the Old Testament, applied to the latter. I do not alledge this fact as being of any consequence to the argument; for if it had been on the other side, it would have proved nothing. It would not have been at all surprising, if, in a book wherein so little is revealed concerning a future state, the word should have been used *much more* frequently in a figurative, than in a proper sense: but as far as I am able to judge, the fact is otherwise.

In looking over the various passages in which the word occurs, I perceive that in many of those instances which I noted as examples of the limited use of it, the limitation is such as arises necessarily from the kind of duration, or state of being, which is spoken of. When Hannah devoted her child Samuel to the Lord *for ever*, there was no limitation in her mind; she did not intend that he should *ever* return to a private life. Thus also, when it is said of

a servant whose ear was bored in his master's house, he shall serve him *for ever*, the meaning is, that he should never go out free. And when Jonah lamented that the earth with her bars was about him *for ever*, the term is not expressive of what it actually *proved*, namely, a three-days imprisonment, as you unaccountably construe it;* but of what it was *in his apprehensions*, which were, that he was cut off from the land of the living, and should *never* more see the light.

So far as my observations extend, the word, whenever applied to a *future state*, is to be taken in the endless sense; and this you yourself will allow, *except in those passages which relate to future punishment*. You therefore plead for a meaning to the term, in relation to this subject, which has nothing parallel in the scriptures to support it.

In the new testament, the future state is a frequent topic with the sacred writers; and there; as might be expected, the terms rendered *everlasting*, *eternal*, *for ever*, &c. are generally applied in the endless sense. Of this you seem to be aware; and therefore, after asserting that, by old testament writers, the term rendered everlasting was "most generally" applied otherwise, you only add concerning new testament

* *Univ. Mis.* No. i. p. 6.

writers, that they “use it but a few times in relation to future punishment;” a remark, as we have already seen, of but very little account. If a particular term should be applied to one subject only five or six times, it does not follow that the evidence is scanty. There may be other terms equally expressive of the same thing; and the foregoing letter, it is presumed, has given proof that this is the case in the present instance. And if there were no other terms to convey the sentiment, five or six solemn affirmations on any one subject ought to be reckoned sufficient, and more than sufficient to command our assent; and if so, surely they may be allowed to justify the assertion, that the scriptures *appear*, at least, to teach the doctrine of everlasting punishment.

In answering what I considered as a misconstruction of a passage of scripture, (Rev. xiv. 19.) I suggested that the phrase, *day and night*, was not expressive of a successive or terminable duration, but a figurative mode of speech, denoting *perpetuity*. “It follows then, (say you) that your best ground for believing that there is no successive duration after the end of this world, is only a figurative expression or two.”* Did ever a writer draw such an inference! What I alleged was not for the pur-

* *Univ. Mis.* No. xxxv. p. 329.

pose of proving endless punishment, but merely to correct what I considered as a misinterpretation of a passage of scripture. If this be your method of drawing consequences, we need not be surpris'd at your inferring the doctrine of universal salvation from the holy scriptures.

I thought that you, as well as myself, had better not have attempted to criticize on hebrew and greek terms. You think otherwise. Very well: we have a right then to expect the more at your hands. Yet, methinks, you should have been contented to meet an opponent, who never professed to have a competent acquaintance with either of those languages, on his own ground: or if not, you should either have assumed a little less consequence, or have supported your pretensions with a little better evidence. To be sure it was very kind in you to inform me, that though *αιων* and *αιωνες* agree, in some respects, with the english words *eternity* and *eternal*, yet they will not always bear to be rendered by these terms. I ought equally to thank you, no doubt, for teaching me, and that repeatedly, that “as for the word *eternal*, it is the same in the original which is translated everlasting.”* Seriously, May not a person, without pretending to be qualified for greek criticisms, understand so much of the meaning

* No. i. p. 7. No. xxxv. p. 238.

of words as to stand in no need of the foregoing information? Nay more: Is it not possible for him to know that the greek words *αιων* and *αιωνι* will not always bear to be rendered by the English words *eternity*, *everlasting*, or *eternal*; and yet perceive no evidence that the one are *less expressive of endless duration than the other*?

This, if it must be so called, was my "hypothesis." To overturn it, you allege that the greek terms will "admit of a plural," and of the pronouns *this* and *that* before them, which the english will not.* So far as this is the case, it may prove that there is *some difference* between them; but not that this difference consists in the one being *less expressive of endless duration than the other*. Words in english, that are properly expressive of endless duration, may not ordinarily admit of a plural; and if this were universally the case, it would not follow that it is the same in greek. Nor is it so: for the idea of endless duration is frequently conveyed by these very plural forms of expression. Thus in Ephes. iii. 11. *κατα προθεσιν των αιωνων*; *according to his eternal purpose*. So also in 1 Tim. i. 17. *τω δε βασιλει των αιωνων, αφθαρτω, αρατω, μονω σοφω θεω, τιμη και δοξα εις τες αιωνας των αιωνων*. *Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever*. Ren-

* *Univ. Mis.* No. xxxv. pp. 332. 333.

der these passages how you will, you cannot do them justice unless you express the idea of unlimited duration. And though the english terms may not admit of what is termed a plural form, yet they admit of what is equal to it: for though we do not say *everlastings*, nor *eternities*, yet we say *for ever and ever*; and you might as well contend, that *for ever* cannot properly mean unlimited duration, seeing another *ever* may be added to it, as that $\alpha\iota\omega\nu$ must needs mean a limited duration, on account of its admitting a plural form of expression. You might also, with equal propriety, plead for a plurality of *evers* in futurity, from the english phraseology, as for a plurality of *ages* from the greek.

With respect to the admission of the pronouns *this* and *that*, we use the expressions *this* eternity of blifs, or *that* eternity of blifs; nor does such language, being applied to a state of existence, express the idea of limitation. The very passage that you have quoted, (Luke xx. 35.) where $\alpha\iota\omega\nu$ is rendered *world*, and admits of the pronoun *that* before it, refers to a state which you yourself, I should suppose, would allow to be endless.

For any thing you have hitherto alleged, the greek words $\alpha\iota\omega\nu$ and $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\textcircled{C}$ are no less expressive of endless duration, than the english words *everlasting* and *eternal*: the latter, when

applied to temporary concerns, are used in a figurative or improper sense, as frequently as the former. And if this be a truth, it must follow, that *the continual recurrence to them by your writers, is no better than a sing-song; a mere affectation of learning, serving to mislead the ignorant.*

You make much of your *rule* of interpretation, that “Where a word is used in relation to different things, the subject itself must determine the meaning of the word.” (p. 333.) You are so confident that this rule is unobjectionable as to intimate your belief, that I “shall not a second time have the temerity to reprove you for the use of it.” If you examine, you will perceive that I have not objected to it a first time yet, but rather to your manner of applying it. I shall take the liberty, however, to object to it now, whatever “temerity” it may imply. I know not who those “best critics” are, from whom you profess to have taken it, but to me it appears disrespectful to the scriptures, and inadmissible. It supposes that all those words which are used in relation to different things, (which, by the way, almost all words are) have no proper meaning of their own, and that they are to stand for nothing in the decision of any question; but are to mean any thing that the subject to which they relate can be proved

to mean without them. Had you said, that the subject, including the scope of the writer, must commonly determine whether a word should be taken in a literal, or in a figurative sense, that had been allowing it to have a proper meaning *of its own*; and to this I should have no objection; but to allow no meaning to a term, except what shall be imparted to it by the subject, is to reduce it to a cypher.

But exceptionable as your rule of interpretation is in itself, it is rendered much more so by your manner of applying it. If under the term "subject" you had included the scope and design of the writer, it had been so far good; but by this term you appear all along to mean, *the doctrine of future punishment abstractedly considered from what the scriptures teach concerning it*; at least from what they teach by the terms which professedly denote its duration. You require that "there be something in the nature of future punishment which necessarily leads us to receive the word $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota$ in an endless sense; in which case, (as you very properly add) it is not the *word*, but the *subject* which gives the idea of endless duration."* What is this but saying, We are to make up our minds on the duration of future punishment from the nature and fitness of things: and having done this, we are

to understand the scripture terms which are designed to express that duration, accordingly? But if we can settle this business without the aid of those scripture terms, why do we trouble them; and what is the meaning of all your criticisms upon them? If they are so “weak, from their vague and indeterminate application in scripture,” that nothing certain can be gathered from them, why not let them alone? It should seem as though all your critical labour upon these terms was for the sake of imposing silence upon them.

I do not know that endless punishment can be proved from the nature of things; but neither can it be disproved. Our ideas of moral government, and of the influence of sin upon it, are too contracted to form a judgment *a priori* upon the subject. It becomes us to listen with humility and holy awe to what is revealed in the oracles of truth, and to form our judgment by it. When I suggested, that “the nature of the subject determined that the term everlasting, when applied to future punishment, was to be taken in the endless sense,” I intended no more than that such is the sense in which it is used when applied to a future state.

By your rule of interpretation, I have the “temerity” to say again, you might *disprove almost any thing you please*. I observed before, that if one should attempt to prove the divinity

of the Son of God, or even of the Father, from his being called *Jehovah*, your mode of reasoning would render all such evidence of no account; because the same appellation is sometimes given to an altar, &c. You reply by insisting, that you interpret this term by the *subject*. But if you interpret it as you do the term $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\iota\varsigma$, it is not the name *Jehovah* that forms any part of the ground of your conclusion. You do not, on this principle, believe God to be self-existent from his being called *Jehovah*; but that the name *Jehovah* means self-existent, because it is applied to God, whom, from other considerations, you know to be a self-existent being. If Christ were called *Jehovah* a thousand times, you could not, *on this account*, believe him to be the true God, according to your principle; because the same word, being applied to other things, its meaning can only be determined by the *subject*; and in this case, as you say, it is not the word but the *subject* that gives the idea.

The rule adopted in my last letter allows a proper meaning to every scripture term, and does not attempt to set it aside in favour of one that is improper or figurative, unless *the scope of the passage or the nature of the subject require it*. This is a very different thing from *not admitting it, unless the subject, from its*

own nature, render it absolutely necessary. The one is treating the proper meaning of a scripture word with respect, not dispensing with it, but upon urgent necessity: the other is treating it with indignity, refusing it admission, except where it cannot be denied.

You refer me to Hab. iii. 6. as a parallel passage with Mat. xxv. 46. in which the same word is used in the same text in a different sense.* But these passages are not parallel: for there is no such antithesis in the one as in the other. It has been thought, and I apprehend is capable of being proved, that the everlasting ways or paths of God, denote those very goings forth by which he scattered the mountains, and caused the hills to bow; and that the term everlasting, in both instances, is expressive of merely limited duration. But admitting that the everlasting hills are opposed to the everlasting ways of God, or that the one were only *lasting*, and the other properly *everlasting*; still the antithesis in this case naturally directs us so to expound them; whereas in Matt. xxv. 46. it directs us to the contrary. If there be an opposition of meaning in the one case, it lies in the very term *everlasting*; or between the duration of the hills and that of the divine ways: but the opposition in the other is between *life* and *punish-*

* U. M. No. xxxv. p. 331.

ment, and the adjective everlasting, is applied in common to both; which, instead of requiring a different sense to be given to it, requires the contrary. The words recorded by Matthew are parallel to those in John v. 29. *Some shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation*; and we might as rationally contend for a different meaning to the term "resurrection" in the one case, as to the term "everlasting" in the other.

But besides all this, by your manner of quoting the passage, you would induce one to suppose that you had taken it merely from the *english translation*, which, in a man of your pretensions, would be hardly excusable; for though the same word be twice used in the passage, yet it is not in those places which you have marked as being so: the instances which you have pointed out as being the same word, are not the same, except in the *english translation*.

It was asked, Whether stronger terms could have been used concerning the duration of future punishment than those that are used? You answer, "The question ought not to be what language God could have used, but what is the meaning of that which he has used?"* I should have thought it had been one way of ascertaining the strength of the terms that are used, to enquire

* *U. M.* No. xxxv. p. 334.

whether they be equally strong with any which the language affords? Should this be the case, it must follow, that if they do not convey the idea of endless duration, it is not in the power of language, or, at least, of that language, to convey it.

You suggest a few examples, however, which in your apprehension would have been stronger, and which, if it had been the design of the Holy Spirit to teach the doctrine of endless punishment, might have been used for the purpose. "I refer you (say you) to Heb. vii. 16. "*ακαταλυτος, endless*, say our translators. The "word (you add) is never connected in scripture "with punishment, and but this once only with "life; which however shews that the sacred writers speak of future life in a different way than "they do of punishment." (p. 334.) It is true, the term *ακαταλυτος*, is here applied to *life*; but not, as you insinuate, to that life of future happiness which is opposed to punishment. The life here spoken of is that which pertains to our Lord's priesthood, which is opposed to that of Aaron, wherein men *were not suffered to continue by reason of death*. The word signifies *indissoluble*; and being applied to the nature of a priesthood which death could not *dissolve*, is very properly rendered *endless*. It possibly

might be applied to the endless happiness of good men, as opposed to the *dissoluble* or transitory enjoyments of the present state; but as to the punishment of the wicked, supposing it to be endless, I question whether it be at all applicable to it. I can form no idea how the term *indissoluble*, any more than *incorruptible*, can apply to punishment. The word καταλυω, *to unloose or dissolve*, it is true, is said to refer to travellers *loosing* their own burdens, or those of their beasts, when they rested by the way: but there are no examples of its being used with reference to the termination of punishment; nor does it appear to be applicable to it. In its most common acceptation in the new testament, it signifies *to destroy or demolish*; and you will scarcely suppose the sacred writers to suggest the idea of a *destruction which cannot be destroyed*.

You offer a second example, referring me to Isai. xlv. 17. *Israel shall not be confounded, world without end:** but this is farther off still.—In the first place, The phrase is *merely English*, and therefore affords no example of “Greek,” for which it is professedly introduced.—Secondly, It is not a translation from the Greek, but from the Hebrew. To have done any thing to purpose, you should have found a Greek word which might have been applied to punishment,

* U. M. No. xxxv. p. 334.

stronger than αἰώνιος: or if you must needs go to another language, you should have proved that the Hebrew words in Isai. xlv. 17. which are applied to future happiness, are stronger than the Greek word αἰώνιος, which is applied to future punishment: but if you had attempted this, your criticisms might not have perfectly accorded, as they are the same words which you elsewhere tell us, would if “literally rendered, be *age* and *ages*;”* and therefore are properly expressive of only a limited duration. And why did you refer us to the *Old Testament*? It could not be for the want of an example to be found in the *New*. You know, I dare say, that the english phrase, *world without end*, occurs in Ephes. iii. 21. And are the Greek words there used stronger than αἰών, and its derivatives? On the contrary, they are the very words made use of, and in a plural form too; εἰς πάσας τὰς γενέας τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰῶνων, *throughout all ages, world without end*. Had these very terms been applied to future punishment, you would have pleaded for a different translation, and denied that they were expressive of endless duration.

Without pretending to any thing like a critical knowledge of either the Greek or Hebrew language, I can perceive, Sir, that all your

* *U. M.* No. xxxvi. p. 364.

arguments have hitherto been merely founded upon *English phraseology*; and from your translating $\epsilon\gamma$ and $\epsilon\beta\gamma$ *age and ages*,* as though one were the singular, and the other the plural; and $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\alpha\varsigma$ $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\omega\nu$ *to the age of ages*, as though one here also were the singular, and the other the plural; as well as from your reference to $\alpha\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ as a proper term to be applied to endless punishment, I am furnished with but little inducement to retract my opinion, that you had better not have meddled with these subjects.

Kettering,

Yours, &c.

Mar. 17. 1800.

A. F.

LETTER VII.

AN EXAMINATION OF MR. V.'S SYSTEM, AND HIS
ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF IT.

Sir,

I HAVE certainly to beg your pardon for having misunderstood you with respect to the doctrine of *annihilation*. I did not observe how you opposed the idea of endless punishment on the one hand, and annihilation on the other. In this matter I submit to your correction, and readily acquit you of all those absurdities which would have followed the admission of *that* principle. Other parts of that letter, however, you

* *U. M.* No. xxxvi. p. 364.

have but lightly touched ; and some of them are entirely passed over.

As to your conjectures about my *motives*, both you and your friends might have been as well employed in something else. I can truly say, that I never wrote a line in my life with a view to “raise a dust” that might obscure the truth; and it is difficult to suppose that any person, unless he himself had been in the habit of doing so, would have thought of imputing it to another.

It is my desire to understand you, and not to wrest any of your words to a meaning which they do not fairly include. I have endeavoured to collect your sentiments as well as I am able. The amount of your first maxim, in p. 330, appears to me to be this:—‘ That if God created
‘ men, and placed them in circumstances which
‘ he certainly foreknew would issue in their
‘ fall and ruin, he willed this their fall and
‘ ruin; and that it is of no importance that he
‘ forewarned them to avoid the evil: whatever
‘ be the event, he is chargeable with it. But
‘ God (you say) hath sworn by himself, that he
‘ willeth not the death of him who dieth; that
‘ is, he willeth it not as death finally or simply,
‘ or destruction irrecoverable. If, therefore,
‘ it occur, it is a part of his economy of grace,
‘ and finally a ministration unto life; for he

‘ hath declared that it is his will that all should
 ‘ be saved: therefore the doctrine which forges
 ‘ any contrary will, falsifies supreme unchange-
 ‘ able truth.’

Thus it seems you reckon, that you acquit your Creator of injustice, which must otherwise attach to his character and conduct. Let us examine this matter. It is true, that whatever exists must, in some sense, accord with the will of God. Let the blasphemer make what use he may of it, it may be asked, Who hath resisted his will? God willeth not evil, however, as evil, but permits its existence for wise ends. The good that shall arise from it, and not the evil, is the proper object of divine volition. But it is not true, That God is on this account chargeable with man’s sin; that all his cautions and warnings are of no account; and that he is to be “accused” of the death of the sinner, if he die eternally. If it be, however, it is not the doctrine of universal salvation that will free him from the charge.

I am surpris’d, sir, that you could allow yourself in this manner to reproach your Maker. You cannot allege all these things as merely attaching to my system. It is a fact—is it not?—That God did place man in circumstances which he certainly foreknew would issue in his fall; and that he did, notwithstanding, caution

and warn him against apostasy, and still continues to caution and warn sinners against those very sins which he certainly foreknows they will commit: Who then is this that dares to arraign his conduct, and to accuse him of insincerity? Who, that at one stroke, aims to sweep away the accountableness of his creatures; and to charge him with the evil of their sin, on account of his having placed them in such circumstances?

If it be as you insinuate, it must follow, That man is not blame-worthy in all his rebellion against his Maker, nor justly accountable for any of its consequences. Whether those consequences be *eternal*, makes nothing to the argument. Sin, and all the evils which follow upon it, are, by you transferred from the sinner to the account of his Creator! State your supposition with reference to your own principle—‘Suppose him about to create twenty
 ‘ men. He knows ten of them will become
 ‘ vicious, and consequently exposed to the tremendous penalty of damnation *for ages of*
 ‘ *ages*. Who doubts, in such a case, that he
 ‘ wills that penalty, who, being almighty and
 ‘ all-knowing, does that, without which it could
 ‘ not come to pass; and who will not accuse
 ‘ him of their damnation—having sent them
 ‘ into such circumstances!’ Thus, sir, you un-

dermine the justice of *all* punishment, present and future, and every principle of moral government.

Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. Yes, says Mr. Vidler, it is he, who, “knowing all events, and placing us “in such circumstances as he does, that is accountable! And it is of no importance in “the consideration of common sense, that he “cautions or forewarns us against the evil.”

If what you have suggested be true, it must also follow, that there is no need of a mediator, or of forgiving mercy. Where there is no blame, it is an insult to talk of forgiveness, or of the need of a mediator to effect a reconciliation. All that is necessary to recover man is justice. If the Creator only be accountable for the evil, it belongs to him to remedy it. Thus, instead of supporting the doctrine of universal salvation, you undermine all salvation at the very foundation.

Think not that you shall be able to roll away this reproach, which you have had the temerity to charge on your Creator, by suggesting that all the evil which follows will be ultimately a benefit; for still it follows that man has not been blame-worthy in sinning against God; that God has never been sincere in his cautions and warnings; and that, being accountable for the whole, it is but justice to man that he turn all

to his ultimate advantage, as a recompense for present injury. “ He sent his children into
 “ the wood, it seems, where he knew the poi-
 “ sonous fruit abounded; and though he warned
 “ them against it, yet he was not in earnest;
 “ and when they had eaten, to the endangering
 “ of their lives, he counteracted the poison;
 “ but was conscious, at the same time, that if
 “ there were any fault in the affair, it was his own;
 “ and if the children were to perish, he would
 “ be justly accused of their death.” And can
 you, sir, with these sentiments, continue to dis-
 avow your *invalidating the divine threatenings*
towards sinners; and concurring with him who
 taught our first parents, “ Ye shall not surely
 die?” What better exposition could the deceiver
 of mankind have wished for, than what your
 words afford! *Ye shall not surely die*; “ viz.
 finally, or simply, or with destruction irrecover-
 able.” *For God doth know, that in the day ye*
eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened. “ If
 “ death occur, it is a part of his economy of
 “ grace, and finally a ministration unto life.”
 That is, it shall prove a benefit.

“ God hath sworn that he willeth not the
 “ death of him that dieth. That is, he willeth it
 “ not as death finally, or simply, or destruction
 “ irrecoverable.” Death simply and finally,
 then, means irrecoverable destruction; Does it?

But if it does so in this passage, it may in others; and then the threatenings of death, provided they were put in execution, may mean eternal damnation. Yea, if death in this passage mean irrecoverable destruction, it will follow that some are irrecoverably destroyed: for the death in which God taketh no pleasure, whatever it be, the sinner is supposed to suffer—He hath no pleasure in the death of *him that dieth*. God taketh no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, in the same sense as *he doth not afflict willingly*, nor grieve the children of men. It does not mean that he doth *not afflict them*; for this is contrary to fact; but he doth not afflict for affliction sake, or for any pleasure that he takes in putting his creatures to pain. In all his dealings with sinners, he acts like a good magistrate, who never punishes from caprice, but for a good end; in many cases for the correction of the party, and in all for the good of the community.

To your second maxim I have no objection—
 “ That whatever God does is intended by his
 “ goodness, conducted by his wisdom, and ac-
 “ complished by his power.” But your appli-
 cation of it is inadmissible. Some parts of it are trifling, others rest on unfounded assumptions, and others are adapted to overthrow all future punishment.

First: The greater part of it is *mere trifling*.—Whoever supposed that eternal punishment, or any punishment, was a *benefit* to God; or even a *pleasure* to him, or any holy beings, for its own sake? Or who pretends that it is inflicted for the *honour; pleasure, or benefit* of the sinner?

Secondly: Some parts of it which object to endless punishment, because it cannot be for the *honour* of God, or the *benefit* of creatures, proceeds altogether upon *unfounded assumptions*.—The only proof you have offered for the *first* branch of this position is naked assertion; “That every “unsophisticated heart would so determine.” Suppose I say, every unsophisticated heart would determine the contrary, my assertion would prove us much as yours; and I may add, if *our* hearts be sophisticated it must be by malignity, or the wish of having our fellow creatures miserable, which I imagine you will not generally impute to us. But if *your* hearts be sophisticated, it is much more easily accounted for. The decision of sinful creatures in such a case as this, is like that of a company of criminals who should sit in judgment on the nature of the penalties to which they are exposed, whose prejudices are much more likely to cause them to err on the favourable than on the unfavourable side.—The *second* branch of this position is as unsupported as the first. Only one reason is alleged, and

that is far from being an acknowledged truth; viz. That no possible good can arise to society from the punishment of sinners, but that of *safety*. Common sense and universal experience teach us that this is not the only end of punishment. Israel might have been safe, if Pharaoh and his host had not been drowned; yet they were drowned. Was *safety* the only end answered to the world by the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha; or were they not rather *set forth for an example*? Is it only for the *safety* of society that a murderer is publicly executed? That end would be equally answered by perpetual imprisonment, or banishment, or a *private* execution; but there would be wanting an *example* to express the displeasure of a good government against crimes, and to impress the public mind with it.

Thirdly: Most of what you say on this subject, if admitted, would overturn *all* future punishment.—You might ask, Would it be honourable to God to have any of his creatures miserable *for ages of ages*, rather than happy? Would it be a greater *pleasure*? *Benefit* he can have none; for there is no profit in their blood.—As to the punished, future punishment can be neither honour nor pleasure to them: and if their salvation could be accomplished without it, it cannot be any benefit to them. If they

may not be saved without it, it must be either because there was not efficacy enough in the blood of Christ for the purpose; or else that “the full efficacy of the atonement was withheld by the divine determination.”—As to *fellow creatures*, can the future punishment of any of the human race be any honour to them? Who ever thought it an honour to him, that any of his family were punished in any way? Is it not a dishonour to human nature at large to be sent to hell? Can any creature have *pleasure* in the punishment of another? Would not every benevolent mind possess a greater pleasure in seeing sinners converted and saved, without going to hell; than to see them condemned to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, *for ages of ages*? Benefit they can have none, except *safety*; and that is better answered by their enmity being conquered in the present life. As then future torments can answer no possible good end to any one in the universe, I conclude them to be neither the work nor will of God; and consequently, not the doctrine of scripture!

You “think there is a vast difference indeed in the nature of future blessedness, and future punishment; such as fully to justify us in giving a very different sense to the word eternal, when applied to these subjects.” (p. 331.) It may be so; but your thoughts

prove nothing. "Sin and misery (you say) have no root or foundation in God;" and therefore must come to an end. Awhile ago they seemed to have their sole root in him, so much so as to exclude the accountableness of creatures: but allowing they have not, this inference is a mere creature of the imagination. Reduce your argument to form, and see what it will amount to:—

Whatever has its root in the creature must come to an end:

But sin and misery have their root in the creature:

Therefore sin and misery must come to an end.

Now what proof, I ask, have you for your major proposition? None at all. It is an argument, therefore, without any medium of proof, founded upon mere imagination. Another with equal plausibility might imagine, that as sin and misery had their origin in the present state, they will also terminate in the present state; and consequently, that there will be no future punishment. And another might imagine, that as the acts of human beings are performed within a few years, the effects of them upon society cannot extend much farther; and consequently, it is absurd to suppose that a whole nation still feels the consequence of what was

transacted in a few hours at Jerufalem, nearly 1800 years ago; and a whole world of what was wrought, perhaps, in lefs time in the garden of Eden. In fhort, there are no bounds to the imagination, and will be no end to its abfurdities, if it go on in this direktion. If inftead of taking our religion from the bible, we labour to form a fystem from our own ideas of fitnefs and unfitness, and interpret the bible accordingly, there will be no end of our wanderings.

Because all judgment is committed to the Son, you conclude that future punifhment has its origin in mercy, and will end in eternal falvation. To this I anfwer, firft: If it be owing to the mediation of Chrift that punifhment fhould be a work of mercy, this is allowing, that, if no mediator had been provided, it muft have been the reverfe. But if fo, all your arguments againft eternal punifhment from the divine perfeftions, and all your attempts to maintain that the original meaning of the divine threatenings never included this idea, are given up.—Secondly: If whatfoever is done by Chrift in his mediatorial capacity fhall terminate, on his delivering up the kingdom to the Father; the rewards of the righteous, as well as the punifhments of the wicked, muft at that period come to an end: for he will equally confer the one, as inflict the other. The “ execution of

judgment" committed to the Son, denotes not merely the carrying into execution the sentence at the last day, but the general administration of God's moral government, both in this world and that which is to come. See Jer. xxiii. 5. xxxiii. 15. Matt. xii. 18—20.

You talk of our "ascribing a proper eternity to sin and misery," as if we considered sin and misery to be necessarily eternal. The existence of intelligent creatures is no more eternal than their moral qualities or sensations; and therefore it would be improper to ascribe eternity either to the one or the other: but if God perpetuates the existence of intelligent beings to an endless duration, he may also perpetuate their moral qualities to the same extent; whether they originated with their existence, or were acquired at any subsequent period. Holiness and happiness, in respect to creatures, are not necessarily eternal, any more than sin and misery; and in this view it would be as improper to ascribe eternity to the purity and blessedness of the saved, as to the sin and misery of the lost, seeing that the endless duration of both depends upon the will of God. You speak of the "life and blessedness of holy beings as having their root and foundation in God; and that, being thus grounded in him, they will be, like him, eternal in duration." But this position is contrary to fact; for was not "God the source and

“ proper spring both of the life and blessedness” of the unfinning angels? Yet they *kept not their first estate*, but lost their blessedness, and are reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. The life and blessedness of man in a state of innocence had their origin in God, as well as those of saints and angels; yet they were not on this account like their author, “ eternal in duration.” To make such an assertion is, “ to say the least of it, an “ unguarded mode of expression:” but more than this, it is contrary to fact; and tends to lessen the dependance of creatures upon God as the constant author of all their happiness. The argument to prove that sin and misery cannot be eternal, is the counterpart of the above position, and of course it is equally fallacious.

“ Sin and misery being contrary to the “ holiness and benevolence of God, they must “ (it seems) come to an end.” Such an assertion is soon made; but where is the proof? A little more assurance might lead another to say, that sin and misery, being contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, they cannot *exist* in a future state: and were it not for the awful evidence of facts, another might assert, that sin and misery do not *now* exist; for in theory it would be as easy to prove, that the present existence of sin and misery is as contrary to the

holiness and benevolence of God, as their existence in future; and that their existence in future *for ages of ages*, is as contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, as their existence to an endless duration. By such kind of reasoning some men have become atheists, because they cannot reconcile the present state of things with their ideas of a superintending power, possessed of infinite holiness and benevolence; and I cannot but tremble for the man who begins to travel in this unwary path, by measuring the divine administration by his own unhal- lowed notions of moral fitness.

If your attempts to prove that all judgment is a work of mercy, and yet that there may be *judgment without mercy*, should prove fruitless, it is no more than may be expected; for the thing itself is a contradiction. “The scriptures
 “ afford instances of punishment and pardon
 “ to the same persons, and for the same sins:”* but was this punishment *without mercy*? “Judg-
 “ ment and mercy were united in God’s dealings
 “ with Jerufalem.”† Granted; but for this very reason it could not be *judgment without mercy*. You might as well allege the union of wisdom and righteousness in all the works of God, as a proof that there are some works in which wisdom will be exercised without righteousness!

* U. M. p. 337.

† p. 338.

In another letter, sir, I hope to conclude these remarks. Meanwhile I am,

Your's, &c.

A. F.

LETTER VIII.

A FARTHER EXAMINATION OF MR. V.'S SCHEME, WITH
REPLIES TO HIS ANIMADVERSIONS.

Sir,

I DO not know whether I fully understand your remarks on *proper eternity*. (p. 364.) It is certainly one of those ideas in which the human mind is easily lost, as it infinitely surpasses our comprehension: but whether “the scriptures have revealed any thing past or to come, besides what is connected with successive duration,” and whether we be “left to infer a *proper eternity* only from the nature of Deity,” are other questions. You will allow that the scriptures *attribute* a proper eternity to the Divine Being, and to his all-comprehending purposes, which I should think is not leaving us to *infer* it from his nature. They speak also of a period when *God shall be all in all*, when the *end* cometh, and of the *end of all things* being at hand. They likewise promise an inheritance that shall be *without end*. I should think, therefore, that this inheritance, of which the new testament speaks very fully,

cannot be said to be connected with successive duration; not so connected, however, as to be commensurate with it.

By successive duration being ended, I meant no more than what I apprehended you must mean by the cessation of *day and night*, (No. i. p. 8.) and the state of things when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father. Strictly speaking, it may be true that the idea of successive duration necessarily attaches, and ever will attach, to the existence of creatures, and that none but God can be said to exist without it: but there is a period, by your own acknowledgment, when the states of creatures will be forever fixed; and if at this period, sinners be doomed to everlasting punishment, the term everlasting must be understood to mean endless duration. This period I conceive to be at the last judgment: you extend it to ages beyond it. Here, therefore, is our difference. I did not allege Rev. x. 6. in favour of there being an end of time. I did not apprehend it needed proof. Your formal answer to it, therefore, is only removing an objection of your own creating; and if designed to prove that time will have no end, it is as contrary to your own avowed principles, as to mine.

You contend, that “the day of judgment is not the finishing period of Christ’s kingdom;”

for which you offer a number of reasons. To the greater part of them I have already replied. The rest I shall briefly consider:—

“ This earth (which is to be the hell of wicked men, 2 Pet. iii. 7—13) is to be renewed, whereby hell itself will be no more.”* If this gloss will bear the test, you have certainly for once hit upon a clear proof of your point; for none can imagine the conflagration to be eternal. But, first: The scriptures speak of a hell *already existing*, wherein the angels who kept not their first estate are *reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*; and in which the departed spirits of wicked men *lift up their eyes, being in torment*; and intimate that this, whatsoever and wherever it be, will be the hell of ungodly men: for they are doomed to depart into everlasting fire, *prepared for the devil and his angels*. But this cannot be upon earth, as its present condition does not admit of it.

Secondly: If the earth, as being dissolved by fire, is to be the hell of ungodly men, their punishment must *preccede* the day of judgment, instead of following it: for the conflagration is uniformly represented as prior to that event. It is described, not as your scheme supposes, as

* U. M. No. xxxvi. p. 365.

taking place a thousand years after Christ's second coming; but as attending it. *The day of the Lord's coming, is the same as the day of God, which christians look for and hasten to; WHEREIN the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved—Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him; and all this previous to his giving orders for his saints to be gathered unto him.* And thus we are taught by the apostle Paul, that *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven IN FLAMING FIRE.**

Thirdly: I appeal to the judgment of the impartial reader, whether, by the *perdition* of ungodly men, be not meant the destruction of their *lives*, and not of their *souls*? It is spoken of in connexion with the deluge, and intimated that as the ungodly were then destroyed from the face of the earth by water, in like manner they should now be destroyed by fire.

You plead the promise, that "every knee shall bow to Christ," and consider this as inconsistent with a "stubborn knee even in hell." But the question is, Whether the bowing of the knee to Christ be necessarily expressive of a *voluntary* and *holy* submission to him? The same inspired writer applies the language to that universal conviction which

* 2 Pet. iii. 7, 12, 13. Psalm l. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

shall be produced at the last judgment, when every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. *We shall all stand (saith he) before the judgment seat of Christ: for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.** But you will not pretend that every knee will in that day bow to Christ in a way of voluntary submission.

“ All things (you allege) are to be reconciled to the Father by the blood of the cross: “ but while any continue in enmity against “ God, this can never be performed.” (p. 364.) You refer, I suppose, to Col. i. 19. 20. But if the reconciliation of things in earth, and things in heaven, denote the salvation of all the inhabitants of heaven and earth, it would follow: (1.) That the holy angels are *saved*, as well as the unholy, though in fact they never sinned. (2.) That when the apostle adds, *And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*, he deals in unmeaning tautology. Things in heaven, and things in earth, were at variance through sin. Men becoming the enemies of God, all his faithful subjects, and all the works of his hands, were at war with them; yea, they were at variance with each

* Rom. xiv. 10—12.

other. But through the blood of Christ, all things are reconciled; and under his headship, all made to subserve the present and everlasting good of them who believe in him. Such appears to me to be the meaning of the passage, and which involves neither of the foregoing absurdities.

“ Christ, (you add) is to rule till his enemies
 “ are *subdued*; till there be no authority, power,
 “ or dominion, but what shall be subservient to
 “ him; till death the last enemy shall be de-
 “ stroyed; and as the wages of sin is death, the
 “ second death must be here included.” (p. 365.)
 This language, which is taken from 1 Cor. xv. is manifestly used in reference to the resurrection of the bodies of those that sleep in Jesus, which is an event that precedes the last judgment: for WHEN *this corruptible shall have put on incorruption*—THEN *shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory*; which is the same thing as *the last enemy being destroyed*. And THEN *cometh the end*, the last judgment, and the winding up of all things, WHEN *he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and authority, and power.* (ver. 24, 25.) For you to interpret this language of things that are to *follow the last judgment*, and to say that it *must* include the second death,

proves nothing, but the dire necessity to which your system reduces you.

“ Finally: The character of God is LOVE—
“ which is expressly against the horrible idea
“ of the endless misery of any of his rational crea-
“ tures.” (p. 395.) So, sir, you are pleased to
assert. Another might from the same premises
infer, that the punishment of any of his rational
creatures in hell for ages of ages, where there
shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of
teeth, and this notwithstanding the death of
his Son, and the omnipotence of his grace,
which surely was able to have saved them from
it, is horrible and incredible! Is it inconsistent
with the benevolence of a supreme magistrate
that he dooms certain characters to death?
Rather, is it not an exercise of his benevolence?
Should a malefactor persuade himself and his
companions in guilt, that his majesty cannot
possibly consent to their execution, without
ceasing to be that lovely and good character for
which he has been famed, would not his reason-
ing be as false in itself as it was injurious to the
king? Nay; would it not be inimical to his
own interest, and that of his fellow criminals; as
by raising a delusive hope, they are prevented
from making a proper and timely application to
the throne for mercy?

Such are your reasons for successive duration, and final salvation after the last judgment; which, whether they ought to satisfy any other person, let the reader judge. I shall close with replies to a few of your animadversions.

Your misrepresentation of what I had advanced concerning the Jews as a distinct nation, I should hope needs no correction. If any of your readers can mistake what you have said, for a just statement of the views, or an answer to the argument of your opponent, they are beyond the reach of reasoning.

You inferred from what was God's end in punishing Israel *in the present life*, that (seeing he was an *immutable* Being) it must be the same in his punishing others in the life to come.* I answered, That I might as well infer from what appears to be his end in punishing Pharaoh and Sodom *in the present life*, which was not their good, but the good of others, that such will be the end of future punishment.† You reply, by *supposing* that these characters were destroyed for their good. (p. 367.) What, *in the present life*? No; but in the life to come! And do you call this reasoning?

You say, "If any be finally incorrigible, it must be in consequence of the divine purpose; or else the purpose of God has been

* *U. M.* No. ii. pp. 43, 44. † No. xxxiii. p. 262.

“frustrated.” I have in my last letter replied to the substance of this dilemma. I may add, you need be under no apprehension that I shall be tempted to give up the infrustrableness of the divine purpose; and if I admit that God in just judgment has purposed to give some men up to stumble, and fall, and perish, it is no more than the scriptures abundantly teach. You talk of “the LAST state of a creature according with “the divine purpose:” but I know of no evidence for this, which does not equally apply to every state. If you be tempted to ask, *Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?* You may possibly recollect that these questions have been asked before, and answered too; and it may be of use to you to study the answer.

Akin to this, is your dilemma, “That God “cannot, or will not, make an end of sin; “that there is not efficacy enough in the blood “of Christ to destroy the works of the devil; “or else that the full efficacy of the atonement “is withheld by the divine determination.” It has been already observed, and I hope proved, that the scripture phrases, *making an end of sin, &c.* convey no such idea as you attach to them. (p. 264.) And as to your dilemma, to which you ascribe great “weight,” I answer again, you need be under no apprehension of my limit-

ing the power of God, or the efficacy of the Saviour's blood; and if I say that both the one and the other are applied under the limitations of his own infinite wisdom, I say not only what the scriptures abundantly teach, but what you yourself must admit. Can you pretend that your scheme represents God as doing all he can do, and as bestowing all the mercy which the efficacy of the Saviour's blood hath rendered consistent? If so, you must believe that God cannot convert more than he actually does in the present life, and that the efficacy of the blood of Christ is not equal to the saving of more than a part of mankind from the second death.

You think that "the scripture is not silent concerning the future emendation of the ancient Sodomites;" and refer me to Ezek. xvi. 44—63; arguing, that "Sodom and her daughters must be taken literally for the city of Sodom, and the neighbouring cities of the plain—that the prophecy must refer to the very persons who were destroyed, seeing they left no descendants—and that there is the same reason to expect the restoration of Sodom, as the fulfilment of God's gracious promises towards Jerusaleem." (p. 368) But if your interpretation prove any thing, it will prove—I will not say, too much, but too little. It will prove, not that the ancient Sodomites will be saved from

“ the vengeance of eternal fire,” and introduced into the heavenly world; but barely that they are to return *to their former estate*. (ver. 55.) And do you seriously think, that *after the last judgment*, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah, of Samaria and Jerusalem, will be rebuilt, and repossessed by their ancient inhabitants? If so, it is time for me to lay down my pen.

The former part of the above passage, (ver. 46—59.) I apprehend to be no promise; but the language of keen reproof: and instead of intimating a return to either Sodom or Jerusalem, the latter is reasoned with on the footing of her own deserts, and told in effect not to expect it any more than the former.* The latter part (ver. 60—63.) contains the language of free mercy; not however towards the same individuals, against whom the threatenings are directed, but to their distant posterity, who under the gospel dispensation should be brought home to God; and by a new and better *covenant*, have the *gentiles* given to them. The conversion of the heathen is expressed by this kind of language more than once; as by *bringing again the captivity of Moab, of Elam, and of the children of Ammon in the latter days*. Jer. xlviii. 47. xlix. 6, 39.

* See a similar kind of phraseology in Jer. xxxiii. 19—26.

You “ have not discernment enough, it seems, to perceive the gross absurdity” of maintaining that there can be no diversity in future punishment, unless it be in duration; that is, that the reflections of sinners on their past life, must all be exactly the same. It may be so; but I cannot help it. Your answer amounts to this: Diversity of degrees in future punishment *may* be accounted for, by varying the duration of it; “ for every one knows there needs not so much “ time to inflict a hundred stripes, as to inflict “ ten times that number.” Therefore that *must* be the way, and the *only* way; and if you do not admit it, you “ confound all degrees of “ punishment, in giving infinite punishment to “ all.” (pp. 42, 264, 369.)

You believe, you say, that “ *those who die in their sins cannot go where Christ is.*” You must mean to say merely, that they *cannot follow him NOW, but shall follow him AFTERWARDS.* Such things, indeed, are said of Christ’s friends, but not of his enemies.

You have represented me as maintaining that all punishment clashes with the benevolence “ both of God and his people.” I have said no such thing concerning God; and if we were equally wise and righteous, and equally concerned to guard the interests of the universe, as he is, we should be in all respects of the same mind

with him. The misery which I suppose true benevolence to clash with, is misery inflicted for its own sake; and to this, whether it be temporary or endless, it is alike abhorrent. God has also made it *our* duty, while sinners are not his confirmed enemies, to do all in our power to preserve their lives, and save their souls: but *He* is not obliged to do all that he can to these ends, nor does he.—Temporary punishment, you contend, may consist with benevolence, “because it is directed to a good and glorious end:” And do I contend for endless punishment on any other principle? If you can form no idea of an end that is good and glorious, save that which respects “the amendment of the sufferer,” it does not follow that no such end exists. A murderer, contemplating his approaching exit, might be so much absorbed in the love of himself as to be of your opinion; but the community would not.

Whether I have entered into “the merits of the cause,” or conducted the controversy in a becoming “spirit,” I consider as no part of my province to determine. The impartial reader will judge, whether I have dealt in “soft words, or hard arguments;” and if I have been so happy as in this particular to follow your counsel, whether I have not been obliged to deviate from your example. On this account

I shall be excused from taking any notice of your animadversions on these subjects, together with those of your new ally, the "Hoxton Student," unless it be to thank you for affording additional proof of the justness of my remark, *That socinians rejoice in the spread of Universalism.*

Whether the kingdom of heaven be prepared for all men, or not, that you and I may so agonize in the present life, as at last to enter in, is the desire and prayer of your sincere well-wisher.

A. F.

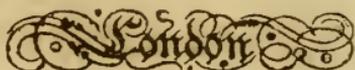
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LETTERS
TO MR. FULLER
ON THE
UNIVERSAL
Restoration,
WITH A STATEMENT OF
FACTS ATTENDING THAT CONTROVERSY,
AND SOME
STRICTURES
ON
SCRUTATOR'S REVIEW.

BY WILLIAM VIDLER.



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and Taylor, Edinburgh.

1803.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

The first part of the book is devoted to a general survey of the subject. It is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with the history of the subject, the second with the present state of the subject, and the third with the future prospects of the subject. The second part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the subject. It is divided into two chapters. The first chapter deals with the theory of the subject, and the second with the practice of the subject. The third part of the book is devoted to a critical examination of the subject. It is divided into two chapters. The first chapter deals with the strengths and weaknesses of the subject, and the second with the conclusions to be drawn from the study of the subject.

INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

THE statement of a few facts is necessary as an introduction to these Letters.

In the year 1793 I received a *private* letter from Mr. Fuller, occasioned by my having openly avowed the *universal restoration*. On the same occasion, and about the same time, I received many others from different persons. These letters were of various characters: some were full of pathetic lamentations on account of what they quaintly called my *fall*; others upbraided me, in coarse and vulgar language, as an enemy to truth: others again dared me to an open defence of my sentiments: one proposed a few queries to me in favour of the endless *destruction* of the wicked: Mr. Fuller expostulated in favour of the popular doctrine of eternal misery, and in an oblique way, charged me with teaching the same doctrine that the devil taught our first parents, and threaten-

ed me with wrath. I did not answer any of them. Some reasons for my silence will be found in the course of this correspondence*.

In the year 1795 Mr. Fuller saw fit to *publish* the letter which he had written to me in 1793, having first, by his own acknowledgment, *shewn it to several persons*: it was published in the Evangelical Magazine for September. The periodical work which Mr. Fuller made use of was not open to me that I might defend myself: I speak this with certainty, having tried it, and found no admission: but Mr. Fuller had not the generosity to let me know what he had done; and as I did not read the Evangelical Magazine at that time, I remained ignorant of it till the latter end of the year 1796.

In January 1797, I began to publish a monthly work called The Universalist's Miscellany †, in the first and second numbers of which I inserted two letters in answer to Mr. F. As I thought it ungenerous to attack sentiments in the person of any man without acquainting him with it, I sent these numbers to him with my respects. In September, 1798, I published a second edition of the former part of The Universalist's Miscellany; and, as Mr. F. had taken no notice of the first edition, I there-

* See Letter I. p. 1 and 2.

† This work is still continued under the title of The Universal Theological Magazine, &c.

fore sent him the second, to which I had prefixed an Advertisement which concluded thus: 'When the first and second numbers of the Miscellany came out with my answer to Mr. Fuller's Letter, I conveyed them to that gentleman with my respects. Above a year and a half is now elapsed, and he has returned no answer. The reason of his silence is, doubtless, a *cogent* one, though to me unknown.'

Still Mr. F. took no notice. An article of news from Birmingham, which was inserted in the second volume of *The Universalist's Miscellany*, p. 39. at length roused his attention, and produced his second and third letters. When I had replied to these I wrote to him that 'if he had any thing more to add, my publication was still open to him, and that I wished to be informed when he had finished his letters; as I meant to publish the whole of our correspondence upon the subject in one piece.' Mr. F. then wrote his fourth and following letters. I finished my reply to these in *The Universalist's Miscellany* for December 1801, and waited for him to say if he chose to add any thing more. Meantime, August 2, 1802, came out Mr. F.'s Letters, *separate*, and by *his licence* to Mr. Morris the Editor, saying, that as I had had sufficient time to fulfill my proposal of publishing the whole at one view, and had not done it, Mr. M. had liberty to publish that part of the correspondence which belonged to Mr. F.!

Another fact is also proper to be mentioned, *viz.*

that before Mr. F. wrote any thing in defence of endless misery, in *The Universalist's Miscellany*, he demanded of me that I should not insert an answer, *in the same number*, to any thing which he wrote; in order, as he said, 'that the full effect of what he wrote might be felt upon the minds of the readers.' I agreed to this; and most faithfully kept my promise; as any body may see by consulting that publication.

On the ground of these facts, it is evident that Mr. F. began this controversy *unknown* to me—that I had a right to urge him to proceed in it when *thus* begun—and that I exercised this right in an open and candid manner—that it would have been candid in Mr. F. to have given me notice that he did not mean to add any thing more upon the subject, before he published, or gave leave to any other to publish, what he had written in *my* publication!

My reason for wishing to publish the whole controversy in one piece, was that the public might see both sides of the subject together. I thought it would be an advantage to truth, on which ever side it might be found, if it appeared face to face with its opposite: and I think so still. Mr. F. and his friends think otherwise; and have taken occasion, in the *manner* stated above, to bring forward his letters to me.

I am not fond of controversy: it is too often conducted in a way that excites unholy tempers, and be-

gets a degree of personal dislike in contending writers towards each other. If any thing of this nature should appear in the following letters, I assure the reader that it is far from being pleasant to me. I began the controversy with great personal respect for Mr. F., and wish I had found reason, from his conduct, to have retained it: but to have my views mis-stated (*as I then thought, by design*); to be likened to a *maniac*; and every absurdity which can arise from an union of opposite sentiments, attributed to me—these things were provocations not easily to be borne. For any expressions of resentment, therefore, into which I may have been betrayed by such unchristian usage, the reader will be pleased to accept this apology.

Mr. F. has affected greatly to despise the arguments which I have adduced in favour of the universal restoration; facts, however, prove that they are not so light in his esteem, and in that of his friends, as he would insinuate. For no sooner did his letters appear, as printed by Mr. Morris, than *The Theological Magazine* for October 1802, presented a review of them, from which the following is an extract:

Mr. Vidler is an universalist, in the widest sense, asserting the final restoration of men and devils to happiness. Though *this* scheme of *universalism* be more consistent than any other, even it betrays the self-inconsistency of error; for some of the human

race, and of the diabolical (how *many* we are not told), are to be given up as *incurables to annihilation*. There is to be a limited eternity too, it seems, *after time*; one eternity in hell, and another eternity in heaven, for the *same persons*. Were not the subject so awful and important as to demand the utmost gravity, the repetition of these absurdities would excite a smile; and to repeat, is to confute them. The clear testimony of scripture, in numberless passages, contradicts the opinion of Mr. V.; and could stronger terms have been employed to express the idea of proper and endless eternity? The *original* languages to which, *after the manner of the erroneous, when plain English is against them, he appeals*, if candidly examined, and *fairly* criticised, confirm the doctrine of eternal punishment.

It is difficult to understand what this curious sentence may mean. Is the English translation so correct as to be, in any case, incapable of emendation? Or is every man necessarily in an error, who examines the original scriptures? Neither of these things are probable. Does the writer, then, mean that the universal doctrine cannot be proved by the plain English of our common translation? If so, let the English reader recollect that the New Testament writers use Old Testament language—that the words *ever*, *everlasting*, and the phrases *for ever* and *for ever and ever*, are used in the Old Testament in a limited sense—that as these words and

phrases are, in the New Testament, used to express the duration of future punishment, it is reasonable for us to take them in a limited sense in relation to this awful subject; especially as the New Testament writers have given us no intimation that they have attached to them any other sense, nor does the subject itself require any other.

The reviewer afterwards says, Mr. Fuller's Letters 'discover a strong judgment, a Christian spirit, and a zealous heart, laudably indignant at the grievous injury done to scripture, and to the souls of men. May they be blessed, particularly, for convincing his deluded opponent; and may *God be pleased to give him repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth!*'

The reader will judge of my astonishment when I read this *review*. The names of *fifty* divines appear on the cover of The Theological Magazine; which, or whom of them produced this precious *morceau*, I know not: but being willing to give them all the assistance in my power, I wrote them the following letter:

'To the Editors of The Theological Magazine.

Gentlemen,

Looking over your publication for October last, I observed in your review of Mr. Fuller's Letters to me, two great mistakes, which I take the liberty to state to you. I am represented as maintaining the universal salvation both of men and de-

b

vils, and yet admitting, at the same time, that ‘ some of the human race, and of the diabolical, are to be given up, as *incurables*, to *annihilation*.’ It is true that Mr. Fuller did tax me with this inconsistency; but he had the justice afterwards to own his mistake in the following words—‘ I have certainly to beg your pardon for having misunderstood you with respect to the doctrine of annihilation. I did not observe how you opposed the idea of endless punishment on the one hand, and annihilation on the other. In this matter I submit to your correction, and readily acquit you of all those absurdities which would have followed the admission of that principle.’ Let. VII. p. 80. Mr. Fullers’s third Letter, in which he committed this mistake, is also attended with the following note from the Editor, p. 21.—‘ The reader will perceive hereafter that Mr. F. was mistaken in supposing Mr. V. to hold the doctrine of annihilation: this he acknowledges in Let. VI.’ (It should be Let. VII.)

‘ With these facts before me, I am utterly at a loss to account for your misrepresentation of what I have written on this subject.

‘ The other mistake, which is intirely your own, (for Mr. F. never charged me with it) is expressed as follows—‘ *There is to be a limited eternity too, it seems, after time; one eternity in hell, and another eternity in heaven, for the same persons. Were not the subject so awful and important as to demand the utmost gravity, the repetition of these absurdities would excite a smile; and to repeat is to confute*

them. So far from having taught a limited and twofold eternity, I have firmly contended, in my correspondence with Mr. F. that the *gnōlam* of the Hebrews, and the *aion* of the Greeks, literally signify *age*, not eternity; and that the adjectives of them must therefore mean *age-lasting*, not eternal. I do not blame you, gentlemen, for differing from me; you have a right to judge for yourselves, in this or any other point; but I do blame you for not exercising that care in this article, which would have prevented you from mistaking plain facts. I, doubtless, have my errors and mistakes, as well as other men; but I have always esteemed those as my friends who have convicted me of them; hoping you will do the same, I venture to subscribe myself your friend and well wisher,

‘ 349, Strand.

W. VIDLER.’

‘ *P. S.* The insertion of this in your next number will be an act of justice to me, and will prevent any altercation concerning your *falsifying plain facts*. I own I feel myself indignant at the gross nonsense which you have imputed to me.’

The answer which was first given by these gentlemen,—ten of whom reside in London,—was, that they referred it to the *reviewer of that article*. This gentleman, though he was charitable enough to bestow his prayers on me, yet was not generous enough to tell me his name; consequently, I am to this day ignorant of the particular person, among the *fifty*

reverend divines, to whom myself and the public are indebted for this *impartial* review. However, an apology appeared in the Theological Magazine for December 1802, which I will transcribe, and make a few remarks on.

‘ *Apology to the Rev. Mr. Vidler.*

‘ Mr. Vidler has complained of two mistakes in our review of Fuller’s Letters to him in October last. In that article he is represented as maintaining universal salvation, both of men and devils, and yet admitting that some of the human race, and of the diabolical, are to be given up, as incurables, to annihilation. Mr. Fuller had charged him with the same inconsistency, but his mistake was afterwards corrected in a note. The other mistake with which Mr. Vidler charges us, is our asserting, that, according to his representation, there is to be a limited eternity after time, one eternity in hell and another in heaven, for the same reasons.

‘ As to the *first* mistake, we were led into it by the edition * of the Letters sent to us. It does not contain the *note* to which Mr. V. refers. Though, in the seventh letter, Mr. F. acquits Mr. V. from holding the doctrine of *annihilation*, the reviewer naturally supposed that these gentlemen understood the precise points in dispute, as stated in the second and third letters; and the subsequent correction of

* * The note being added at the press after some copies were taken off.’

a mistake as to *one* point, escaped his eye. This he frankly acknowledges, and hopes that Mr. V. will have the goodness to excuse the inadvertency. As to the second mistake, it is an absurdity closely connected, in our opinion, with the doctrine of limited punishment and final restoration after the present life. Can Mr. V. deny that the twenty-fifth chapter of the gospel by Matthew describes the procedure of the last judgment? Let him seriously consider, that the same term, *αιωνιον*, is applied to the duration of future punishment and of future bliss. By what rule of interpretation will he apply it in the one case to *limited*, and in the other to *endless* duration? The native tendency of his doctrine is, to weaken the hopes of the righteous, and to allay the fears of the wicked. If it were true, we must blot out many passages of the Bible, and particularly Mark, xiv. 21. *Good were it for that man if he had never been born.*

I observe, 1st. That candour required the insertion of my letter in *The Theological Magazine*; but the Editors of that work are not in the habit of inserting any thing contrary to their own sentiments. The same remark applies to the Editors of *The Evangelical and Methodist Magazines*. Are these guardians of orthodoxy conscious that their tenets will not bear examination? Or have they so low an opinion of the understanding of their readers, that they cannot trust them with the right of private

judgment? Whatever be the cause, the fact is certain!

2. The apology, so far as it clears me from the absurdity of holding both with restoration and annihilation, is open and manly, and as such I receive it.

3. But, 'As to the *second* mistake,' says the apology, 'it is an absurdity closely connected, in our opinion, with the doctrine of limited punishment and final restoration after the present life.' So then, because these gentlemen are of opinion that 'the doctrine of limited punishment and final restoration after the present life, is closely connected with the absurdity of a limited and twofold eternity,' therefore they have a right to say, *that I hold with this absurdity!* My letter, had they inserted it, would have cast some light upon this subject;—but they thought proper to suppress it.

4. If these gentlemen had read my letters, there would have been no occasion for the latter part of their apology, which is, indeed, an *attack*, an answer to which will be found in the letters themselves.

Another fact is, that the republication of Mr. F.'s Letters was intended to introduce* an highly empasioned tract, called '*Letters to an Universalist, containing A REVIEW of the Controversy between Mr. Vidler and Mr. Fuller, on the doctrine of Universal SALVATION.*' The writer of this piece, ashamed to

* See Mr. F.'s Letters, Advertisement.

put his name to the effusions of his anger, has taken the signature of *Scrutator*. Mr. F. had unhappily set an example of calling in the aid of slander, to give weight to his arguments in defence of endless misery*. But his assistant, *Scrutator*, commits an outrage upon decency: according to him, I have neither learning, honour, candour, nor even common sense. As for the latter of these qualities, I may say, that those who know me best, know that I am not in the habit of talking nonsense; and it remains yet to be proved, that all the honour, candour, and learning, are in the possession of Mr. F. and *Scrutator*.

But who is this writer that hides himself in order that he may defame character without detection?—For aught I know, he may be a country curate, whose pride is mortified because he cannot subjugate every conscience in his parish to his own infallible dogmas, and who has long beheld with pain the spread of the universal doctrine in his neighbourhood. Or it may be Mr. Fuller himself, who, not content with what he had written in his *own* name, has now attacked me under a feigned one. Whoever it may be, three things are evident; *first*, that I had grievously offended him by refusing to insert, in *The Universalist's Miscellany*, a litigious piece of his writing, *unless he would put his name to it*†.

* Letter IV. p. 34, 35.

† *Scrutator's Letters*, p. 6.

For this offence I am doomed to suffer the loss of all claim to candour henceforth. I freely own that I am not dissatisfied with my sentence in this instance. I willingly endure literary assassination on my own character, rather than suffer it to be perpetrated on another, in a public work of which I am the Editor. *Secondly*, I have the misfortune to differ from this nameless writer, in several theological points. Tho' this has nothing to do with the question in hand, yet it is industriously brought forward again and again by this gentleman; and from hence it is insinuated that I must necessarily be wrong in every thing. One of my correspondents is called an *indecent Socinian*, another is a *blasphemous Deist*. In one place it is represented that I have denied the doctrine of atonement*; in others that I have dared to differ from Petitpierre, Chauncy, and Winchester, on the doctrine of universal restoration. If all these charges were true, yet I ask, How do they affect my arguments? May not a Socinian, or even a Deist, propose his doubts, and have a fair hearing? May not I cordially believe† and rejoice in the doc-

* 'Whoever in those days (the days of King Edward VI.) entertained any opinion out of the common road, was called an *Anabaptist*, though perhaps he did not know what were the distinguishing doctrines of that sect. Just as in these latter times they who have been troublesome to the professors of the orthodox system, have been classed with *Arians, Socinians, &c.*'

Archdeacon Blackburn.

† I certainly do deny the doctrine of *satisfaction*; but the doctrine of atonement, that is, the doctrine of *reconciliation* of sinners to God by his grace, through Christ Jesus, I believe and rejoice in.

trine of reconciliation to God by the death of Christ, without supposing that Christ died in order to change the mind and will of God our Father, and to cause him to love us? And may I not dare to differ from the great men above mentioned, and yet the universal doctrine be true notwithstanding?

Thirdly, it is also a great offence to Scrutator that I conduct my periodical work on such fair principles as to admit every writer to have a place in it ‘*Who uses soft words and hard arguments.*’ It is singular enough that out of seven religious periodical publications now extant, there is only that of which I have the honour to be Editor which dares to admit both sides of a question; and I am counted an enemy to truth for doing it! Mr. S. thus remarks upon me: ‘A blasphemous Deist or an indecent Socinian have free access *incog.* to this publication; but one who calls in question the dogmas of Universalists cannot be heard without giving in his name; because, forsooth, the Editor (A PROPER JUDGE) chooses to say his letters are severe! and yet this Editor glories in his unexampled liberality and candour*!’ And again, ‘His Miscellany is almost exclusively occupied by writers of the Socinian cast †.’

Notwithstanding these charges, it is a fact that a certain writer under the signature of *Hilasteriophilus*, in defence of the doctrine of Satisfaction ‡, has

* Letters to an Universalist, p. 8.

† Ibid. p. 181.

‡ It is highly probable that Scrutator and Hilasteriophilus are the same person.

had six letters, containing from six to thirteen pages each, inserted in *The Universal Theological Magazine* for the last year. Such proof from fact has the Editor to give of his impartial conduct, which, as it satisfies his own conscience, so he is persuaded it will satisfy the public. With these facts before the reader, he may ask, What qualifications has *Scrutator* that are proper for a *reviewer*? Whatever pretensions he may have to polite literature, biblical criticism, or logical precision; yet it is evident that coolness of temper, impartiality of judgment, and candour in the statement of facts, are none of his qualifications. The reader may be more fully convinced of this by comparing the manner in which he has stated Mr. F.'s arguments and my own. Of the former there are eighteen pages of quotation *together**, beside large quotations elsewhere; but the latter are either generally suppressed, or mutilated in their statement.

Again, a press error or two had escaped notice in my letters to Mr. F.; these are not only marked by this captious writer but expatiated upon with great pomp; and yet the running title to his own book exhibits a mistake all through an hundred and eighty-two pages, reading *A* universalist, instead of *AN* universalist.

In the course of my correspondence with Mr. F., *Scrutator* has discovered that I have mis-quoted

* See *Letters to an Universalist*, p. 17----34.

one Greek word. I acknowledge myself indebted to him for his correction, and have made my submission in due form at the proper place; meanwhile, that the scripture may be fulfilled which saith *sinnners give to sinnners that they may receive as much again*, I observe that this friend of mine has erred, at least three times, in his Greek*.

I confess that it seems like trifling to notice these things; for any man, however honest or learned, may, in the course of argument, *mis-quote* a text, *mis-spell* a word, or make a *breach of grammar*. Nor would any opponent, whose simple object is truth, and whose mind is candid, take an ungenerous advantage of such peccadilios: much less would he affirm that his opponent is 'destitute of a sound and discriminating judgment, and scarcely possessed of common penetration†!' that he '*affects skill in ancient languages*,' and that 'the only truth which this generally conveys, is, that either he or his friends have learned two or three different alphabets;' and that he is guilty of '*arrogance, abuse, falsehood, and contempt of SUPERIORS‡!*' Far be it from me to apply this language to Mr. F. and his friend Scrutator; though they have their errors, as well as other men.

* See his Letters, p. 86, where we have *κολασις* instead of *κολασις*. P. 89. *σωμα* instead of *σωμα*, and Ibid. *αντιβαινειν* instead of *αναβαινειν*.

† See Letters, p. 7. of Preface.

‡ Id. p. 8.

It has afforded matter of surprise to many who know Mr. F.'s experience and skill as a polemic writer, that he should think his cause stood in need of those fierce and fiery eruptions of Scrutator's ardent genius to assist it. For my own part, as I am pronounced to be 'destitute of a sound and discriminating judgment, and scarcely possessed of common penetration,' it would be presumption in me to say any thing on this subject; otherwise, I should be tempted to think, that, as the *essence* of the doctrine of endless misery is *implacable wrath*, so Mr. F. thought that 'proud wrath' became the subject, and that Mr. S. was properly qualified to exhibit it.

But to drop this, I make an observation of much greater importance, namely, that a capital and leading argument in this controversy has been all along totally overlooked, both by Mr. F. and Scrutator. It is this—'that the whole revealed economy of God towards fallen men, is mediatorial, in Christ Jesus; and that it is contained within the ages of Christ's kingdom, which, itself, shall come to an end.'

This argument is founded upon express scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 24—28. and is supported by its current testimony concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom, as being delegated: given to him to be exercised till all things be gathered together in him—till all things be reconciled to the Father by him—till every knee bow to him of things in heaven, things on earth, and things under the earth, and every one confess that he is Lord—till every enemy

be subdued, and death itself be destroyed. Tho' I have made continual use of it, and think I have given evidence that we have no revelation which reaches beyond that period, yet have these two gentlemen never directly made any reply to it. As for the outcry which both Mr. F. and S. have made concerning the immoral tendency of the universal doctrine, at most it proves nothing more than that they have formed a bad opinion of it. But it seems possible to me that persons equally wise and pious with these gentlemen, may think very differently. And, till facts prove the contrary, they ought not to be blamed for supposing that the doctrine in question contains in it the most powerful restraint on vice, and the strongest incentives to virtue.

I have two reasons for making these general remarks on Scrutator's Letters; first, justice to that good cause for which I have the honour to be an advocate, demands it. Secondly, justice to myself also requires it. The annals of literature have seldom exhibited such an abusive publication as this nameless writer has thought fit to obtrude on the world. And lastly, the remarks which I have made are to be considered by the reader as the whole of my answer to Scrutator's angry invectives. The following notes subjoined to my Letters to Mr. F. are directed to such parts of his coadjutor's performance in which he appears not to rail but to reason.

I may here adopt the language of a reverend divine of the seventeenth century. 'If any where I have used more sharpness than is pleasing to men

who would have all controversial writings managed without passion, I shall only say that the hard grating of my opponents hath sharpened my style, and made it more keen and piercing than I could have used towards good-natured adversaries. 'Tis almost morally impossible for him who contends with fiery and furious antagonists, not to be sometimes a little overheated.'

On the whole, I am perfectly satisfied with the doctrine of the restoration of all intelligent creatures, as a truth founded in scripture, and also being consonant to the perfections of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, in my view, a doctrine according to godliness; containing in it the only scriptural restraints on iniquity—furnishing the strongest and purest motives to holiness; calculated, above all other doctrines, to destroy party prejudice among Christians—to remove obstacles which hinder the spread of the gospel; and to bring the highest possible glory to our blessed Redeemer.

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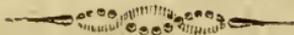
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LETTERS

TO

MR. FULLER.



LETTER I.

REASONS FOR NOT ANSWERING MR. FULLER'S LETTER BEFORE.-- REPLIES TO HIS EXPOSTULATIONS, CONTAINING REASONS FOR BELIEVING AND PREACHING THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL RESTORATION.

SIR,

SOME time ago a friend put the Evangelical Magazine for September, 1795, into my hand; in looking over which I found, that in answer to the request of Brightonensis, concerning the *Eternity of Hell Torments*, you brought forward a letter written to me on February 14, 1793, on account of my having avowed the *Restoration of all Things* through Christ Jesus. The postscript to the above letter mentions, that you have never received an answer to it. I hereby acknowledge the reception of that letter from you, and that I never answered it. I also take this occasion to thank you for writing to me, and take it as a proof of your esteem for me.

There were two reasons why I did not answer you. One was the number of letters which I received on my change of sentiment. My time would not permit me to

write much, as I generally preached from six to eight times in a week, and if I had answered one or two of my friends, *others* would have said that I had not answered *them*; I therefore answered none.

The other reason was my natural love of peace, which made me wish to avoid all controversy with my former connections, whom I highly respected, notwithstanding they had publicly excluded me from their communion, merely for my sentiments, without giving me a hearing. And probably I should never have answered you at all, had you not made your letter to me thus public. Though I have more than once been informed by friends, that your having written to me, and my not having answered, was no secret in the circle of your acquaintance; yet my love of peace imposed silence upon me. I now think myself called upon publicly to give you some reasons why I believe and preach God's universal and efficacious love to men.

You say you have 'observed me to be of a speculative turn of mind.' If by this you mean that I did not discover a disposition to take the assertions of men as the rule of my faith, I own I am a speculator; and I think the scriptures make it my duty so to be. *Buy the truth and sell it not*, says one sacred writer. *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good*, says another; and our gracious Lord commands that we *search the scriptures*. But if you mean that I have discovered any want of respect to the sacred writings, or have not submitted implicitly to their dictates in every thing, so far as I have understood their meaning, I shall think the charge heavy indeed. For God is my witness I always revered his word, even from my childhood; but since the time that I had the first experience of his forgiving love upon my soul, I have esteemed it above all riches and honours. To me it seems, that

one of the highest instances of regard I ever gave to the Bible, was by daring to assert the doctrine of the Restitution of all Things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. Acts iii. 21. And this I did at the risk of all temporal good that I possessed, and at the risk of losing the esteem and friendship of my brethren in the ministry, which I can truly say I prized more than any thing, truth excepted.

‘ You wish I had read Dr. Edwards upon the subject of endless misery, before I had avowed my sentiments.’ You have your wish, Sir: I had read him twice before I opened my lips to controvert his misrepresentation of the character of *that God*, whose *nature is love*. And at the request of a much-esteemed friend, was reading him again, when I received your letter; and if I had, *even then*, seen any real weight in the Doctor’s arguments, I would have recanted, as openly as ever I professed the Universal doctrine; and however *humbling* such a recantation may be thought, yet I should not have been without great examples. I could have pleaded the retractions of St. Austin, an authority which my Calvinist brethren would not have despised. And I declare even now, though I have preached the doctrine with some success for four years, yet would I give it up to-morrow, if convinced of its error. But if there be nothing better to be said, than what is found in Dr. Edwards’s piece, I do not expect ever to receive that conviction.

I grant that ‘ it is a serious matter, that we err not in our ministrations.’ But are we to take it for granted, that all truth has been in possession of our forefathers, and that we have nothing more to do, than receive their sentiments, and pay implicit obedience to them? I know *you* do not think so. You have in some instances dared to differ

from great and good men, even of your own denomination, and I esteem you for it; as I am persuaded you have differed, not from the love of singularity, much less from the love of sin, but from the love of truth. Yet how easy would it be for a good man, who laments your departure from opinions which he deems orthodox, to remind you, ‘it is a very serious matter that you do not err in your ministrations, as error in a minister may affect the eternal salvation of many.’ Your answer to such a man, (which I am sure would be both honest and sensible) may be considered as my answer to you.

I cannot help thinking, that the questions you ask me in your letter, discover you to be but little acquainted with the subject. Otherwise I cannot account for a man of your strong mental powers asking whether,

First, My change of sentiment has not arisen from an idea of endless punishment being in *itself* unjust?

Secondly, Whether the genius of the sentiment, be not opposite to that of every other sentiment in the Bible?

Thirdly, Whether my ministrations, on this principle, will not savour of *his*, who taught our first parents, ‘Ye shall not surely die?’

It would have been easy for you to have asked a hundred more questions of a similar kind, and to have reasoned upon them, as you have upon the above. And it would be easy for me to shew, that such questions have no relation to the doctrine of the restoration, any more than to that of election. Suffer me to tell you, worthy Sir, that the question is not whether endless punishment is in itself just, but whether God has any where in his word, threatened any description of sinners with it. I am bold to say he has not so done.

But if you, or any other man, can prove that he has, I will then openly retract my assertion, and humbly ask par-

son of God, and his Church, for having said the contrary. My reasons are as follow:

I. The English * reader may observe, that the words which the scriptures use, by which to express the duration of future misery, do not *necessarily* mean endless, for they are all of them applied to things that have ended, or must end. As *everlasting* in Gen. chap. xvii. ver. 7, 8, and 13. Here the land of Canaan is called, an *everlasting* possession, and the covenant of circumcision, an *everlasting* covenant; but will any body infer from hence, that the land of Canaan will not be burnt up at the conflagration? or that circumcision will be practised to endless ages? We may remem-

* Scrutator begins his Review by saying, ' Mr. V., supposing that the Doctrine of Endless Punishment rests entirely on the meaning of the words *ever, everlasting, &c.* attempts to prove, that these are words of INDEFINITE meaning.' I refer to the judgment of the reader whether I have not proved that these words are very frequently taken in a LIMITED sense by the sacred writers; but I never said that the Doctrine of Endless Punishment rested ENTIRELY on their meaning. This is an assumption of our Reviewer, which he often makes use of. I thought, however, and still do think, that the advocates for this tremendous sentiment ought to prove that it is CLEARLY revealed, before they proceed to doom nine-tenths of mankind to the awful endurance of it. Hence I repeatedly urged Mr. F. to consider this, and not vaguely to talk of my expecting Universal Restoration as a matter of RIGHT. With much difficulty I, at last, (in his FIFTH Letter) persuaded him to enter on this point. Our Reviewer charges me, here, as having given up the ground on which Muncy, Petitpierre, and Winchester had maintained the Universal Doctrine. Supposing this to be true, I know of no criminality in it. These great and good men judged for themselves, so do I. But, as far as I am acquainted with their writings, I believe the fact to be otherwise.----- They all thought that there was no threatening of Endless Misery in the Scriptures. It follows, that I may justly address the feelings of mankind, ' by pathetic declamations on the infinite goodness of God,'----- or, ' the disproportion between sin and Eternal Punishment,'-----or, ' on Endless Punishment being inconsistent with the honour, pleasure, or benefit of God or man.' All these arguments have their just place and due weight, though this gentleman cannot see their consistency.

ber here, that the *everlasting* covenant of circumcision is, in the New Testament, declared to be abrogated.

The same word is used of the hills, Gen xlix. 25, and of the Aaronical priesthood, Exod. xl. 15. and of the yearly fast of expiation, Lev. xvi. 34. And yet the *everlasting* hills shall be dissolved, and our Lord has changed the *everlasting* customs that Moses delivered. I could add many more places.

For ever. Jonah was in the whale's belly *for ever*. Jonah ii. 6.

The leprosy of Naaman was to cleave to Gehazi and his seed *for ever*, 2 Kings v. 27. And Rehoboam might have made the Israelites his servants *for ever*, which can mean only during his life, or theirs at most. I might add above fifty more places, where *for ever* must be taken in a *limited* sense.

For ever and ever. Even this phrase is used in a limited sense, Isa. xxx. 8. Here is mention made of a book which is to last *for ever and ever*; yet at the conflagration all books will be burnt. And in Jer. vii. 7. the land of Canaan is said to be given to the fathers of the Jews *for ever and ever*. And again, Jer. xxv. 5 yet the Jews have been many ages cast out of the land; and if ever they are restored to it again, they cannot possess it endlessly.

As for the word *eternal*, it is the same in Hebrew and Greek, that we translate everlasting, and therefore of the same signification; our translating it sometimes eternal, will afford no argument for affixing the idea of endless duration to it. Now if the above words are used in a limited sense in Scripture, as we have seen, they cannot *necessarily* convey the idea of *endless* duration. It follows, therefore, that the doctrine of endless punishment cannot be proved from the *use of these words*.

If it be objected that the Scripture uses the same words to express the happiness of the saints, and even the dura-

tion of God, (which is granted) both of which must be endless, (which is also granted) then, it will follow, that the Holy Spirit having used the same words to express both limited and unlimited duration, the *subject only* can determine in which sense they are always to be taken.

But it is contended, that they ought not to be taken in an endless sense, when connected with future punishment; because there is nothing in the nature of *that* subject, which can be given as a reason why it should be of endless duration.

It is evident that the reason which is generally given, why it should be endless, is not scriptural, viz. 'Because when the wicked are sentenced to their punishment all temporal things shall be at an end. Time itself, ages, periods and dispensations, shall have ceased.'

If so, it should follow, that there is nothing but *proper eternity*, in which to execute the punishment of the wicked. But I would ask, Are not day and night portions of time? And do we not measure ages, periods, and dispensations, by the revolutions of day and night? Now it is expressly said, even of such who worship the beast and his image, they shall have no rest *day* nor *night*. Rev. xiv. 11. Their punishment is also said to be *εις αιωνας αιωνων*, for ever and ever, or rather to the age of ages. And however long this age of ages may endure, yet day and night are mentioned as existing with it; consequently these ages will all pass away before *day* and *night* come to an end, which I understand they will do, Job xxvi. 10, when He that sitteth upon the throne shall have made all things new, when the earth shall have no more sea, and consequently there will be no need of bounds set to the waters of it as now; and there will be no more death among *men*, neither crying nor sorrow, nor any more pain, for the former things shall be passed away.

Compare the above passage in Job with Rev. xxi. 1—5. and verse 25.

II*. Beside which, I can but think, that I meet with promises of an *universal restoration*; and that I plainly see there are *times*, not merely a time in the singular, but periods, yea ages, to perform it in. For the mystery of the will of God, which he hath purposed in himself, is, that in the

* I here remark, 1st. that Scrutator has brought forward the four following paragraphs in a mutilated state, and represented them as my answer to a part of Mr. F.'s FIFTH Letter, *which was not written till more than three years afterwards!*

2d. He taxes me with making a false quotation from the Greek of Ephes. i. 10. reading *χρονος* instead of *καιροι*. But the reader will observe that I was expressing myself in general terms, and not bringing forward direct evidence in a formal way. It is true that I referred to Ephes. i. 10. and to Acts, iii. 21. where we read that the 'Heavens must receive Christ till the *TIMES*, *χρονων*, of the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the *AGE* began.'

3d. This CANDID opponent, also affirms that I have found *AGES* in Ephes. i. 10. That I have found ages, and even *AGES TO COME*, elsewhere, I grant; and had a reference to them here; and think I have proved, in the course of these letters, that in those ages God will gather together all things in Christ. But let the reader again cast his eye over the paragraphs which this note is connected with, and ask himself if he can discover all the things which the KEEN SIGHTED Scrutator has found?

4th. This gentleman has made a great parade about the difference betwixt *καιροι* and *χρονος*; but he has not, after all, had the goodness to give the reader clear information on this point. According to Parkhurst '*χρονος* denotes THE LENGTH OF SPACE OF TIME, but *καιροι*, DUE OR PROPER TIME, OPPORTUNITY.' In this manner the Septuagint read it, 'To every purpose under heaven, there is both, *χρονος*, time, and *καιροι*, opportunity.' Eccles. iii. 1. As these words stand connected with 'the restitution of all things; with the gathering together of all things in Christ,' I still suppose they have their meaning, and imply that in the divine purpose there are both *TIMES* and *OPPORTUNITIES* appointed sufficient, in which to perform this great work.

By what authority does this writer act, when he attributes every kind of nonsense to me which suits his purpose? Does the GOOD cause of Endless Misery demand, or permit such treatment of its opposers?

dispensation of the *fulness of times*, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him.

The word *ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι*, rendered gather together in one, signifies to recollect, and arrange under one head, as scattered soldiers under a general, and is beautifully expressive of the accomplishment of that purpose by the Father before mentioned, when all in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, shall bow the knee to Jesus, and confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Though there are *καιροι*, *times*, fixed in the Divine purpose for this great work of the Mediator, the exact number of these times is not expressed; but what I would notice is, that there is a fulness of them, and that this fulness is only bounded by the gathering together of *all* things in Christ: consequently, that the Lord Jesus shall retain and exercise his mediatorial power, till this great work is done. For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, that having made peace by the blood of his cross, he might reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. Coll. i. 19.

The same thing I understand is meant by Christ's putting down all rule, and all authority and power; putting all things under his feet, and subduing all things unto himself; which, when he hath done, his mediatorial reign shall end, and he shall deliver up the kingdom to God even the Father, that God may be *all in all*. 1 Cor. xv. 24---28.

Whatever the blessed God *was* to all his creatures before sin took place, and rent them from him, that, at *least*, he *shall* be to them again, before Christ hath finished his glorious work: for he was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Surely, Sir, you will not blame me, as thinking I ascribe too much to Christ. I know you love to glorify

the Saviour, I love to do so too. And I sincerely think that the above scriptures, and many others which I could mention, ought, in honour to Christ, to be taken in their fullest sense.

You see that my view of the restoration doth not suppose that ‘ it will be effected independent of the death of Christ:’ for it is founded expressly on the blood of his cross, which was shed that he might reconcile *all things* to the Father.

As for punishment of all degrees and duration, I believe it to be a mediatorial work, and that its foundation is *mercy*, as is intimated in James ii. 13. ‘ For he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath shewed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.’ And in Psa. lxii. 12. ‘ Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth *mercy*, for thou *renderest to every man according to his works.*’ In which latter passage Christ is represented as universal judge, and even in that awful character, he will proceed on the ground of *mercy*. I can but therefore think, there is a merciful design in all punishment, and that mercy shall shut up and close the scene of all God’s works. For his mercy endureth for ever, for his mercy endureth for ever, &c. &c.

I am, &c.

W. VIDLER.

LETTER II.

CONTINUATION OF REPLIES TO MR. F.'S EXPOSTULATIONS,
CONTAINING VIEWS OF THE SUPERIOR HOLINESS OF THE
UNIVERSAL DOCTRINE, AS OPPOSED TO ANNIHILATION
AND ENDLESS MISERY.

SIR,

YOU next ask, 'Is not the genius of the sentiment (of the Restoration) opposite to every other sentiment in the Bible; because the whole tenor of Scripture saith to the righteous it shall be *well* with him, and to the wicked it shall be *ill* with him?'

I fully accord with you, Sir, this is the whole tenor of Scripture, and I rejoice in being able to say, that the whole tenor of my ministry is according to it also. If the doctrine of the Restoration of all Things destroyed that discrimination of moral character among men, which the Scripture every where abounds with, it then ought to be held in abhorrence by every man. And I believe it is in this view of it, that many serious minds immediately revolt when the doctrine is mentioned. But let me inform you, Sir, that the universal sentiment is, in my view, above all others friendly to holiness.

1st. It holds forth the Scripture declaration of punishment according to works more clearly than any other. The doctrine of annihilation gives indiscriminate and endless *death* to *all* the wicked—and the doctrine of endless misery seems to confound all degrees of punishment in giving infinite punishment to them *all*. But limited punishment, which is included only in the universal doctrine,

shews clearly how it may be *more* or *less* tolerable in judgment for one sinner than another, and how one may have *few* stripes, and another *many*.

2d. It shews the great distinction betwixt the righteous and the wicked without contradicting any part of Scripture, or obscuring any of the Divine perfections. For it teaches that the believer in Christ is passed from *death* unto life, and shall not come into condemnation.---That Christ gives to such eternal life, and they shall never *perish*.----That Christ will give to them a kingdom, and they shall be kings and priests to him.---But that the wicked shall *not* inherit the kingdom of God---but they shall *perish*---they shall *die*---even the *second death*.---And notwithstanding which, there shall, in the times which God hath appointed, be a *restitution of all things*; a reconciliation of *all things* by the blood of his cross; *death* shall be swallowed up in victory; there shall be *no more death*.

3d. It carries the idea of the purity of God to its proper scriptural extent, by shewing that sin is so hateful to him, that he will *utterly* destroy it. For Christ was manifested that he might *utterly destroy* the works of the devil. And as all sin is the work of the devil, so all must be destroyed, or else the works of the devil must endlessly exist, and consequently the end of Christ's manifestation will be frustrated. But the universal doctrine teaches that all the counsel of God shall stand, and that he will perform all his pleasure.

We believe that God will pursue sin with his displeasure in every state in which it is found---that he will search out the iniquity of the wicked till he find *none*. Ps. x. 15. So that it will always be *ill* with the wicked and *well* with the righteous; for he will deal with his creatures according to character: with the *merciful* he will shew himself *merciful*, with the *pure* he will shew himself *pure*, and with the

froward he will shew himself froward. Ps. xviii. 26. That is, if his creatures walk *contrary* to him, he will walk *contrary* to them; and if they continue to walk *contrary* to him, he will then walk *contrary* to them in fury, and *chastize them seven times more for their sins*, till he has finally subdued them, that they might be reconciled to him by the blood of the cross. See Lev. xxvi., which whole chapter I would recommend to your serious consideration, as I apprehend it contains an epitomé of the dealings of God with all men; and take this farther thought, that the Divine Character is always the same: what God is now, that he always will be---a God that hateth sin; and as he makes use of natural evil, or punishment, to correct moral evil or sin, while we are on earth. so I can but think that he hath the same design in all future punishment; *for with him there is no variableness or shadow of turning.*

Is it not possible, my dear Sir, to think rightly of the God of love unless we ascribe endless wrath to him? Can we not love, revere, and imitate his purity, unless we believe that he will suffer sin endlessly to exist, yea to have dominion over the greatest part of mankind? Did he send his only begotten son into the world, full of grace and truth, to give us *this character* of himself? No; he hath told us, on the contrary, that he is the living God, *the saviour of all men*, but especially of them who believe.-----
1 Tim. iv. 10.

I dare appeal to you, or any other man, whether it can be any thing injurious to the holiness of God, or to the dignity of the doctrine of atonement, to suppose that sin, universally, in all its power, guilt, and pollution, shall be destroyed? See Dan. ix. 24. Rather, Does not the dishonour both to divine purity, and to the efficacy of atonement, attach itself to your scheme? seeing you must of necessity admit either that God *cannot* or *will not* make an

end of sin ; that there is not efficacy enough in the blood of the cross to destroy the works of the devil, or else that the full efficacy of the atonement is with-held by the divine determination.

Your third *important* question is, Whether my ministrations on this principle (*of the universal doctrine*) will not savour of *his* who taught our first parents, *Ye shall not surely die?* I answer, if I taught that there would not be *any* future punishment, your insinuation would not be without reason. But what has been said, I think, will be sufficient with most men to clear the universal view from the obloquy of your question. I hinted above that your questions were such as betrayed your ignorance of the subject which you have written against: you take things for granted which are not true ; as for instance, your present question is founded upon the idea that my views invalidate the threatenings of God towards sinners. On the contrary, Sir, I avow to you and all the world, that there will come a time with sinners when he that made them will not have *mercy* on them, or when he that formed them will shew them no *favour*. Isa. xxvii. 11. But I am also informed that God will not contend *for ever*, neither will he be *always wroth*; for, saith he, *the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.* Isa. lvii. 16. And I understand that both these scriptures relate to the same people.

If the universal doctrine be ever abused to the purposes of sin, I cannot but think it must arise from ignorance of its principal features. I am happy in being able to say, that I have never yet been witness to any practical ill effects that have followed the preaching and belief of it: not that I deny the *possibility* of such effects ; for it is a maxim which cannot be disputed, that the greatest display of mercy in the doctrines of grace *may* be abused ; but you would not on that account hide the richest views of divine

love which you are acquainted with, under pretence of preventing sin: so neither would I.

With regard to my communion with God, which you seem to think must be greatly injured by my present sentiments, I would observe, that the enjoyment of the comforts of religion, in the experience of Christians, doth not always keep pace with the measure of truth that they have in their understanding; yet I am persuaded that if divine truth have its proper influence on the heart, then there will be communion with God in proportion to the degree of truth possessed: and I seriously assure you, my friend, that I find it so in my experience; and though I can truly say I was no stranger to it before, yet I have had my heart nearer to God, and have possessed more of the temper of Christ, have had more faith, more patience, and more love to God, to his saints, and to men at large, since I have received the universal doctrine, than I ever had before; and I am thankful that this experience is still increasing.----- Whenever this glorious and full gospel of the blessed God shall come to be universally received by good men of every denomination (which I am persuaded will be the case) it will effectually destroy that little narrow spirit of party, the prevalence of which has done such incredible mischief to the cause of Christ upon earth.

With sincere respect both for your person and abilities, I remain, with great cordiality,

Yours, in our common Lord,

W. VIDLER.

LETTER III.

MR. F.'S REASONS FOR NOT CONTINUING THE CONTRO-
VERSY CONSIDERED, AND ANIMADVERSIONS ON HIS
REPLIES.

SIR,

I AM glad to see you come forward to an open discussion of this very interesting subject; but I am sorry that you have the appearance of disappointment and anger with you. You say *I have done you justice* in inserting your letter of June 5, 1799, and yet you are not satisfied. This seems a little unreasonable, and implies that you wish for something beyond justice. As this is the second time of your addressing the public upon this matter, I will just state what our Birmingham correspondent* said, and what you have said, and leave the reader to see whether there be such a vast difference as to make it worth while to give the Editor so serious a rebuke.

CORRESPONDENT.

MR. FULLER.

'The most pungent reflections of the damned in hell were and would be to remember that Christ died for them.'

'I might very possibly assert, that the most pungent reflections of the damned were and would be that they had rejected the gospel way of salvation.'

Perhaps your readers will wonder how the damned in hell will feel the most pungent reflections from the consi-

* Mr. F. has left out most of the Birmingham correspondence in the edition of his Letters; but as it is, at some places, connected with the general argument, I have thought it best to retain it.

sideration that they had rejected the gospel way of salvation, unless it be included that Christ died for them. I should be very glad for you to handle this *curious* subject more at large, if you keep it distinct from the universal doctrine. The Universalist's Miscellany is open to you, and you will have it in your power to shew to the public how just it is for God to condemn sinners to endure the most pungent reflections endlessly in hell, for rejecting a salvation which was never provided for them.

Your statement of the publication of your letter and mine, &c. is just; but it was no secret, by your own confession. I did not mention this to criminate, but to shew my reasons for addressing you by name, as it was understood pretty generally that Gaius was Mr. F., and the minister who had not answered his letter was myself.

By your mentioning the Birmingham correspondent a third time, it seems you are very sore upon that business; yet I cannot see why. I think I have equal reason to complain of you in making a *private* letter *public*, having first of all instructed several persons in the history of it: yet I complain not, nor should now notice it, but just to shew that you do not begin the present controversy in so friendly a temper as might be wished, or as the cause of truth demands.

As for my hopes that my letters had made some impression on your mind, though I never expressed such a sentiment as this, yet I am ready to confess that I both had and still have such a hope: nor do I think that I hereby either dishonour you or compliment myself. It seems to me that an honest man cannot but wish the conviction of his opponent; and the transition from wishing to hoping is very natural, especially if there be in his heart any personal respect for his opponent, and a full conviction of the truth

of what himself contends for. Now I freely confess myself to have both these, and therefore I enter upon the discussion of the subject both with pleasure and with hope.

The reasons of your silence for so long a period after I had answered your letter deserve some consideration.-----
 ' You did not know that it would be agreeable to me to insert in the Universalist's Miscellany what you might write upon the subject; and though you considered the Evangelical Magazine as a suitable work for the introduction of a single piece, yet it did not appear to you to be a proper vehicle for a continued discussion, unless what was said on both sides was introduced.' The Editors of the Evangelical Magazine perhaps will not thank you for this censure of their conduct in admitting only one side of the question; but however that may be, I beg leave to say, that you might have known that the Universalist's Miscellany was as much open to you as myself; for upon the cover of it, in the *Address to the Public*, are the following words: ' Objections against the doctrine of the restoration, however forcibly they may be stated, while couched in decent language, will be candidly attended to.' I sent you the first and second numbers of the Universalist's Miscellany, which contained my letters to you, on purpose to invite you to come forward, and supposed that the above words were a sufficient encouragement to you so to do. You might indeed overlook them; but the public will hereby see that this was not my fault, and that I had a right to suppose you had ' cogent reasons' for your silence; nor will your following reasons, probably, make them think otherwise, for,

2d. You say, ' Though I was not very deeply impressed with the force of your arguments, yet being fully persuaded, notwithstanding what you say of the holy nature of your doctrine, that it needed only be read by a certain

description of people in order to be imbibed; and not supposing your work to have a very extensive circulation; I thought it might be as well to let it alone.'

There is but one thing that I clearly understand in this reason of your silence, which is, that you apprehended your coming forward would greatly extend the knowledge of the universal doctrine, which at present is, you suppose, confined in a very narrow circle. Whether the compliment you pay to your own great name, or your want of confidence in the truth of your own cause, be the most prominent in this curious sentence, I shall leave others to determine. Meanwhile I should be glad to know who this description of people is, that are so ready to receive the doctrine; and on whose account you kept a prudent silence, till I 'compelled you to pursue a different conduct.' You add,

3d. 'Your two letters appeared to me to contain so many misapprehensions, and such a quantity of perversion of the plain meaning of scripture, that I felt it a kind of hopeless undertaking to go about to correct them.'

These are your reasons for not answering my letters before. If, as you hint in your second reason, the universal doctrine is dangerous to the morals of a certain description of men; and if I had so perverted the meaning of scripture, as you intimate in your third reason, I should have thought that you would not have kept silence, no, not for an hour, but have borne an immediate testimony against so dangerous an error, which was supported by so manifest a perversion of the word of God. But the *hopelessness* of the undertaking prevented the exercise of your zeal! I do not see, Sir, that you have any occasion for despairing thoughts; you certainly have the popular side of the question; you are

measure of superiority of numbers; you have the prejudices of both professor and profane in your favour; add to this, that you have the free use of a publication of which I am the editor, so that I am actually making known your objections against my own sentiments, and inviting mankind to read, judge, and determine. Prudence might have dictated a very contrary conduct to me, and have whispered, 'it might be as well to let it alone;' and if I had been conscious of any 'weakness' of my cause, I probably should have hearkened to the voice of Prudence---but TRUTH COURTS THE PUBLIC OBSERVATION OF MEN.

I thank you for your civility in permitting me either to pay myself a compliment, or load myself with a censure, concerning what you said of my *speculative* disposition. I fully absolve you of any intention of *compliment* to me in the use of that term; but I still think that you meant to convey a censure; for, to say that a man is 'of a speculative disposition,' would be enough to ruin a minister's character in most orthodox baptist churches in England.

I have neither more time or inclination for 'a wrangle about words' than yourself. I am willing to submit a comparison of my two former letters with this of yours to all the world in this point.

You say I have not told you whether I claim an exemption from endless punishment as a *right*; but seem to wish you to think that this is not my ground. Really, Sir, I do not care a straw which way you think of it in the present state of the controversy. It behoves you to prove that endless misery is threatened in scripture to any description of sinners whatever. This is what you affirm and I deny. Prove your point, and every thing else follows of course; but till then I shall esteem all this as mere quibble, raised only to hide the main question.

Having, by your own confession, inspected the first and

second volumes of the Universalist's Miscellany; you cannot be ignorant that I admit correspondents of very different sentiments from my own; your reference to other parts of the Miscellany; not written by me, and making me answerable for the sentiments, is as reasonable as though I should refer to the sentiments of a great number of Calvinists, and make you answerable for them all, however different they might be from your own. Surely, you might be content yourself with pointing out *my own* 'many mistakes and apprehensions,' and exposing *my own* 'perversions of the plain meaning of scripture,' since you affirm I have so many of them.

You remind me of a part of your second question to which you say I have given no answer. I apprehend that I did return a competent answer to this in the beginning of my second letter; but for your satisfaction I will add to it. 'What doctrine *besides* that of universal salvation,' say you, 'will you find in the Bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death?' You triumphantly add, 'Was this question equally irrelative to the subject as the doctrine of election?' I answer, 'The same question may be asked with the same propriety concerning the Calvinistic doctrine of Election. It only requires an assumption in the one case which you have made in the other. Let us try---What doctrine *besides* that of unconditional unfrustrable election do you find in the Bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on in his trespasses, and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in them till death?' I have expressly allowed that it will be always ill with the wicked---that a sinner, as such, can have no enjoyment of God; but that God will pursue sin in every state in which it is found with

his displeasure. And this I have supposed to be perfectly consistent with the restitution of all things. You have, I think, without reason assumed that this view of things ‘affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death.’ Let the world judge whether your question does not go on an unfounded assumption, which applies as much to the doctrine of election as to that of the restoration of all things. When you have proved, or at least attempted to prove, that your question is founded on fact, I may then either confess its truth, or expose its falsehood more fully.

I your next section * you go on in the same unfounded manner, *supposing* me to raise the hopes of the ungodly part of my audience with respect to the duration of future punishment, &c. and then *supposing* me ashamed to look them in the face another day, and especially to look him in the face who hath charged me to be pure from the blood of all men.

You blame me for not answering this, and ask again, ‘Was this equally irrelative to the subject as to the doctrine of election?’ I answer, It was equally so. I might *suppose* as many things upon the one subject as you upon the other, and neither of us suppose any thing to the purpose. Pray, Sir, inform the world what argument there is in a string of suppositions? and what blame is to be attached to the man who is charged with not answering them? I looked your question full in the face, and admitted the full latitude of God’s threatenings towards sinners, and the execution of them too; contending, at the same time, that all punishment is limited; for which I gave, not a string of suppositions, but a variety of reasons; among other

* Mr. F.’s Letters, p. 14.

things I observed that your third question was *founded upon the idea that my views invalidate the threatenings of God towards sinners*. To all this you have wisely said---*nothing*.

But you have represented me as saying that the whole of your third question proceeded upon the supposition of my denying *all* future punishment. I refer you to my letter again, Sir, for the correction of your judgment in this point. There you will find, that when I considered your third question, namely, 'Whether my ministrations on this principle (of the universal doctrine) will not savour of *his*, who taught our first parents, *Ye shall not surely die?*' I answered, If I thought that there should not be *any* future punishment, your insinuation would not be without reason; but the ground of your question, with all its train of suppositions, I stated to be as above. I do not charge you with a wilful perversion of truth; but I think if you had attended to the subject in a direct and open manner, instead of raising dust to hide it, by misrepresenting your opponent, you would not have furnished this proof to the public eye of '*talents for fair and plain reasoning being perverted by a system.*'

Hitherto I have found nothing in your letter that is immediately to the point, but have been forced to shape my course after you. If the reader should find it not so profitable as might be wished, he will recollect that it is a course of which I had not the choice.

As in your next section you have the appearance of leaving supposition and insinuation, and using some sort of argument, I wish to give your reasons their full weight; I will not therefore enter into them at this time, but give them a fair and cool discussion in some subsequent letters;

Yours, &c.

Oct. 9, 1799.

W. VIDLER.

LETTER IV.

REASONS WHY THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED WILL NOT BE ENDLESS, AND DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING MR. F.'S SENSE OF THE WORDS EVERLASTING, ETERNAL, &c.

SIR,

I NOW, with pleasure, attend you in considering your objections against the limitation of future punishment; but I confess myself at a loss how to do it regularly, on account of your very confused and desultory manner of writing; for though you contend for never-ending punishment to the wicked, from the use of the words *everlasting*, &c. yet you allow the limited use of these same words, of which you give several instances: however, I will endeavour to attend to your ideas with what perspicuity I can.

You say, though I contend that the scriptures no where teach the doctrine of endless punishment, yet I am aware that they *appear* so to do, and am obliged to have recourse to a method of weakening the force of words to get rid of them.---As this relates to the scripture words *ever*, *everlasting*, &c. which are sometimes connected with future punishment, I will make a few remarks upon the subject.

The word *everlasting* is used in the whole Bible, in connection with *punishment*, only seven times---Isa. xxxiii. 14. Dan. xii. 2. Mat. xvi. 8. and xxv. 41 and 46. 2 Thes. i. 9. ude, 6. The first of these passages, according to Bishop Lowth, does not refer to *future* punishment at all, but contains the language of the wicked Jews while under the execution of divine wrath upon their country by Sennacherib, who burnt up their towns and villages. And the latter pas-

sage relates to the *angels which kept not their first estate*; so that, in all the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the word *everlasting* is connected with the future punishment of *men* only five times; yet this same word is used in the scriptures at least *ninety* times, very generally indeed in relation to things that either have ended or must end. Is this a proof that the scriptures *appear* to teach endless punishment? The whole Old Testament, till we come to the prophecy of Daniel, never uses the word in this relation, and having *once* used it, this sacred book closes without so using it again; and that notwithstanding all the warnings of the prophets, and their frequent threatenings against sinners. We find also, that, out of twenty-seven books, of which the New Testament consists, composed and written by seven apostles or evangelists, that *everlasting* is used only four times in relation to the future punishment of men.

As for the word *eternal*, it is the same in the original which is translated *everlasting*. It is used in the text and margin upwards of forty times in the whole Bible, out of which there are only two which can be supposed to relate to future punishment --- Mark, iii. 29; and Jude, 7. From hence we see, that as the Old Testament writers use the word only once in relation to future punishment, so of the New Testament writers, St. Luke never uses the word *everlasting* or *eternal* in this relation in his gospel, nor in the Acts, though in the latter he records so many of the apostolic sermons both to Jews and gentiles. St. John never uses it in his gospel, nor his three epistles.

* The four gospels were written at different *times* by the four evangelists, at different *places*, and before they were collected into one volume, there were thousands of genuine Christians who had died in the truth, who had seen only one gospel. If the doctrine of *eternal* misery be so evident a truth as Messrs.

Neither St. James or St. Peter ever use it in their epistles; and of fourteen epistles written by Paul, only one mentions the word *everlasting* as connected with future punishment*. When I reflect that the word which we render *everlasting* and *eternal*, was, by the Old Testament writers, most generally applied to things limited in their duration, and that the same word is used by a few of the writers of the New Testament only a few times in relation to future punishment, I cannot think that any man who reads the scriptures with candour and attention, can say that they appear to teach the doctrine of endless punishment—unless there be something in the nature of future punishment itself which necessarily leads us to receive the word in an endless sense. In this case it is not the *word* but the *subject* which gives the idea of endless duration. You are sensible of this, for in your second letter you thus address me—' Admitting all you allege in favour of the limited sense of the above terms, (*everlasting* and *eternal*) still the nature of the subject, the connection and scope of the passages, together with the use of various other forms of expression which convey the same thing, are sufficient to prove that when

Fuller and Scrutator would persuade us, and if the true meaning of *αιωνιος* be *eternal*, &c. then the evangelists Luke and John were guilty of a capital omission in not mentioning it in their gospels. But, as we have reason to suppose that these holy men inserted in their evangelical histories every thing necessary to be believed by a Christian in order to salvation, we can but think that a man may be a very good Christian and not believe a word about *eternal* misery. The same will apply in respect to the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke; in all the sermons preached by Paul and the other apostles, which are there recorded, the word which, in our common translation, is rendered *eternal* and *everlasting* does not occur in connection with punishment. Would an evangelical minister of modern times have so written, and so preached the gospel? I trow not.

* 1 Thes. i. 9.

applied to the doctrine of future punishment, they are to be understood without any limitation.

I was in great hope, when I read this, that you would have produced some of the various forms of scripture expression which convey the idea of endless duration; and have given some reasons, taken from the nature of future punishment, to shew that it must be endless. The whole which you have done on this head is to intimate that, after this world is ended, successive duration consequently terminates; and that the words *day* and *night*, in Rev. xiv. 10. are a figurative mode of expression to denote perpetuity; especially as the same language is used, you say, by the inhabitants of heaven, ch. vii. 15. It follows, then, that your best ground for believing that there is no successive duration after the end of this world, is only a figurative expression or two. And do you think this a sufficient warrant for you to believe and teach the tremendous doctrine of endless damnation on?

As for your sneer about the New Jerusalem's filling up the sea, &c. I leave you to enjoy it, while I go on to give some reasons why future punishment will not be endless.

Every thing proper to be believed concerning our Maker must be founded in the manifest *fitness* of that thing-----or on the general evidence of God's *providence*-----or on *revelation*. Now there is nothing in the nature of endless torment which can evince its *fitness*---nothing in the analogy of providence that can make it *credible*---nothing in the sacred scripture, consistently understood, to *support* it.

I lay it down as a maxim, to be doubted by few and denied by none, that *whosoever doth any thing, foreseeing the certain event thereof, willeth that event.* If a parent send children into a wood in which grow poisonous berries, and certainly know that they will eat of them, it is of no

importance, in the consideration of common sense, that he cautions, or forewarns, that they, having free-will, may avoid the poison. Who will not accuse him of their death in sending them into such circumstances where he foreknew it would happen? God foreknows every thing; to his knowledge every thing is certain. Let us suppose him about to create twenty men: he knows ten of them will become vicious, therefore damned, and thence inherit the unceasing penalty. Who doubts, in such a case, that he wills the end, who, being almighty and all knowing, does that without which it could not come to pass: but he hath sworn by himself, for he could swear by no greater, that he *willeth not the death of him that dieth*; that is, he willeth it not as death finally, or simply, or destruction irrecoverable. If therefore it occur, it is a part of his economy of grace, and finally a ministration unto life; for he hath declared that it is his will that all should be saved*; therefore

* In the course of my correspondence with Mr. F. I have stated that I did not contend for universal *salvation*, (which excludes all future punishment,) but for universal *restoration*. It is evident that Mr. F. understood this to be the case from the first; for though he uses the phrase 'universal *salvation*', when he speaks of my sentiments, and, I think, often reasons as though I denied all future punishment, yet when I noticed this in my second letter to him, he replied-- 'You represent the whole of this third question as proceeding on the supposition of your denying *all* future punishment. *But is not this a gross misrepresentation?* Does not the whole foregoing passage allow that you admit of future punishment of limited duration?' p. 15. of Mr. F.'s second letter. Great part of Mr. F.'s fifth letter appeared to me to go on the ground of my believing universal salvation; I therefore declared that I never believed that sentiment, but that I was contending for universal *restoration*, which admitted future punishment according to character. The *gentle* Scrutator is astonished at this; says that '*fifteen* letters had passed between Mr. F. and myself before I had even hinted at this distinction.'--Hints that an illness which I had experienced during the controversy, had weakened my intellects.--Says, that 'the distinction betwixt *salvation* and *restoration* has been but *lutely* made by the universalists.'--That I 'once thought *salvation* synonymous with *restoration*.'-----

the doctrine which forges any contrary will, falsifies supreme unchangeable truth. And, were not reason on my side, I would say to all objectors, *Let God be true, and every man a liar.*

That my 'having made this distinction while disputing with Mr. F. has every appearance of a shuffle for the purpose of getting rid of an argument. All this he utters (and a great deal more of the like kind, for twenty-two pages together—see his letters, p. 55, 56.) in the character of a reviewer, and close observer of every thing that passed, p. 9. After this sample of close observation and candid report, the reader may judge of the degree of credit which ought to be given to the statements of this nameless writer.

The distinction betwixt salvation and restoration was made, probably, before the pious and confident Scrutator was born; as a proof of which, I will give the reader the following quotation from 'Universal Restitution a Scripture Doctrine,' by the Rev. Mr. Stonehouse, vicar of Islington. Printed in 1761.

'In the Greek testament this passage (1 Tim. ii. 4. *he will have all men to be saved*.) runs thus—*ος παντας ανθρωπους θελει σωθηναι*. But first, we affirm that the word *sared* can by no means be a fit translation of the Greek word *σωθηναι* in this passage, because what it imports is so contrary to the sentiments of an apostle who so well knew that all men would not be saved from the wrath of God, (Col. iii. 6.) *which should come upon the children of disobedience*. St John, in a like case, speaks thus, (1 John, v. 15.)—*If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he will give him life for him that sinneth not unto death: there is a sin unto death, I say that he shall not pray for it: for God willeth not that his people should pray in vain.* Deut. iii. 26. Jer. vii. 16. xv. 1.

'But can it be believed otherwise than that St. Paul must have thought too like St. John, to have advised Timothy to pray for what he well knew could never be? Whereas, on the other hand, supposing St. Paul's directions to Timothy to have been only to recommend all men in his prayers to the mercy of Jesus Christ, this was acceptable to God, and a praying after the mind of God; since his will is, that all men shall be restored, or recover their original spiritual life; and so be delivered from a state of misery.

'It is also praying to some purpose, not only because God knows how to shew mercy to those that perish, as well as to those that are saved; but because he has in his eye the real, though distant, restitution, delivery, and quickening of all his creatures, having (1 Tim. ii. 6.) *given himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time* (το μαρτυριον καιροισι ιδιαις).

‘ I lay it down as another indubitable maxim, that whatsoever is done by a being of the divine attributes is intended by his goodness, conducted by his wisdom, and accomplished by his power to a good end. Now all possible

‘ But 2dly. It being evident that St. Paul could not order Timothy to pray that all men might be saved, we will examine what he must have advised Timothy to do in the word *σωθῆναι*—and this will appear in the following texts, where the words *σωζω, σωζομαι*, must evidently intend what is very different from the meaning of our English words TO SAVE, TO BE SAVED, as that word is usually understood by us.

‘ Mat. ix. 21, 22. *And the woman (with the issue of blood) said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, (σωθῆσομαι) I shall be (not saved, but) restored to health; and the woman (ισωθη) was (not saved, but) restored to health from that hour.* Mark, v. 21--23. *And Jairus besought him greatly, saying, I pray thee lay thy hands upon her, (σωσας σωθη) that she (his daughter) might (not be saved, but) be restored to health.* Mark, vi. 56. *And as many as touched him (ησωζοντο) were recovered to health.* John, xi. 12. *And his disciples said, Lord, if he (Lazarus) sleep (σωθησται) he shall be (not saved, but) restored to health.* Acts, xiv. 9. *And Paul, perceiving that he had faith (σωθῆναι) to be restored to health, said—See also, Luke, viii. 36. xviii. 42. Acts, iv. 9. and James, v. 15.*

‘ Hence then let us take our notion of the words *σωζω, σωζομαι*, when applied to the following texts: 2 Tim. ii. 4. *Who wills that all men (σωθῆναι) should be (not saved from the wrath prepared, but) restored to health, and come to the acknowledgment of the truth.* John, iii. 17. *God sent his son into the world that the world through him might be (not saved from hell, but) restored to health (ισωθη ο κοσμος δι αυτου).* 1 Tim. iv. 10. *Who is the (σωτηρ) restorer of all men, especially of the faithful, (because he saves them even from the wrath prepared.)* 1 John, iv. 14. *We do testify that the Father sent the son to be (σωτηρα του κοσμου) the restorer of the world, notwithstanding its previous doom to the æonian fire.* So again, John, iv. 42. *This is indeed the restorer of the world, the Christ, (αληθως σωτηρ του κοσμου, ο χριστος) i. e. because the world's recovery, or restoration, will be its last resource in Christ, therefore is our Lord thus called its restorer.*

‘ A critical observer will, I think, find the words *σωζω, σωζομαι*, when spoken with reference to a state of evil or danger, into which a man is fallen, to signify to deliver, to rescue: so Mat. xxvii. 42. *He delivered (εσωσεν) others, can he not deliver (αυσαι) himself?*

good ends may be enumerated under three heads---*honour* ---*pleasure*---*benefit*; and every one to whom good can accrue from endless punishment, must be either *punisher*, *punished*, or *fellow-creature* to the punished. Let us try every one of the former three to each of the latter.

1st. The *punisher*. Would it be greater *honour* to him to have his creatures endlessly miserable than happy?----- Every unsophisticated heart will say, No. Would it be a greater *pleasure*? No; for *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*. *Benefit* he can have none ----*There is no profit in their blood*.

2d. The *punished*. Punishment can be neither *honour* nor *pleasure* to them, nor can *endless* punishment be of any *benefit*; but *limited* punishment, to humble and subdue the sinner, will be of endless benefit.

3d. The *fellow-creatures*. Can it be any *honour* to them? Who ever thought it an honour that one of his fa-

* But when spoken in reference to a state of happiness or blessing lost, or from which man is fallen, it signifies *to restore*, or *recover*; so Luke, xix. 10. *The son of man is come to seek and (σωσαι το απολωθρον) to recover that which is lost*.

* So that though in English we say a man is *delivered* out of a state of danger or misery, and that he is *restored* into a state of security and happiness, yet in Greek the same verb answers both purposes.

* But I no where find that the verb σωζω imports the same with the verb τηρω--When the Greeks would signify *to save*, *preserve*, or *keep from mischief*, they used τηρω: so John, xvii. 15. *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst save, preserve, or secure them (να τηρησθης αυτους) from the evil one*. Rev. iii. 10. *I will preserve, secure, or save thee (τηρησω σε) from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them*. Jude, 1. *Jude the servant of Jesus Christ to the sanctified by God the Father, preserved, secured, saved (τητηρημενοις) in Jesus Christ, &c.* 1 Thes. v. 23. *I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body, be preserved, secured, saved (τηρηθειν) blameless, unto the coming of our Lord*. And thus it is also said of worldly treasures; as John, ii. 10. *But thou hast preserved, secured, saved (τητηρηκας) the good wine until now*.

mily was hanged for robbery or murder: Is it not a dishonour to human nature at large that any part of it should be rendered irrecoverably abject and miserable? Can any creature have *pleasure* in the *endless* punishment of another? In the limited punishment of the wicked the holiest and most benevolent creature may have pleasure in the view of its fruits. *Beneft* they can have none, except safety; and that is fully answered by the confinement of the wicked in hell till their reformation.

As then endless torments can answer no possible good end to any one in the universe; I conclude them to be neither the work nor the will of God, and consequently not the doctrine of scripture.

You seem to lay great stress upon the same word being used by our Lord, in relation both to future happiness and misery, in Mat. xxv. 46. But I conceive that no solid argument can be drawn from the application of the same word to different things to prove their endless continuance unless their *nature* be the same. Take, for instance, Hab. iii. 16. *He stood and measured the earth; he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the EVERLASTING mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are EVERLASTING.* I ask, Are the mountains *everlasting* in the same sense in which the ways of God are?--- Is it not, rather, clear, that, in this very text, the ways of God are spoken of as being of a different nature from the mountains, which were *scattered*? and the hills, which did *bow*? Notwithstanding which, the same word is applied to both.

I think that there is a vast difference indeed in the nature of future blessedness and future punishment; so great a difference as fully to justify us in giving a very different sense to the word *everlasting* when applied to each of these subjects. Let any man consider that the happiness of the

saints arises from their enjoyment of God as their portion, he will see then that it has its root and foundation in God, as the existence of the creature itself also has; for God is the source and proper spring both of the life and blessedness of his creatures. Not so the sin and misery of the wicked; these have no root or foundation in God. Sin is the act of the creature only, and misery is, by the divine appointment, the consequence of sin; but though God willingly blesses and makes men happy, yet *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* Life and blessedness flow naturally from God, in whom are all our springs; and being thus grounded in him, will be, like him, eternal in duration: but to ascribe proper eternity to sin and misery, which have no ground in him whatever, but which are contrary to both his holiness and benevolence, is, to say the least of it, a most unguarded mode of speaking.

It seems to me, Sir, that you have several times in your letters, descended from cool and sober disquisition of principles to low sarcasm, if not personal abuse. So bad an example as this I wish not to follow: for if you should be altogether mistaken in your judgment of the point in debate, yet I should have no license from hence to despise your person; question your integrity, or ridicule your attempts to maintain your sentiment. Indeed it is a maxim with me, that no man will treat his opponent in this manner, unless he is in want of better argument to support his cause. The following are samples of your manner of treating both myself and the subject--- 'It has long been the practice of writers on your side the question,' say you, 'to ring changes on the words *aion* and *aionios*; pretty words, no doubt; and could they be proved to mean less than our English-words *everlasting* and *eternal*, they might be something to the purpose: but if not, the continual re-

currence to them is *a mere affectation of learning, serving to mislead the ignorant*. Be this as it may, this is an exercise which hardly becomes you or me.' P. 16. And again, you talk of my introducing my '*sing-song of aionas and aionons,*' p. 22. If you, Sir, have not such an acquaintance with these *pretty words*, as to discriminate their agreement with or difference from our English words *everlasting* and *eternal*, you might have been content with confessing your *own* ignorance---it would have been modest in you so to have done, without implicating me in the same charge. I assure you that *there is* an agreement betwixt these Greek words and our English translation, in this--that they are both frequently used *in scripture* to denote periods of limited and unlimited duration, and therefore I infer that the subject only can determine when we are to take them in one sense or the other. And there is also a disagreement; for the English words *eternal*, *everlasting*, and *eternity*, will not admit any plural, which the Greek *aion* and its derivatives do; for instance, who ever read of *eternals*, *everlastings*, and *eternities*, or of *this* eternity and *that* eternity? But in the New Testament we read of the *επι συντελεια των αιωνων*, Heb. ix. 26. If *eternity* be the meaning of *aion*, then we must read thus---*the conclusion of the eternities*. We have the same difficulty occur in 1 Cor. x. 11. and in 1 Cor. ii. 7. we read *απο των αιωνων*---would you say---*before the eternities began?* Again, we read of *this aion*, as Luke, xvi. 8. xx. 34, and 1 Cor. ii. 6. Also of *that aion*, Luke, xx. 35. Now, Sir, will you contend that it must be read *this eternity* and *that eternity?* Yet thus it must be according to your hypothesis.

Thus you see, or 'may see,' that these *pretty words* are rather less expressive of endless duration than the English words *everlasting* and *eternal*; and if writers on my side of the question often recur to them, it is not to mislead but

to inform the ignorant. I hope and believe that I have always made a just and sober use of criticism, upon this and every other subject. If I have not, I stand open to your correction, or to the correction of any of the numerous ministers of your sentiment. The rule I go by is that which was laid down by the best critics, without any relation to the present subject, *viz.* That where a word is used in relation to different things, the subject itself must determine the meaning of the word. Thus, if the name Jehovah be given to an altar, a city, or to the church,---or the word God be applied to Christ, to Moses, to rulers, or to Satan, we must understand these words in a very different sense than when applied to the Father. Or again, when the word *infinite* is used in reference to the understanding of God, Ps. cxlvii. 5.---to the resources of Ethiopia and Egypt, Hab. iii. 9.---to the sins of Job, xxii. 5. no man would hardly understand the word in the same sense at each place. So when *everlasting*, &c. is applied to the hills, to the covenant of circumcision, to future punishment, to the life of believers, and to God, no considerate man will surely attach the idea of equal duration to all these subjects, but will judge of the duration of each according to their nature. How incautious then must it be in you to say that in this manner I might disprove almost any thing I pleased; and that it is not in the power of language to stand before such methods of criticising and reasoning as those on which I build my system. Certain I am, it is a rule which you, and every other man of sense, must have constant recourse to; nor do I believe that you will, a second time, have the temerity to reprove me for the use of it. As for what you say about the term *endless*, it is evident that we are in the daily habit of applying the above rule to this word, and thereby judging of its meaning.

But you ask, ' Could stronger terms have been used concerning the duration of future punishment than are used?' This seems an important question in your view, yet I do not see its vast weight; for the question ought not to be what language God could have used, but, What is the meaning of that which he has used? However, if the question relate to the English language, then the answer is ready, for every brawler of endless damnation will tell his audience of misery which will endure *as long as God exists!* This is rather stronger language than any which is used in the Bible. But if you refer to the Greek language, then without any ' affectation of learning,' I refer you to Heb vii. 16. --- *ακαταλυστος*, *endless*, say our translators. The word is never connected in scripture with punishment, and but this once only with life; which, however, shews that the sacred writers speak of future life in a different way than they do of future punishment. Beside which we are told that *Israel shall never be ashamed nor confounded,* WORLD WITHOUT END. ' Isa. xlv. 17. There is no language of like import used any where in the scriptures concerning the punishment of sinners.

Surely, therefore, here I may be allowed to reverse your language, and say, ' *It is idle* to bring forward the words *everlasting* and *eternal* in order to prove endless punishment, seeing they are rendered weak from their vague indeterminate application in scripture; and also seeing there are phrases, both in the Greek and English languages, which are more strongly expressive of eternal duration.'

If this language should sound harsh in your ears, you will recollect that it is not my own. I will at present defer the consideration of your third letter, and remain, Sir,

Yours, &c.

Oct. 28, 1799.

W. VIDLER.

LETTER V.

MR. F.'S MISTAKE ABOUT ANNIHILATION NOTICED, AND
PROOF THAT ALL PUNISHMENT STANDS ON THE GROUND
OF MEDIATION.

SIR,

I AM extremely at a loss to know how to begin my remarks on your third letter. You set off by charging me with believing the doctrine of *annihilation*; and great part of your letter goes to prove the inconsistency of this sentiment with that of the universal restoration. Whatever variance there may be betwixt these doctrines, you are the *first*, and I think will be the *last* * man who has or will charge me with holding them both. I know many wiser and better men than I am who do believe the doctrine of annihilation; and many also who have gone from the belief of endless misery to annihilation, and from that to the doctrine of universal restoration. I have also observed that this is no uncommon process in the minds of thinking men; but for my own part, I never did believe annihilation. Indeed I think it much preferable to the doctrine of endless misery, as being less inconsistent with the divine character; but I never was fully satisfied of its truth, and am much less so now than ever, chiefly because I think it contradicts a great number of scriptures, which either imply, promise, or foretel an universal restoration.

For proof of my holding with it, you refer to a passage

* I was mistaken in this: see the VERY CURIOUS Review of Mr. Fuller's Letters in the Theological Magazine, in the Preface to this work.

in my second letter : for the sake of the reader I will transcribe the passage---

‘ The universal sentiment is, in my view, above all others, friendly to holiness. It holds forth the scripture declaration of punishments according to works more clearly than any other. The doctrine of annihilation gives indiscriminate and *endless death* to ALL the wicked. And the doctrine of endless misery seems to confound all degrees of punishment in giving infinite punishment to them *all*. But limited punishment, which is included only in the universal doctrine, shews clearly how it may be *more* or *less* tolerable in judgment for one sinner than another, and how one may have *few* stripes and another *many*.’

How it could enter into your heart to conceive that there is any thing in the above lines, expressive of my belief in the doctrine of annihilation, I cannot divine, seeing I opposed it both to endless misery and the restoration of all things, and decidedly gave my approbation to the latter. I also added, in the same page, that though I believed the wicked should *perish*, should *die* the *second death*, yet there should be a *restitution of all things*. This idea I thought to be in direct opposition to the *endless death* of annihilation. If there had been ambiguity in my mode of expression, I should then have taken the blame of your egregious blunder to myself; but as it is, I must either suppose that you knew not how to meet the subject in a fair and open manner, and therefore threw dust in the air to hide it; (and the use you make of annihilation in general, but especially in the close of your letter, where you dextrously shift a difficulty by its means, has made many believe this to be the truth;) or rather, which I am inclined to suppose is the fact, that you had a contemptible opinion both of the universal doctrine and of myself as an advocate for it; and this led you to write at random, without much consideration

on the subject. I should not thus judge, had not you, when making use of my supposed belief of annihilation, added, ‘ *Such, Sir, are your expositions of scripture. Except in the productions of a certain MANIAC in our own country, I never recollect to have seen so much violence done to the word of God in so small a compass.*’

Whether any thing which I have said justly deserves such a comparison from you, your cooler reflections will determine.

As for all the jargon and nonsense which your mistake has led you to place to my account, I pass it over, which I think will save you much trouble, as you will no longer have occasion to puzzle your head to find out how all men are to be finally saved, and yet many annihilated.

I have said, that ‘ I believe punishment of all degrees and durations to be a mediatorial work, and that its foundation is mercy,’ and yet I allow there will come a time when some sinners will have *judgment without mercy*. This you cannot comprehend. I beg leave, Sir, to assist your comprehension by remarking that *the father judgeth no man, but hath committed ALL judgment unto the son, and hath given him power to EXECUTE judgment also, because he is the son of man.* JOHN, v. 22. 27. I consider these words as fully expressive of the universal empire of Christ, by the Father’s gift. For what can be more demonstrative of sovereign dominion than the full exercise of judgment, and the execution of it? If we require further proof of this empire of Jesus, we are informed that all power in heaven and in earth is committed into his hand---that *he hath the keys of hell and of death*. Now I conceive that all government is in the hands of the mediator, and that punishment is an essential part of government: hence I infer, that punishment, of all degrees and durations, is a mediatorial work, and that its foundation is mercy. And this is a

point you will not dispute, so far as it relates to the elect. These, you suppose, are the special objects of God's love---are given into the hand of Christ in order to be saved---are interested in every thing which Christ has done in his priestly character---that they are immediately under his government, and that he oftentimes punishes them in a most heavy and tremendous manner; yet all this is a mediatorial work, and founded in mercy, and shall end in their welfare. These ideas are good, so far as they extend; I only would apply them to the whole human race. I suppose that God loves the world---that *he is good to all*, and that *his tender mercy is over all his works*---that *the Father loveth the son, and hath given all things into his hands* in order to be saved; for this is the Father's will, *that of all which he hath given to Christ he should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day*---that all are interested equally in what Christ has done in his priestly character; for *he, by the grace of God, tasted death for all*---that all are immediately under his government, for *he is Lord both of the living and the dead*---that he will judge and execute judgment upon all in order to effect the great work of gathering all together in himself as their one head. And the father has appointed the times, seasons, and ages in which to perform this work. It is on this ground, Sir, that I suppose punishment of all degrees and durations to be a mediatorial work, and founded upon mercy. This is a principle which neither you, nor any other man, who believes the scripture, will dare to deny. As you all make use of it in relation to believers, the only question is, whether I have applied the principle in too great a latitude or not. If you can prove that God loves only the elect, that Christ died only for them, and that the present life is the only period in which men can experience mercy, it will then follow, that I have extended the principle too far.

It is upon this great principle also, that I suppose there may be judgment without mercy, and yet that mercy shall triumph over judgment. The scripture affords instances of punishment and pardon to the same persons and for the same sins, as David---the Lord put away his sin that he should not die; yet he was punished by the death of his child, and by the rebellion of Absalom, 2 Sam. xii. And God threatens Jerusalem (after declaring her sins to be greater, than those of Sodom and Samaria) thus---*I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, &c. Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant---And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* Ezek. xvi. 60---63. And to the same people for the same sins, after denunciations of dreadful judgment, he says, *So will I make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.* Ezek. xvi. 42. And in Isaiah, xl. 1, 2. Jerusalem is to be comforted, and the prophet is to say to her, *that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.* It appears to me that the great purpose of God is to gather together in one all things in Christ Jesus, and that judgment and mercy are united in accomplishing this work, and that there is a fulness or sufficiency of times to be dispensed in order to its accomplishment. Hence I see a harmony in the Scriptures, a beauty in all the ways of God. Judgment and mercy do not in my view contradict

each other; they conspire to the same end, and hence I can comprehend how God can punish and yet pardon.

The idea that the present life is the only period in which men can experience mercy, seems to be a great ground of the doctrine of endless misery. I have before given some proof of successive duration after the day of judgment; this you are dissatisfied with, and suppose that *day and night* are only figurative expressions, used to denote *perpetuity*, especially as the same language is used of the inhabitants of heaven, Rev. vii. 14. I am not quite satisfied that the inhabitants of *heaven* are referred to in this passage. It is an idea long ago brought forward by our best writers upon the revelation of John, that his general language, thoughts, and figures of speech are drawn from the ancient prophets: and in fact that the Revelation is a continuation and enlargement of old testament prophecy. With this sentiment full in my view I read Rev. vii. which gives an account of the sealed ones, who came out of much tribulation, worshipping God *day and night* in his temple; and that they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither the sun light on them nor any heat; but that the lamb shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water, and that God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. I turn to Isaiah, from which prophet the language of the Revelator is borrowed, and I learn that he is describing a millennial scene, and pointing out the blessedness of those who have suffered tribulation for Christ; for the prophet says, ‘the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the *earth*,’ chap. xxv. 9. And in chap. xlix. in which we find the rest of John’s language, it is evident that the scene is laid on *earth*; for at the very time that God will give this blessedness to such as suffered for Christ, he will make all his mountains a way, and his highways shall be ex-

alted, &c. as the *earth*, and the *mountains* are called to break forth into singing, because God had comforted his people. I still suppose therefore, that day and night are to be taken literally as portions of time, whereby we measure ages, periods, and dispensations. I am much confirmed in this opinion with regard to what is said of the punishment of the wicked in Rev. xiv. 10. because Peter, if I understand him aright, represents that this earth, when it is burned up, dissolved, melted, shall be *the place of perdition for ungodly men*; and yet, notwithstanding this, there shall be a new heavens and a new earth, 2 Peter, iii. 7---13. Now I suppose the millenium will be upon the *present* earth, and will commence at Christ's second coming; that it will last a thousand years; that at the beginning of this period the first born saints will be raised and reign with Christ; that during it the whole earth will be converted to Christ---that at the end of it, after a great defection from Christ, the general resurrection and judgment will take place---then this earth and the airy atmosphere, called the heavens, will be burned and dissolved, for the perdition of ungodly men; that after this there will be a glorious renewal of the airy heavens and the earth, that so hell itself will cease and be no more; and all things will be reconciled to the Father by the blood of the cross. Whether these views will be, by you, counted among my *perversions* of Scripture I know not: be that as it may, I am willing to give my reasons for the truth of them whenever you shall require it; meanwhile in my next letter I shall go on to shew, that *evidence of a successive duration after the day of judgment, is no such scarce article in the paths which I am in the habit of tracing* as you suppose.

I am, &c.

Nov. 8, 1799.

W. VIDLER.

LETTER VI.

CONSIDERATIONS ON ETERNITY.---PROOF OF SUCCESSIVE
DURATION AFTER THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.---THE IM-
MUTABILITY OF GOD A GROUND OF THE UNIVERSAL
DOCTRINE.---CASE OF SODOM AND SAMARIA.

SIR,

THE idea that time will end with the present life, and eternity begin with the next, is very common; whence this thought originated is very difficult to say. Upon serious enquiry I find nothing of it in the scriptures. In Rev. x. 6. we have a passage which has often been brought forward upon this subject. *The angel swore-----that there should be time no longer*; but that this cannot be taken in the acceptation of the ending of time and beginning of eternity is evident from the context, which immediately goes on to mention the *days* of the seventh angel, &c. which are to take place after this period. As the late learned Dr. Gill has a valuable exposition of this text, I will transcribe it---

‘ The words will bear to be rendered, as some have observed, *that there should be delay no longer*; that is, (no delay) of the coming and kingdom of Christ; though the bridegroom has tarried, he will come, and will not tarry beyond the time the angel swears to: every seal of the sealed book, (see ch. v. 1.) is a delay of and stop upon the open appearance of Christ’s kingdom; and the opening of every seal is an advance to it; and when the sixth seal was opened, and paganism destroyed, and Christianity spread throughout the empire, the kingdom of Christ might have been expected to have appeared but there was a seventh

seal to be opened, which was a stop upon it, and which, when opened, brought ruin and destruction upon the Christian empire, both western and eastern, under the six first trumpets; and till the seventh sounds, there will be a delay of Christ's kingdom; but when that sounds there will be no more delay.'

The idea that we have of the duration of eternity is certainly a very obscure one; it has been said to be 'an union of consistence and simple continuance.' Whether this definition will convey any clear notion of the subject to others, I know not; but to me I confess it is sufficiently dark. The only method I can think of to conceive with any satisfaction of eternity, is to connect it with the *necessity of the divine existence*; but I find no ability to connect the full idea of eternity with the existence of a creature; for every creature must have had a beginning: but was there an eternity *past* before that creature existed? And will there be an eternity to *come* after it has received its existence? This would make two eternities; an absurdity that I believe is often exhibited in modern orthodox pulpits*. Other men may possibly be possessed of powers which I am not: they may be able to point out in what manner a creature can measure the term of its own existence after the day of judgment without successive duration. Probably, Sir, you can assist me in this point, as you have so positively affirmed that *all successive duration will end at that awful period*.

To me it appears that the scriptures have revealed nothing, either past or to come, but what is connected with

* The scholastic distinction of *æternitas a parte ante* and *æternitas a parte post*, will not help the subject, for I am speaking of *æternitas absolute infinita a parte ante et post*, or such an absolute eternity as is without beginning or end.

the idea of successive duration; and that, concerning proper eternity, we are left to infer it from the nature of deity. *In the Old Testament we read of the sabbath of days, or weekly sabbath; seven years brought about a period called the year of release, or sabbath of years; seven of these periods were included in that grand revolution which brought about the jubilé. This was the comprehensive age, or period, which, as the greater, included all the less* *. Thus the Hebrews obtained the idea of their γ and לשנים ---age and ages. It cannot be *eternity* and *eternities* †. From a similar source the Greeks derived their *aion* and *aiones* ‡, which are used in the Septuagint version in the very same sense; and the writers of the New Testament use the same words, with their derivatives also, in the same manner.

These words are applied to different subjects, and joined with periods of a longer or shorter date; all which are included in the grand comprehensive period of Christ's mediatorial kingdom, which comprehends all ages, yet shall

* The reader's attention is requested to the use which Scrutator makes of this sentence in p. 47. 124. 125. 126. He represents me as saying that *the utmost limits of an age, or aion, does not exceed forty nine years*. Upon this assertion, he reasons in his usual bombastic stile, and insinuates that I suppose *the rewards and punishments of the kingdom of Christ will continue only forty nine years!* &c. &c. That as I have affirmed the proper duration of an *aion* is forty nine years, it cannot therefore mean a year; seventy years; an hundred years; the duration of the world, &c. &c! In this manner he fills several pages with what he appears to think is good reasoning. But the whole of it is totally overthrown by recollecting that I have not said 'the utmost limit of an age is forty-nine years;' but that, *in Jewish reckoning*, the jubilé was the comprehensive age which included the smaller ages in it. Has the *keen*, the *profound*, the *accurate* Scrutator disproved this? Why does this gentleman give himself the liberty to misrepresent my words? does he think, by this means, to fasten on me all the nonsense which he thus takes occasion to utter in my name?

† עלם ועד is more directly *to the age and beyond*.

‡ *Age and ages*.

itself, in its appointed season, come to an end when its purposes are all fulfilled, as the apostle testifies, 1 Cor. xv. 25 ---28. What took place before the creation of the world the scripture has no where unfolded; and what will take place after the subjection of all things to Christ, and his giving up all things to the Father, we do not know, except that then God will be all in all: here revelation drops the curtain, so to speak, including the whole of its communications in the gnolams, aions, or ages of the mediator's reign.

I conceive that the day of judgment is not the finishing period of Christ's kingdom. The execution of judgment must take place after the sentence, and Christ himself is to execute his own righteous award, John, v. 27.; that is, it will be inflicted under his government, by the ministry of his holy angels, Mat. xiii. 41, 42. Rev. xiv. 10. And however awful future punishment may be in its nature, or long in its duration, I judge it will come to an end,

1. Because the words which express its duration are not, in their scriptural use, expressive of proper eternity.

2. Because the nature of it does not lead us to conclude it to be of endless duration.

3. Because this earth (which in its state of conflagration, is to be the hell of wicked men, see 2 Pet. iii. 7---13.) is to be renewed, whereby hell itself will be no more. These ideas have been insisted on in my two last letters; to which I now add,

4. That every knee in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, is to bow to Christ, and every tongue to confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father; but while there is a stubborn knee, even in hell, or a tongue that will not own his government, this cannot be.

5. All things are to be reconciled to the Father by the

blood of the cross; but while any continue in enmity against God, this can never be performed.

Reasons to the same purport might be drawn from many other scriptures; but to pass by them, I add,

6. Christ is to rule till all enemies are subdued; till there be no authority, power, or dominion; but what shall be subject to him; till death, the last enemy; shall be destroyed. And as the wages of sin is death, the second death must be here included, but death can never be destroyed, except by the universal prevalence of life.

And, seventhly, the character of God as LOVE, which is the substance of a multitude of scriptures, is expressly against the horrible idea of the endless misery, or even the annihilation of any of his rational creatures.

If this statement be right, there must be aions, *ages to come*, after the age of judgment; in which ages all punishment will be distributed with unerring wisdom, and to a good and glorious end; and all rewards be conferred with the same wisdom and goodness; for in the *αιωνι*, *ages to come* God will shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, &c. Eph. ii. 7. And the punishment of the wicked will take place during the same ages; for the smoke of their torments is to ascend *εις αιωνας αιωνων*, *to the age of ages*, i. e. to the period of the restitution of all things, which is the closing period of the mediator's kingdom. I hope it will be granted that from the above there is some proof of successive duration after the day of judgment. But if you think otherwise, and will give your reasons, I shall be glad to hear from you again. In the mean time, I cannot but observe, that the advocates of endless misery must be, to say the least of it, very incautious, to rest any part of the proof of this doctrine upon the supposition that successive duration will cease at the day of judgment.

As for what you say about fallen angels not being included in the mediation of Christ, I refer you to 'God's Love to his Creatures Asserted and Vindicated,' which I am now publishing in the Universalist's Miscellany. In page 20---22, you will find an answer to your objections, which I forbear to repeat here, as it was published but last month*.

* 'You represent that the declaration of the angel to the shepherds, and the promise made to Abraham, are quoted in the Address in order to prove that devils would be liberated from the prison of hell. And do you seriously mean to say that we had such a design in quoting the above passages? We can hardly think you do. But our 'hypothesis includes the idea of the liberation of devils from the prison of hell as well as unbelievers of the human race.' What then, do we pretend that every text which includes the restoration of man includes that of devils also? If not, to what purpose do you make the above insinuation? Was it to amuse your readers at the expence of the Universalists? Be it so: while they are smiling, we go on to consider your objections to the restoration of devils.---' How could the birth of the Messiah be a propitious event with regard to them?' say you. 'Our Lord took not on him the nature of angels.' And 'We know at the time, the devils did not consider the birth of Christ as a propitious event with regard to themselves, for they would have prevented it, if possible, because they thought he came to torment them.'

'If we are to conclude that none were interested in the birth of Christ who would have prevented it, or who were afraid of him, what are we to say of Herod and his courtiers and soldiers, who slew the infants of Bethlehem, in order that they might slay the infant Jesus? And what are we to say of Peter, who seems to have thought Christ came to torment him, when he said, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord?' And what are we to say of every sinner when under conviction? Are they not then afraid of Christ? If your mode of reasoning be conclusive, the birth of the Messiah cannot be a propitious event to these. If fear of Christ, or even hatred to him, will endlessly exclude those who have been the subjects of it from a participation of his grace, then alas! how few, even of the human race, can be benefitted by his birth!

'That our Lord took not on him the *nature* of angels, is often rendered as a reason why angels cannot be benefitted by his mediation; but we might as well

I referred you to Lev. xxvi. as an elucidation of the divine conduct in punishing sinners for their sins; and as the design of God in punishing Israel is expressly repre-

say that the gentiles cannot be benefitted by his mediation, and this text would give as much support to one assertion as the other: If he took on him the nature of the seed of Abraham, you infer that all human nature is included in it. May we not infer also that angelic nature is included? For if he lays hold of that order or beings who were originally made lower than the angels, then we may suppose he has not totally passed by the higher order. Our Lord himself has taught us, that a man is more worth than many sparrows, because he is of an higher order of beings than a sparrow; surely then an angel is, for the same reason, more worth than a man, and a fallen angel than a fallen man.

‘But we have no occasion to reason in this manner upon this passage, for the text actually says nothing about Christ’s taking upon him either the nature of man or the nature of angels. This the apostle had mentioned before, Heb. ii. 14. and in v. 15. he gives a reason why Christ took flesh and blood, namely, ‘to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage;’ and then in the verse under consideration he describes the present conduct of Christ in his method of grace, and says indeed of angels, he *ἐπιλαμβάνει* taketh not hold; but of the seed of Abraham he *ἐπιλαμβάνεται* taketh hold: that is, as we conceive, he doth not in the present dispensation of mercy lay hold of angels for their salvation, (for they are reserved for the judgment of the great day;) but he layeth hold of those who, like Abraham, believe the promise of God, Gal. iii. 6, 7.; and these are the first fruits of his creatures, Ja. i. 18. It is to be hoped either that you will shew we are mistaken in this scripture, or that you will cease to quote it to the exclusion of angels from the mediation of Jesus.

‘But though every text which relates to the restoration of men doth not include that of devils, yet we are persuaded some do include both, as Col. i. 19, 20. *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and (having made peace by the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.*’ And also Ephes. i. 10. *That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him.* Let it be observed, that all rational creatures are either things in earth or things in heaven; *i. e.* things of earthly original, or of heavenly original: nothing was made in hell; even hell itself is only the consequence of the creature’s transgression. All the things therefore, which are

sented to be for their good, I inferred that this must be his universal design in punishing his creatures, because God is always the same. You object to this the peculiar dealing

in heaven; or which are in earth, must mean every rational creature that needed reconciliation. That this is the sense of the apostle may be justly urged from Col. i. 15.—*Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature; for by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* It will not be denied that every man and every angel are here included, as being created *by* Christ, and *for* Christ, and having their existence *in* Christ. Paul then goes on to say that Christ is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven. Let any man ask,

‘ 1. Whether it be not here included that Jesus Christ made the *devils*; not indeed as devils, but as pure and holy angels?

‘ 2. Whether Jesus Christ did not make them *for* himself?

‘ 3. Whether Jesus Christ doth not now uphold them in being? For ‘ *by* him all things consist.’

‘ 4. Let him ask, Whether the all things in heaven and in earth in verse 20. which are to be reconciled by the blood of his cross, are not the same all things said to be created by Jesus Christ in verse 16? And if so,

‘ 5. Whether *devils* are not to be reconciled as well as men?

‘ You object against *reconciliation* applying to things in heaven (p. 16.), and ask ‘ Do the holy angels, or the spirits of just men made perfect, need any such reconciliation as that for which you contend?’ We have observed above, that things in heaven and things on earth, mean things of heavenly and things of earthly *original*, and we well know that there was a time when those who are now the spirits of just men needed reconciliation; and as for angels, if they need no reconciliation to God, (which perhaps you will find a difficulty to prove,) yet there must be a reconciliation betwixt them and such as are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ. In this sense Jesus is the center of union, and the medium of reconciliation to all. But you say, ‘ the text mentions nothing of things in hell.’ No; what need, unless the devils and wicked men had been created in hell? Yet if you want a text which extends subjection

of God to the Jews. I grant this peculiarity; but I say that God chose Israel for the good of other nations; for they were to be to him a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS; and his dealing with Israel in rewards and punishments was a miniature delineation of his conduct towards all others. But you reason as though you supposed the government of God was a system of FAVOURITISM, and that he chose Israel to the eternal neglect and rejection of all others. I have long observed that this unscriptural view of election is too prevalent; hence the pride that is so eminently conspicuous in those who count themselves the elect of God; and hence their fierce contempt of other men, whom they judge to be made for purposes of wrath; and hence, I think also, your present reasoning, as though God had regard to no other nation but the Jews, whereas he never left even the heathens without witness of his goodness; for he not only gave them rain and fruitful seasons, and filled their mouths with food and gladness, but also they had so much of his law written upon their hearts as was sufficient to accuse or excuse them in their moral actions; and if they had not the advantage of a revelation, like the Jews, so they had not the guilt of abusing this blessing, 'for the times of their

to Christ and confession of his name to hell, we refer you to Phil. ii. 10, 11. Tell the world (if you can) where *under the earth* is, as distinguished from heaven and earth, and as the habitation of rational creatures, without including hell.

'The dispensation of the fulness of times, Ephes. i. 10. you explain by the fulness of the time, Gal. iv. 4. But is the sense of these texts the same? And is the fulness of the *time* in which God sent his son into the world the same as the dispensation of the fulness of the *times*, in which God has purposed to gather together all things in Christ? In the former there are *times*, and a *fulness of them*, ordained to be dispensed for the great purpose expressed; in the latter there is a fulness of *time past*, in which God has already done the purpose expressed. Why not suppose that, as the period of the one time is accomplished, and the purpose of God performed in it, that the periods of the other times shall be so?'

ignorance God winked at.' I therefore still think that the end which God uniformly pursues in this life he will continue to pursue hereafter (unless he has told us to the contrary); because he is without variableness or shadow of turning; so that however his measures may alter, his end is still the same; nor do I see how you can reasonably infer the contrary while you believe the immutability of God, unless you could prove that natural evil is not always intended for the correction of the offending parties. This, indeed, you attempt to do, by saying, that though you should grant that natural evil be used on earth to correct moral evil in society at large, 'yet we have no proof that the men of Sodom were destroyed by fire, or Pharaoh drowned in the sea, for their good.' If the scriptures were found to be totally silent respecting the future emendation of these characters, yet I should infer it concerning both, because I think that the LAST state of the creature must be that which accords with the PURPOSE of the Creator; hence, if there be any finally incorrigible it must be in consequence of the Divine purpose: or else the purpose of God has been frustrated. The first ascribes cruelty and injustice to the Deity, and the latter ascribes weakness. I cannot possibly admit either of these; but as your scheme includes one of them, you have the satisfaction of chusing which.

But I think the scripture is not silent concerning the future emendation of Sodom. I refer to Ezek. xvi. 44---63, where God is reproaching Jerusalem with her crimes, and representing Samaria and Sodom as SISTERS to Jerusalem (so called on account of sin); and after describing the transgressions of each, and their punishment, God says to Jerusalem, *When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them.* Ver. 53. And again, *When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters,*

shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. Ver. 55. And then, after threatening to deal with Jerusalem according to her sins, he adds, Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder (Samaria, ver. 46.) and thy younger (Sodom, ver. 46.); and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God. I remark here,

1. That Sodom and her daughters must be taken literally for the city of Sodom and the neighbouring cities of the plain; because of their situation on the right-hand of Jerusalem, ver. 46., and because of their sins, pride, fulness of bread, idleness, oppression of the poor, and abomination, *i. e.* the unnatural sin, ver. 49. 52. with Gen. xiii. 10. xix. 4---11.; and because of their punishment, v. 50. Gen. xix. 24, 25.

2. That this prophecy of Ezekiel must refer to the very persons who were destroyed by fire from heaven, because they left no descendants in whom it can be fulfilled, being wholly consumed, both men, women, and children. Lot and his daughters, the only persons who were spared, were strangers in Sodom.

3. That God in this prophecy speaks as plainly as in prophecies in general; and represents the restoration of Sodom as connected with the fulfilment of his most gracious promises, according to the new covenant, towards Jerusalem.

If any man deny the former, he must also deny the latter.

On the whole, I conceive this is a proof that God's past dealings with Sodom shall ultimately tend to the good of that people. And therefore we may reasonably conclude that his dealings with all men shall have the same end.

I would have noticed several other scriptures on which you have formed some difficulties; but as I have given my view of them in that part of *God's Love to his Creatures Asserted and Vindicated*, which was published last month, I will not here repeat it, but refer you to what I have there written, as I judge it contains an answer to you*.

* There are two words of nearly the same import, ἀποκαθίστημι, which is translated *restored*, Mat. xii. 13. Mark, iii. 5. viii. 25. Luke, vi. 10. These passages relate to health or soundness being given to the diseased. Mat. xvii. 11. Mark, ix. 12. These two relate to the ministry of John Baptist, who restored the prophecies concerning the Messiah, to their proper sense. Acts, i. 6. relative to the lost dominion of Israel. It occurs also in a passive form, Heb. xiii. 19. It is evident that, in all these places, the word has the sense of bringing back again something that was lost; and most of the instances have relation to *persons*, not to the creatures who suffer through the offence of man. The other word, ἀποκατάστασις, is in Acts, iii. 21. rendered *restitution*, and connected with *all things*. Mat. xi. 27. *All things are delivered to me of my Father*. John iii. 35. *The Father loveth the son, and hath given all things into his hand*. John, xiii. 3. *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand*. John, xvii. 7. *Now they have known, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee*. In all these places *all things* must include all intelligent creatures, because the subject naturally requires it; for otherwise the gift of the Father to Christ will reach only to the inferior parts of the creation. Beside which Peter declares that this restitution of all things was spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began. Let any man begin, with the first intimation of mercy in the declaration that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; let him consider the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that in them and in their seed (Christ) all the nations, families, and kindreds of the earth should be blessed; let him consider the law in its types of the first-born and younger branches of the family, of the first-

I still think that the doctrine of endless punishment does not give so clear an idea of degrees, as the doctrine of limited punishment does; which was what I said of it in my

fruits and the full harvest and vintage, the seventh year of release, and the grand jubilee that brought liberty to all; let him consider the Psalms, xxii. 26--31. lxxii. 8--11. lxxxvi. 9, &c.; let him go on to the prophets, particularly let him compare Isa. xlv. 23. with Phil. ii. 9--11.; and finally let him ask whether the *restitution of all things* doth not include in it all rational creatures who have fallen from God.

‘You apply the universal salvation, mentioned 1 Tim. i. 14. to temporal deliverance. We do not dispute but that the word salvation is sometimes thus applied; but we think you must be under a deplorable necessity to apply it so in this text. Was it the apostle’s business as a minister of Christ, so *much* to teach the doctrine of providence, as to teach the riches of God’s grace in the deliverance of men from sin and all its consequences? Would the doctrine of general and particular providence have exposed the apostle to that reproach which he mentions? The philosophers had long taught this (in their measure) with credit. And is it indeed true, that those who believe have a special preserving power extended towards them? Are they richer, more healthy, more honourable, or of longer life than unbelievers? Was Paul, in these respects, better circumstanced than many of his persecutors? Was even Paul’s master equal in those views, to that monster of human nature, Nero? What, then, it will be asked, is the profit ascribed to godliness in verse 8? We answer, there is a contrast drawn betwixt bodily labour and godliness, in point of advantage; the former profiteth but little, in *value* and *duration*, but the latter hath an immense advantage in the *nature* of the things which it is conversant in, and also in their *duration*; for the promises of this life, such as pardon, adoption, and peace, belong to it, and those of the life to come, such as salvation and glory also. Paul goes on—*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acception, for therefore* (namely, to bring men to godliness) *we doth labour and suffer reproach,* (and this we persevere in doing) *because we trust in the living God,* (the first cause and last end of his creatures, and) *who is the saviour* (in his intention and purpose) *of all men, but especially* (in the first, place, and with peculiar favour) *of those that (now) believe.* That the apostle is not saying any thing of a peculiar temporal salvation of believers is evident, because Christ has never promised any such thing to his followers, but, on the contrary, has said they should suffer, and many of them die for his sake, and in particular this was foretold as the lot of Paul, Acts, ix. 16. Add to this, that it would have been absurd indeed in Paul to go from place to place pro-

second letter. And I ask, when our Lord represents some as having *few* stripes, and others as having *many*, is not the plain idea which he holds out that of *duration*?----Every one knows there needs not so much time to inflict an hundred stripes as to inflict ten times that number. The '*gross absurdity*' which you think is contained in this, I really have not discernment enough to perceive.

missing peculiar providential blessings to believers, when he himself, though a believer, was in want of all things, and an outcast upon earth. The peculiar happiness of believers is, that they know all these things shall work together for their good.

The Scriptures distinguish betwixt our Lord's *reception* of power and the *end* for which that power was received. Thus, Heb. ii. speaking of Christ the true Adam, to whom God hath put all things in subjection, (save the Father himself, see 1 Cor. xv. 27.) the apostle adds, *But now we see not yet all things put under him; but we see Jesus---crowned with glory and honour.* Here we see all things *are* put under him, as it relates to his power over them: but in relation to their *obedience* to him, their subjection is a thing yet to come with many of his creatures. Of the same nature is 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. where we are informed that the Father *hath* put all things under the feet of Christ; yet we are informed that he must reign *till* he hath put all enemies under his feet; plainly shewing that the reception of Christ's power, and the end for which it was received, are very distinct things, and long apart in point of time. So all fulness dwelling in Christ is not the reconciliation of all, but this is the means appointed by the Father that all may be reconciled. If it be objected that putting under the feet of Christ is not expressive of grace but of wrath, we answer, This is an Hebrew mode of speech, and evidently expressive of grace, for the temple itself, as typical of the church, is called God's foot stool, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2. Psalm xcix. 5. Lam. ii. 2. Or if it be said, that to be subdued to Christ is expressive of wrath, we then observe, that whatsoever method may be used to subdue sinners, yet their being subdued implies a state of grace and favour, for we are exhorted to be subject to the Father of spirits, and live. And the bodies of the saints will be changed at Christ's second coming, by this power whereby he is able to *subdue* all things unto himself. And even our Lord, when he shall have subdued all things to himself, will then be *subject* to the Father.

As for *all things working together for good to them that love not God; as well as to them who do so*, which you say *my scheme* teaches, if there be any truth in this it applies as much to *your scheme* also. You will grant that there are many elect persons, who, not being yet called, do not yet love God; notwithstanding which God loves them, and is seeking their welfare; which his love will ultimately effect. In the same manner I apply to all sinners what you and your brethren do to elect sinners only; yet I believe, as much as you do, that those who die in their sins cannot go where Christ is, but that they must endure the awful pains of the second death; but I think I have proved that this will not be endless.

I have supposed that endless misery is contrary to all the benevolent feelings of every renewed heart, and that it must be much more so to the benevolence of God; hence I infer that God, whose wisdom and power are equal to his love, will not inflict unceasing misery upon any. You attempt to prove that *temporary punishment* clashes as much with the benevolence both of God and his people. For you ask, ‘Is there a man living whose heart is filled with the love of God, that would be willing that his worst enemy should be cast into hell for ages of ages, or even for a single age, or even for a single day, when it was in his power to deliver him from it?’ But surely, Sir, there is no comparison justly to be made betwixt limited and endless punishment; nor because the latter is abhorrent to every idea of benevolence both in God, and good men, does it follow that the former is; seeing that the one is directed to a good and glorious end, namely, the amendment of the sufferer; while the other is a continuance of misery to no possible good end, either to God, or the sufferer*.

* The difficulties which, by the help of annihilation, you attempted to

On the whole, I observe, that you have touched but very lightly on the real merits of the cause. The greater part of your letters have been taken up with foreign matter, palpable mistakes, or unmanly sneers. I invite you, Sir, laying these things aside, to meet the question fairly. Prove that the scriptural use of the words everlasting and eternal, is that of endless duration; or that, though these words are used in a limited sense, yet there is something in the nature of future misery which will render it of endless duration, and reconcile this most tremendous doctrine with the Scripture character of God. When you, or any other man, shall have done this, I will own my error; till then I must retain my present views, as sincerely believing them to be agreeable to the mind of God in his word.

As you have had the free use of the Universalist's Miscellany for the insertion of your former letters, so you are welcome to it again. But I take the liberty to recommend to you the use of **SOFT WORDS, and HARD ARGUMENTS.**

I am, Sir,

With great consideration and good will,

Yours, &c.

Dec. 20, 1799.

W. VIDLER.

retort upon me in the close of your second letter, remain with all their weight upon your scheme.

LETTER VII.

EXPOSTULATION WITH MR. P. ON HIS USING SCANDAL FOR
 ARGUMENT.---BIGOTRY OF ORTHODOX CONGREGATI-
 ONS.---BOTTOMLESS PIT CONSIDERED.---THE NOTION
 OF SATISFACTION CONSIDERED.---RECONCILIATION OF
 JUDGMENT AND MERCY IN GOD'S DEALING WITH THE
 SAME CHARACTERS.-----THE UNIVERSAL DOCTRINE
 GIVES NO ENCOURAGEMENT TO SIN.

SIR,

ON the perusal of your fourth letter, I was, like Daniel
 of old, *astonished for a season, and my thoughts trou-*
bled me; not at any force of argument, or strength of rea-
 soning you discovered, but at the great anger you shew in
 it. If I have said or done any thing to excite your wrath,
 I am sincerely sorry for it. But I have just looked over
 my former letters to you, and, though there are a few harsh
 expressions in them, yet they are such as you had brought
 into use; and methinks you ought not to be angry at your
 own language; yet, for my own part, I would not be un-
 derstood as justifying unbecoming language, let it come
 from whom it will.

I wish sincerely that you would confine yourself to the
 subject in debate betwixt us. This I have repeatedly re-
 quested you to do; but, as yet, without success.

You complain that I should think you had *formed an*
improper estimate of your own reputation, when you sup-
 posed your name would spread the knowledge of the uni-
 versal doctrine beyond what you wished, if you wrote
 against it: I ask forgiveness for such a presumption---you

certainly have liberty, Sir, to compliment yourself in whatever manner you please: I will no more disturb your self-complacency.

The universalists are not in danger of sinking into insignificance by neglect; nor do they, in any contest about the truth of the restoration, fear being overcome. While the scriptures testify that *God is love*, it will be impossible to reconcile this character of him with the doctrine of implacability, for which you are an advocate.

It seems impossible for me to please you in any thing; for though you have the free use of my publication to controvert my sentiments in, yet you say, 'I consider it as no favour at all; nor as affording any proof at all of your impartiality.' If you are insensible of favours done you, I cannot help it. It argues either your want of discernment or your want of gratitude, that is all.

The Universalist's Miscellany is the only religious publication extant which admits of free enquiry by being open to both sides of any disputed question: and this, it seems, Sir, is not pleasant to you. And because I thus keep my publication open, and say, 'Truth courts the public observation of men,' you reply, 'And so may error. If it be true that wisdom crieth in the top of high places, it is equally true that folly is loud and stubborn.' What is all this to the purpose? The application of the latter scripture on this occasion gives no very favourable idea of your candour or love of inquiry.

When declamation is used instead of argument, and dark unfounded insinuations are brought forward against the morality of an opponent, it discovers either the badness of the cause, or the badness of *his* disposition who conducts it. What could be your intention in the odd jumble of characters whom you are pleased to give me as associates, but only to frighten fearful persons, and thereby hinder

them from attending to the subject, and lead them to think ill of me, and the doctrine for the truth of which I contend. *Deists, libertines, Mrs. Barbauld, the Monthly Reviewers, nominal Christians of loose characters, and the universalists*, are all, it seems, engaged in the same bad design, namely, that of impugning the doctrine of *the endless misery of sinners!* I wonder you did not reckon the Pope, the Grand Turk, the Great Mogul, and the Witch of Endor, in the same sin with me and the universalists. As for the devil, you have taken care to join him in partnership with me in the same work, towards the close of your letter. All this, no doubt, will tell, and pass current with a certain description of readers, the prejudice and applause of whom in your favour, will not excite my envy.

But why were Mrs. Barbauld and the Socinians brought forward? I have no acquaintance with that lady, nor intimacy with any Socinians; but I confess I do not think the worse either of her or them, from any thing which you have said. If there be a coincidence of sentiment betwixt them and me, concerning the subject of future punishment, the doctrine is neither the better or worse for that. It is probable that I coincide with you in my views of many other subjects; yet I am neither certainly right or wrong on that account. To what purpose, then, do you amuse your readers with the names of the Socinians and Mrs. Barbauld?

You charge me with *associating* with the characters before mentioned*, and *administering consolation* to them. Do you expect to be believed, Sir? I have, perhaps, as little familiarity with *nominal Christians of loose characters* as yourself; as for *deists and libertines* also, they are not

* *Deists, libertines, and nominal Christians of loose characters.*

my associates. I do indeed pity such characters, and the more so, as many of them have imbibed their infidelity, carelessness, or libertinism from that distorted character of Deity which is called Calvinism; but when I teach the doctrine of *limited* punishment---in exact proportion to deeds done---on the ground of *mediation*---for you to charge me with administering consolation to them is surprising indeed, and can only be accounted for by the force of system operating upon your mind, contrary to evidence.

I have endeavoured, in bringing your letters forward early, and in announcing them, to avoid giving offence: yet even in this I have offended. Your two first letters were announced as a defence of *eternal torments*. This is ascribed to an intention of working on the prejudices of the readers; with an acknowledgment, at the same time, that the word *torments* can give no *just* offence; consequently, it is the word *eternal* which does all the mischief; and yet *you* have announced your Fifth Letter under the title of ‘*Evidences of ENDLESS punishment.*’ Is there such a difference betwixt *eternal torments* and *endless punishment*, as to rebuke me for the use of the one, while you, with impunity, may use the other? What hope is there of doing any thing right, in the eyes of a man who is of so captious a temper?

It is kind in you to direct me how to conduct my magazine and my pulpit exercises; but I shall never be a ‘brawler of damnation,’ while I follow the scripture method of preaching; - I leave that to those preachers, whose gospel includes in it the necessary and endless damnation of nine parts of mankind, that the tenth may be saved with the more grace.

I have said that the ‘prejudices of both professor and profane are in your favour;’ and am persuaded that there is daily proof of this. Persons of the worst characters, under the Christian name, are seen to pronounce endless wrath

upon others of the most conscientious principles and upright conduct, who happen only to differ from them; and such blind zeal as this is interpreted as a favourable circumstance, because, it is said, they are still *sound* in their judgment, though they are wrong in their conduct.

It is a maxim pretty generally allowed among Calvinist churches, that *Error is worse than vice*. This maxim was publicly avowed at the Association of the particular Baptist Churches at Chatham in Kent, 1793. At that assembly I was publicly excluded from their communion for believing and avowing the doctrine of the *restitution of all things*. The moderator, when he had pronounced the sentence of excision, added, 'I am constrained to say, that your moral conduct has been such as would do honour to a much better cause than that in which you are engaged.' And the minister who preached on the occasion to a very crowded audience, said, '*The universal doctrine is an heresy, and every one who holds it is an heretic; not that every heretic is a wicked man; for heretics are often the holiest of men; but heresy is more dangerous than vice; for if a wicked man is sound in the faith, there is some hope of him; such are often recovered; but as for heretics, they are very seldom recovered from their errors.*'----- There were near thirty Calvinist ministers of different denominations present, and only one of them disavowed the sentiment that was so publicly taught. I have from that time to this been treated with the utmost contempt by many *nominal Christians of loose characters*, who have been taught that the *holiest of men may be heretics, and that heresy, though attended with holiness, is worse than vice!!!* The enormity of this maxim appears in its full view when it is recollected, that by *error* and *heresy* we are not to understand a departure from Christianity, but a departure from Calvinism. As for the bulk of this nation, who pro-

ness the Christian religion, nothing is more evident than that they believe the sentiment of endless misery, so that there are none left who are favourable to limited punishment but a few Socinians, whom you so much despise, and the Deists, most of whom Calvinism has driven into infidelity; but who certainly bear no proportion to the bulk of the nation.

Such is the justness of my remark that the prejudices both of professor and profane are in your favour.

You have several times mentioned the scripture phrase, *the bottomless pit*, but I did not think that you rested any weight of argument upon it, till, in your fourth letter, you criminated Mrs. Barbauld for saying, that 'the phrase originated in the ignorance of the eastern customs.' That it is not to be taken literally, I have no doubt. The scriptures mention the *ends* of the earth, the *pillars* of heaven, the *pillars* of the earth; would you from hence infer that the earth was a flat surface, and that there literally were *ends* to it? That the distant mountains, which seem to support the clouds, were really the pillars of heaven? or that the earth was actually placed upon pillars? Modern philosophy contradicts all this, and teaches us that these modes of expression took their rise either from the ignorance of the writers concerning these subjects, or, at best, that they are poetical figures, not to be taken literally. A *bottomless pit* is as unfounded an idea in nature as *ends* of the earth, or *pillars* of heaven, &c. Beside which I do not find that *αβυσσος* signifies any thing more than *very* or *exceeding deep*. In the Septuagint this word most commonly answers to *תהום* the abyss in the heart of the earth; and it is reasonable to take it in the same sense in the New Testament. You have represented me in your first letter as 'raising the hopes of the ungodly part of my audience,'

by teaching that 'though they go down to the pit, yet it shall not prove *bottomless*.' And you have very solemnly said, 'Wo be to that man who dares to plunge into that abyss, on the presumption of finding a *bottom*!' Am I to take this, Sir, as part of the proof of endless misery? What solemn and important trifling is here!

You say that I 'alternately compliment and reproach my opponent, as if to keep him at a distance from the subject,' and this because I did not attend to your question whether 'I claim an exemption from endless punishment as a right or not.' To this I have said, '*It behoves you to prove that endless misery is threatened in scripture to any description of sinners whatever. This is what you affirm and I deny. Prove your point, and every thing else follows of course; but till then I shall esteem all this as quibble, raised only to hide the main question.*' And could you, with this paragraph before you, tax me with the design to keep you from the subject? when it must be evident to every one, that my intention was to keep you to it? But you found it necessary to alarm the fears of the reader, and stir up his heart with horror by insinuating that the Universal Doctrine teaches *merit*, and that we demand universal salvation as a right. Upon this idea you reason; and because I have admitted the divine threatenings in their full latitude, and the execution of them too, you say, '*Now, Sir, if there be any meaning in all this language, it is, That justice will have its course on the ungodly; and that whatever punishment they endure, whether it be vindictive or corrective, endless or temporary, it is all that their sins deserve. If the threatenings of God mean no more than a punishment which is temporary, and for the good of sinners, their conduct can deserve no more: for we cannot have a more certain rule of estimating the just demerit of sin, than the wrath of God which is revealed from*

heaven against it. *But if sinners endure the full desert of their sin, there is no room for grace, or undeserved favour; nor is any place left for the work of mediation. A criminal who has suffered the full penalty of the law, has no right to be told that his liberation is an act of grace, or that it was owing to the mediation of another. Your universal salvation, therefore, is no part of that which arises from the grace of God, or the death of Christ, nor is it, properly speaking, salvation at all, but a legal discharge in consequence of a full satisfaction to divine justice made by the sufferings of the sinner.* Doubtless, Sir, it was much more easy for you to harangue thus upon a point, which at best has only a collateral relation to the main question, than to meet the question fairly as I had invited you to do. I do again avow my admission of the divine threatenings towards sinners in their full latitude, and the execution of them too; and maintain that God will deal with his creatures according to character, and that sinners will be punished according to their works: and I apprehend there may be a very scriptural meaning to this language perfectly opposite to that which you have put upon it, because, as I have observed before, all punishment stands upon the ground of mediation.

But it would be a sufficient answer to you to say that Christ made full satisfaction to divine justice for all the sins of the whole human race, and that all are committed into his hands in consequence thereof; that his government of them is founded upon his satisfaction, and is intended to make every knee bow to him, *of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* On this ground, let sinners endure what they may, here or hereafter, it would not be the full penalty of the law, nor any penalty of the law at all, that being fully borne

by Christ: but a correction according to the rule of equity on the ground of mediation, '*for the father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, and the Father hath given him power to execute judgment, because he is the son of man.*' Here then is room for grace which is shewed to sinners by the substitution of Christ as their legal surety; and by their being put under his government, for the express purpose of their subjection and reconciliation to God, by the blood of his cross. In this view there is no 'mitigation or shortening of their punishment,' for sin committed against God; for every claim of law and justice was made upon the person of Christ as their law-surety; all the punishment, therefore, which they can ever receive under Christ's government is a mean to the great end of their being gathered together or reheaded in him.

Nothing is more clear than that men, or sinners, do not stand merely on their natural ground of relation to God as creatures: but that he has gone forth towards them in the acts of his grace in Christ Jesus, making him the head of every man. Whether this view of the doctrine of satisfaction be admitted by you as truth I know not, though your reasoning seems to go on this ground; but as you have, by your own acknowledgment, publicly taught that 'the most pungent reflections of the damned were and would be that they had rejected the gospel way of salvation,' I am rather uncertain of your views in this point. Perhaps you may think the death of Christ was not a satisfaction for sin; but only a proper medium through which divine wisdom saw fit to manifest grace to sinners; or as the late pious Dr. Doddridge* and many others have thought, that '*It was graciously allowed of God, as a*

* See his Sermon on Salvation by Grace, p. 17.

valuable consideration,' and through which pardon is conveyed to sincere believers. It is fair to infer something of this kind from the above sentence of yours, because it necessarily implies that even sinners who die impenitent are interested in the gospel way of salvation, of which the death of Christ is an essential part. But if his death was a satisfaction to divine justice for their sins, it seems unjust in God to seek for satisfaction at the hand of sinners for whom Christ has made satisfaction; and if you say he did not die for them who will be damned, then where is the crime of their rejecting the gospel way of salvation, and whence can arise their pungent reflections for rejecting that in which they never had an interest?

In my second letter to you I asked the following question: 'Does not the dishonour both to the divine purity, and to the efficacy of atonement, attach itself to your scheme? Seeing you must of necessity admit either that God CANNOT, OR WILL not, make an end of sin; that there is not efficacy enough in the blood of the cross to destroy the works of the devil, or else that the full efficacy of the atonement, is with-held by the divine determination.' You made an awkward attempt to retort the difficulty of this question upon me, by the help of *annihilation*; but as that failed, you have tried another method upon a different ground, but with similar success.

And here I will remark the extreme absurdity of teaching the doctrine of endless misery upon the ground of satisfaction for sin: for, as before observed, if Christ has made satisfaction to justice, then satisfaction cannot be demanded at the hand of any sinner, for whom Christ died, but with manifest injustice. And if Christ did not make satisfaction, then divine justice, in seeking satisfaction at the hand of any sinner, is seeking that which, it is confess-

ed on all hands, can never be obtained. Thus the doctrine of vindictive justice, as a foundation for endless misery, crumbles away in handling, like a ball of sand. It will be of no use to the subject to restrict the death of Christ to the elect, because that will take away the chief ground of future punishment according to the declarations of the New Testament, namely, neglecting the great salvation which is exhibited in the gospel. Heb ii. 3.

But how strangely do men talk of the justice of God pursuing a sinner with wrath to all eternity! If any man were seriously to affirm that all the vast preparations of our government for war, were only to pursue a *fly*, the reflection would be less dishonourable to our rulers, than the other reflection is to the Almighty.

I have thus stated the doctrine of *satisfaction* for sin, because many Christians hold with the Universal Doctrine in *that* connection; and your objection may justly be repelled by it; but I do not mean to insinuate that I view the subject in that light myself. For though I am perfectly satisfied that God has done, and will do, right in all his dealings with his sinful creatures; yet I am not certain that he has done, or will do,-----or is under any necessity of doing-----all that he *might do* towards them. I consider, therefore, the provision of a mediator, with all his work, and all the blessings which come through him, as of grace, and not of right.

I have before noticed the weight of argument which you rest upon the phrase *bottomless pit*, and the impropriety of it: I leave the reader to form his judgment of your attempt to make your suppositions founded in parton that phrase pass for argument. If I were to use many scriptures concerning the rejection of the Jews, as you have used Rev. xxii. 11, and Isa. xxxiii. 14. I could prove that they were *finally* rejected of God so as never to find mercy. For instance,

Hos. i. 6. *I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel.* V. 8. *Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.* Chap. ii. 4. *I will not have mercy upon her children.* Chap. ix. 15. *All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house, I will love them no more.* Chap. vii. 13. *Wo unto them, for they have fled from me: destruction unto them, because they have transgressed against me.*

Notwithstanding all these plain declarations, yet we are informed that God will again be gracious to Israel. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.* Hos. ii. 19, 20. Now if God will *no more* have mercy upon them, if he will *not be their God*, if he will *love them no more*, how then can he ever be gracious to them? how can he betroth them to himself *for ever*, in righteousness, in judgment, in loving kindness, and in mercies? and how can they ever again know the Lord? And yet all these seemingly contradictory things are threatened, and promised to the same people. If it be said that these things related only to the captivity and restoration of Israel from Babylon, I answer, this does not help the case at all. For here are the most full expressions that God will *no more* have mercy upon *that* nation; that he will *love them no more*, &c. But yet we are as positively informed that *they* shall be betrothed to him again *for ever*. But I am much mistaken if God does not in fact apply both these threatenings and promises to the *individuals* of the nation also. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues;*

*O grave**, *I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.* Hos. xiii. 14. Does not this refer to those wicked individuals, who have been cut off in their rebellion; those whose iniquity was bound up; whose sin was hidden, ver. 12†. that is, those who had not only been punished here with the nation in general, but who had died in their iniquity? It certainly cannot refer to the survivors of the nation in succession who returned from the captivity; because nor death nor the grave were plagued or destroyed for their deliverance. I conceive that this destruction of death and the grave is yet future, and will take place when Christ has subdued all things to himself, and has swallowed up death in victory, by causing those who have borne the image of the earthy, to bear also the image of the heavenly Adam.

Again, the apostle Paul, treating of the rejection of the Jewish church, because of their unbelief, says, Rom. xi. 7---10. *The election hath obtained it, (grace and salvation) and the rest were blinded. As it is written, (Isa. vi. 9, 10. Ezek. xii. 2.) God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear unto this day. And David saith, (Ps. lxxix. 23.) Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them. Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back always.* Now, notwithstanding this sad and awful case, which the psalmist further describes by saying, *Add iniquity to their iniquity; and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.* Ps. lxxix. 27,

* *אֵלֶּם*---the place and state of the dead---sometimes signifies hell.

† See Job, xiv. 16, 17.

23.: and though this their state is described by the apostle as continuing *always*, yet he goes on to shew that they shall be received again, and grafted into their own olive tree again by faith, Rom. xi. 23, 24. and that God will take away their sins by his covenant, ver. 27. Here is a rejection of the Jewish nation in such language, as would lead us to suppose that they should never find mercy again; and still we find mercy is held in reserve for them in the latter day. The apostle even goes further than this, and says, *all Israel shall be saved*, ver. 26. And he further adds, *For God hath concluded them all* (or shut them up together) *in unbelief*, (that damning sin) *that he might have mercy upon ALL*, ver. 32. I conceive that he here applies his argument not only to the Jews as a *nation*, but also to *every individual of them dying in unbelief*, because it is the same *all* who are concluded in unbelief, for whom mercy is finally reserved.

It is a common thing in the scriptures thus to unite judgment and mercy to the same individuals, each in their proper season. The prophecy of Hosea, in particular, is full of it. There we find God saying, *Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone*. Ch. iv. 17. What can be worse than to be given up to sin, and all its awful consequences? Yet in the same book it is said, *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* Ch. xiv. 8. It is in reference to this wonderful dealing of God with sinners, in making them eat the fruit of their doings, and filling them with their own devices, that finally every knee may bow before him, and every tongue confess to his glory, that the prophet concludes thus, *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are upright, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein*. Hos.

xiv. 9. In reference to the same great work the apostle Paul, after he had treated of the rejection and unbelief of the Jews, and of the mercy yet reserved for them *all*, exclaims, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!-----of him, and through him, and to him are all things.* Rom. xi. 33---36.

Thus, Sir, though there will come a time in which it will be said, *he that is filthy, let him be filthy still*, and though there will be a period in which the wicked will go into *everlasting fire*, yet it does not follow that they shall be *endlessly* filthy, or that they shall endlessly dwell in burnings. *God hath made every thing beautiful in its season: Judgment and mercy are both his, and he has his appointed ages for both.* And while the scriptures teach that all the ages, *aioms*, are included in the mediatorial reign of Christ, I must continue to think that judgment itself is not the end, but a means to an end, namely, the subjection of all things to Jesus. *For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ: for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God.* Rom. xiv. 10, 11.

I am so much persuaded of the truth of this, that I look forward with the utmost pleasure to that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be judged: and I have the fullest confidence that I shall then see with boldness *the faces of those whom I have thus taught*; and also shall meet *Him* with joy, who hath charged me to be free from the blood of all men.

You still insist that 'the universal doctrine affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and furnishes ground for hope and joy; even supposing him to persevere in them till death.' And you ask, 'What doctrine *besides* this do I find in the Bible which does the

same?' I think I have sufficiently shewn that the universal doctrine does not afford any encouragement to a sinner going on in his sins, because it teaches that every transgression shall receive a righteous recompence of reward; that it shall be always ill with the wicked *while he continues so*, &c. This, you say, 'is trifling; for if the sinner be taught to believe that, at some future period beyond this life, he shall be delivered both from sin and punishment--- whether the former branch of this deliverance afford him joy or not, the latter must.' Surely, Sir, you talk lightly of that evil which awaits every sinner, even though his punishment be not endless.

I never meant to deny that the universal doctrine held out a hope, finally, to all men; certainly in its very nature it does this; but as you had represented it as naturally giving encouragement to sin, this I strenuously denied, and still deny, for the reasons before given, *viz.* that it necessarily includes in it the *holiness* of the sinner; and teaches him that it shall be always ill with the wicked *while he remains so*.

In my second letter I had, I think, fully expressed this, when I said, 'If the universal doctrine be ever abused to the purposes of sin, I can but think it must arise from ignorance of its principal features. I am happy in being able to say that I have never yet been witness to any practical ill effects that have followed the preaching and belief of it; not that I deny the *possibility* of such effects; for it is a maxim which cannot be disputed, that the greatest display of mercy in the doctrines of grace *may* be abused; but you would not, on that account, hide the richest views of divine love which you are acquainted with, under pretence of preventing sin; so neither would I.'

Nor am I afraid, Sir, of any advantage which you or any

other opponent of the doctrine, may make of this. It has long appeared to me that your doctrine of endless misery has done incredible mischief in the world; not only by making many thinking persons give up revelation intirely, by the distorted view which it gives of the character of God; but also by increasing immorality, even among many who believe it, by consigning all sinners, of every character, to endless wrath; for I have often met with those who think they may as well be damned for a great deal of sin as for a little, seeing that endless punishment is the penalty of all sin. You indeed try to point out a difference in degrees of punishment, where all is endless; but the idea seems not full and clear; for whatever reflection any sinner in hell may have of his own conduct, more poignant than another, this does not seem to express the meaning of our Lord when he represented punishment by *few stripes* and *many stripes*. The leading idea appears to me to be that of duration: as in the nature of things it cannot require so long a period to inflict four stripes as forty; or one hundred as one thousand, &c.

If there be any force in your objection against the universal doctrine *because it finally holds out a hope to EVERY man*, I think the same objection applies with all its force against all the threatenings which God gave by Moses to the Israelites; because all those dreadful denunciations of wrath were *always* succeeded by promises of mercy *finally* to that nation. Let any man read Lev. xxvi. which contains the most awful list of national evils which can be conceived of; there God is represented as contending with that stubborn people because they would not *accept of the punishment of their iniquity at his hand*: and yet the whole concludes by saying, *and they SHALL accept of the punishment of their iniquity; because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my*

statutes. *And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, &c.* In Deut. iv. 25, there are similar threatenings; and yet, ver. 30. it is said, *When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient to his voice, (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.* Deut xxviii. xxix. is full to the same purpose of threatening, and yet Moses goes on to close the whole again with promises and blessings, in ch. xxx. 1---6. which concludes thus---*And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed; to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.* I think it evident that the end of all these threatenings and the execution of them also, is to make this nation holy and happy. I think it also evident that in their state of rebellion, in their state of rejection, and in the midst of their awful punishments, there are promises which ‘afford them ground of hope and joy;’ but yet there is no encouragement to sin from hence, for it shall always be ill with them while they are an unbelieving and wicked nation. And I also think that what applies to them in general, as a nation, equally applies to them as *individuals*. For the apostle Paul, when he treats of their rejection of Christ---the greatest of all their sins, and for which they have endured the longest and most severe punishment---so applies it. He not only represents that, as a nation, they shall be again a believing and obedient people; but says, *God hath included them all in unbelief that he might have mercy*

upon all. Rom, xi. 32. Here is a depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, which the short-sighted doctrine of endless misery cannot reach; but which the doctrine of the restitution of all things fully comprehends and embraces.

You have stated the universal doctrine as teaching sinners that they shall be *eternally saved**. Where, Sir, did I ever state it so? I have always stated that they will be condemned, and will meet with a just punishment according to their character. Because I have affirmed that their punishment will not be endless, but limited and corrective, you seem to overlook it, and talk of their eternal salvation. As well might you make light of all the threatenings pronounced against the Jewish nation for their sin; or against the individuals of them dying in unbelief; because that nation will again partake of divine favour, and because mercy is reserved for all of them who are shut up in unbelief. Have the goodness, Sir, to state the views of your opponent fairly.

Thus the universal doctrine gives no more encouragement to sin than the doctrine of election does; nor is it of so *solitary* a nature, in affording hope *finally* to every sinner, as to be without support and example from scripture.

The Calvinistic election is stated as being God's *eternal, sovereign, personal, unconditional, and infrustrable* choice of his people in Christ. If it be *unconditional*, it can have no regard to moral character; and if it be *infrustrable*, then

* This is the *second* time that I have noticed this mistake of Mr. F. But the *impartial* Scrutator says, that I never mentioned it till fifteen letters had passed. As this gentleman did not write in haste, but with the cool deliberation of a man who had calmly attended to *all* that had passed betwixt Mr. F. and myself, (see his Letters, p. 9) I feel a difficulty in accounting for his frequent mis-statement of facts.

it cannot fail of effect, let the man live how he will: and if a man be not thus elected, he cannot be saved, do what he can. This is the true statement of the doctrine. Shall the man who holds it charge the universalists with encouraging sinners in their trespasses?

Thus, Sir, I have chosen to expose the falsehood of your charge, that the universal doctrine encourages sin. And I say again, let the WORLD judge whether your charge does not go on an unfounded assumption, that applies, not only as much, *but much MORE*, to the doctrine of election, than to that of the restoration.

And why that sneer at the word *world*, which I had used? A Calvinist might have indulged me with saying *the world* when I did not mean one in a million of mankind: it is the language of your system; but perhaps you begin to see its impropriety: I therefore stand corrected; for tho' the Universalist's Miscellany goes to Scotland, America, the East Indies, and Holland; yet certainly but a very small part of the world will examine our productions.

You refer again to the question in your first letter, which is, 'whether my ministry, upon the principle of the universal doctrine, does not savour of *his*, who taught our first parents, Ye shall not surely die?' I have answered, 'that if I thought there would not be any future punishment, your insinuation would not be without reason. And that the question is founded upon the idea that my views invalidate the threatenings of God towards sinners.' You say you 'never supposed me to deny all future punishment,' but that your question proceeds upon this ground--the near resemblance between my labours and those of the deceiver of mankind. 'He persuaded his auditors,' say you, 'that though they should transgress, yet the evil they had dreaded would not come upon them--and they were not afraid to transgress. You persuade your auditors that

though they should die in their sins, yet the evil would not be *so great* as they had been used to apprehend---God hath not said Ye shall die eternally, and he means that you shall all come where Jesus is---If they believe, must they not be *less afraid* of transgression than before?' So then, the deceiver of mankind taught his auditors they should incur *no* penalty by their transgression; I teach my auditors that 'they shall receive a righteous recompence of reward for every transgression unrepented of---that it shall be always ill with the wicked while they continue wicked:' ergo, *there is a near resemblance* between my ministry and his! His auditors were not afraid to transgress because they believed his doctrine of *no* punishment all---mine must be *less afraid* than they were before, if they believe my doctrine, because the punishment is not *so great* as they have been used to apprehend.

This latter part of your argument, if I understand you, goes on the ground that the threatening of *endless death*, (I suppose you mean endless misery) is the greatest possible restraint of transgression which God has or could lay upon it. If you mean so, I own I differ from you. For not to mention that the word *αιωνιος*, eternal, or everlasting, is no where in scripture connected with death, yet, if it was so, and the sense of it could be proved to be of endless duration, it appears to me that there is a method of restraining sin much more effectually than this awful threatening could do. It is that suggested in Eccles. viii. 41. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* It seems from hence that if every sin was to meet an adequate and speedy punishment from the hand of God, it would more effectually restrain transgression than any threatening of future evil, however great it might be.

But wherein does it appear that my auditors are *less*

afraid of sin, than they were while they believed the sentiment of endless misery, or than those who are now believe it? The universalists are not in the habit of boasting of any superior holiness in themselves; but I do not know that they are inferior in holiness to other Christians. And I cannot but think the doctrine of limited punishments is sufficient, when rightly understood, to restrain vice.

I have before noticed your mis-statement of my sentiments. There is a notable instance of this in the above question. I teach, you say, that though my auditors die in their sins, yet, 'God means that they shall all come where Jesus is.' Is this fair? Is it honest? Let the candid reader judge.

What would you think of any man who should make the like use of the threatenings of God against the Jews by Moses, by Hosea, by Paul, merely because mercy is promised them after their punishment?

You hold with the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. You will not deny that some who are called so have greatly sinned, have been greatly chastised, and yet have been the subjects of mercy. Have you taught that in their transgressions God loved them and meant that they should be where Jesus is? Or have you taught that he will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes, that they might be where Jesus is? I know that your system requires the latter, and I know that you have often taught this. Shall I say that *your labours, in this point, have a near resemblance to those of the deceiver of mankind?* and that your saints are hereby *less afraid* of transgression than when they were sinners?

If you have 'built no conclusion' upon the supposition that I deny *all* future punishment, yet I still think that your question cannot apply on any other ground.

You add, 'and now, Sir, who is ignorant, and who has been employed in raising dust to hide the truth, are questions which I leave you to resolve.' I answer, I have resolved them, Sir, I hope, to your satisfaction and that of the reader.

I mean in a subsequent letter to point out *wherein* you have, *hitherto*, been ignorant of the subject in debate.

I am,

Sir,

With great good will,

Yours,

W. VIDLER.

LETTER VIII.

CONTAINING SOME REMARKS ON MR. F.'S NEGLECT OF THE SUBJECT; ALSO, AN ANSWER TO THE FIRST PART OF HIS FIFTH LETTER ON THE CONTRAST BETWIXT THE STATES OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED.

SIR,

THE want of health, with a variety of other circumstances, have hitherto prevented my attention to your fifth and following letters.

In the close of my last I engaged to shew wherein you have, as yet, been ignorant of the subject in debate, or at least have not attended to it, in any thing you have yet written.

In my first and second letters to you, though I did not then draw out the heads of the controversy in a formal manner into propositions, yet I stated that the subject consisted of the following parts.

I. The words connected in scripture with future punishment, as eternal, everlasting, ever and ever, &c. which I conceive do not convey the idea of endless duration.

II. The declarations and promises in the scripture, which I conceive do convey the idea of universal restoration.

III. That the whole revealed economy of God towards fallen men, is mediatorial, in Christ Jesus: and that it is contained within the ages of Christ's kingdom, which, itself, shall come to an end.

IV. That the scripture character of God is expressly against the doctrine of endless misery.

How you have, *as yet*, attended to any of these, a perusal of what you have written will shew.

Your first letter has not the smallest reference to either of them. This made me observe in my first letter to you, that *the enquiry is not whether endless punishment is in itself just or not; but whether God has, any where in his word, threatned any description of sinners with it.* I invited you then to come to the proof of that point, which, as you have not done, your questions, though enforced and re-enforced, have nothing to do with the subject. I might therefore have justly been excused from any attention to them, as they left the grounds of the controversy untouched. For, how improper is it to talk about the *justice* of a punishment, before we have enquired what *that* punishment is; to talk of the *genius* of a doctrine before we have enquired about *its truth*;----and to represent a man as a coadjutor of Satan in his labours, while, for all that yet appears to the contrary, he may be doing the will of God!

In your second letter you just notice the word everlasting, but say little more than that no force of language can stand before my mode of criticising upon it.

Your third letter exhibits hardly any thing but your own mistake about annihilation.

Your fourth is taken up with a re-enforcement of your former questions, or other trivial matter, equally distant from the subject. And then you conclude by saying I have not yet answered what you have written!!!

You begin your fifth letter by saying, that you have not yet stated your grounds of belief for the doctrine of endless punishment. I have above proved that you have not yet opposed the grounds of the universal doctrine, and you now confess that you have not yet stated the grounds of its opposite. What then have you been doing, Sir, in all

your former letters? It appears that nothing has yet been done by you to any purpose.

I am happy, however, at any rate to get you to a point. You now state the principal grounds of your own belief. Let these be examined. In doing which you reckon, '*All those passages of scripture which describe the future states of men in contrast.*'

Here you bring forward a great number of scriptures; you consider these passages as designed to express 'THE FINAL STATES OF MEN.' But why so? There is no one passage of all which you have quoted that expresses this: of which, indeed, you seem conscious; for instead of resting this conclusion upon any positive testimony of these scriptures, you are forced to have recourse to inferential reasoning, and that also upon grounds that will by no means be granted; for,

1st. You say, 'the state of the righteous, which is all along opposed to that of the wicked, is allowed to be final: and if the other were not the same, it would not have been, in such a variety of forms, contrasted with it; for it would not be a contrast.' Here you have taken two things for granted which I think you ought to have proved, *viz.* that the state of the righteous, as expressed by these scriptures, is final: and that if the state of the wicked be not final, it would not be contrasted with that of the righteous. If the former of these assumptions be ever so true, yet you ought not to have thus reasoned upon it till you had proved its truth, because it is one of the disputable things between us. I long ago observed that there will arrive a period when the mediatorial reign of Christ will end, according to 1 Cor. xv. 24-----28. If the mediation of Christ will end, it is reasonable to suppose that the rewards and punishments of men, to appportion which will be a part of his mediation, will end also.

You could not therefore, but know that the final state* of the righteous was not, by me, allowed to be expressed in any of the passages which you have quoted, that stand op-

* Scrutator, with his usual veracity, asserts, 'I had never before suggested that the final state of the righteous was not expressed by passages of scripture which describe them in future life as contrasted with the wicked.' Letters, p. 36--39. I beg leave (in addition to what I have referred to, on this subject, from my first letter,) to quote a passage, to the purpose, from my sixth letter, p. 54. 'These words (gnolam and aion) are applied to different subjects, and joined with periods of a longer or shorter date; all which are included in the grand comprehensive period of Christ's mediatorial kingdom, which comprehends all ages, yet shall itself, in its appointed season, come to an end when its purposes are all fulfilled, as the apostle testifies, 1 Cor. xv. 25---28. What took place before the creation of the world the scripture has no where unfolded; and what will take place after the subjection of all things to Christ, and his giving up the kingdom to the father, we do not know, except that then God will be all in all: here revelation drops the curtain, so to speak, including the whole of its communications in the gnolams, aions, or ages of the mediator's reign.' In the same letter, p. 56. I have also said, 'There must be aions, ages, to come after the age of judgment; in which ages all punishment will be distributed with unerring wisdom, and to a good and glorious end; and all rewards be conferred with the same wisdom and goodness, for in the ages to come, God will shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, &c. Eph. ii. 7. And the punishment of the wicked will take place during the same ages; for the smoke of their torment is to ascend εις αιωνας αιωνων, to the age of ages, i. e. to the period of the restitution of all things, which is the closing period of the mediator's kingdom.'

These passages were written before Mr. F.'s fifth letter, and consequently ought not to have been unknown to him. But if he had incautiously overlooked them while writing to me, one would expect that Scrutator, who lays claim to diligence, acuteness, and candour, in an uncommon degree, would not have quite forgotten them. Yet so it is! I think it a great pity that Mr. F. whose experience in polemic warfare is confessedly great,---did not correct the youth and inexperience of his friend. It would have saved me the trouble of having such frequent occasion to mention his mistakes. The reader, also, would not have had the perplexity of accounting for them so often.

Let it be recollected here, that although in the beginning of my correspondence with Mr. F. and frequently during the continuance of it, I stated, that

posed to the state of the wicked, as I consider that all rewards and punishments belong to Christ's kingdom. Therefore, you should not have brought forward this argument till you had shewn, or at least, had attempted to have shewn, that I was mistaken in my idea of the foundation and duration of future rewards and punishments. Again, how does it appear that 'If the state of the wicked were not final, it would not have been, in such a variety of forms, contrasted with that of the righteous?' you say 'because it would not be a contrast.' I understand you as meaning that there can be no contrast formed betwixt things which are not of equal duration; for this reason---because there cannot! I confess I am neither satisfied with the assertion, nor with the doughty reason by which it is supported; but it is no part of my business to dispute either of them, as my argument does not require it. For I contend that the state of the righteous, as expressed in contrast with that of the wicked, is not final: and it may appear, upon further examination, that the state of the wicked may not be final neither. Whether the final state of the righteous, may not be elsewhere expressed, and taught on other ground, I shall consider hereafter*.

I understood both rewards and punishments were mediatorial acts, and were contained within the ages of Christ's kingdom, which itself would come to an end; and although great part of my reasoning, in defence of the restoration, is founded upon this idea, yet, neither of these gentlemen have deigned to consider this leading argument. *Query*, For what they have *not* done, is there not a *cause*?

* Here I am chaged by Scrutator, with misunderstanding Mr. F. and *shifting the ground of the argument.* Letters, p. 43--45. I have very carefully considered what both these gentlemen have said, and I am *not* convinced that the charge is just. Mr. F. contends, that the scriptures which he mentions, 'express the *future* states of men in contrast; that as the happiness of the righteous is *allowed* to be *final*, so will be the misery of the wicked.'

‘ I think it to be worthy of wisdom itself to make antitheses betwixt a very short period and a very long duration, though neither should be endless. What wise man

Now there is no dispute whether the immediate future state of the wicked and the righteous will be a *contrast*. This I always granted; but the question is, will *that* state be *final*? I have contended that though the righteous will be finally happy, yet I do not know that these scriptures express it. But if they do express it, in relation to the *righteous*, yet they do not so to the *wicked*; for which I have given several reasons, as *first*, that *aion* is an age, not eternity, and *aionion* is age-lasting, not eternal; secondly, that holiness and happiness have their root in God, but sin and misery have not so; thirdly, that there are promises of an universal restoration, &c. I ask, therefore, what remains in litigation but the *final* state of the wicked? and does not this include the idea of *duration*? Does not Mr. F. contend that the state of misery will endure *as long* as that of happiness? because, says he, *these are contrasted one with the other*. To which I answer, there may be a contrast betwixt things which are of *unequal* duration,-----and have produced 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. as a scriptural example.

I have here intimated that I would elsewhere consider whether the *final* state of the righteous is not expressed and taught on other grounds than those which Mr. F. has mentioned. Scrutator says that ‘ *I promised to prove the limited duration of the saint’s happiness, as it is contrasted with the punishments of the wicked.*’ Letters, p. 77. The reader will add this to the number of the other *mis-statements* of this accurate reviewer. But, it seems, I have not sufficiently performed what I did promise: I therefore add,

1. That the endless happiness of the saints, seems to me to be taught without the word *aionion*, and without being contrasted with the misery of the wicked by the word *Αθανασία*, *immortal*. This mortal must put on *αθανασίαν*, *immortality*.--When this mortal shall have put on *αθανασίαν*, *immortality*. 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54. The word is applied to God who only hath *immortality*. *Exemption from death*, is the idea which the word conveys; and as it is applied to the saints in their resurrection state, it appears that they will be possessed of *life which will not end*.

2d. I conceive the same doctrine is taught by the words *Αμειωλον*, *undefiled*; *Αμειωτον*, and *Αμειωσιγον*, *undefading*. 1 Peter, i. 4. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance αμειωλον, undefiled, and, και αμειωσιγον, that fadeth not away*. And 1 Pet. v. 4. *When the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive, την αμειωσιγον της*

but would endure a moment's inconvenience for the sake of a great advantage that he should derive from it, and that should endure for many years? And might he not say with great propriety. The pain and inconvenience I shall endure are but for a moment; but the advantage shall be permanent that I shall derive from it.' And to me it appears that the scriptures have done this, particularly 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. Here the apostle says, *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal, i. e. aionion, weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal, i. e. aionion.* Here is a contrast betwixt *temporal* and *aionion* things, and yet that the apostle did not consider either of them as eternal (as our common translation falsely renders it) is evident; because in verse 17. he says, the glory which our light affliction in the cause of Christ worketh for us, is a glory *exceeding aionion to an excess.*

Every proper judge who reads this, must know that I

δοξας ἑτερον, A CROWN OF GLORY THAT FADETH NOT AWAY. This is spoken of the state of glory and bliss which is reserved for the saints, and which they shall enjoy under him, who is their chief shepherd: consequently both themselves, and the glory reserved for them, are *eternally safe; none shall pluck them out of his hand, nor out of his Father's hand.* John, x. 28, 29.

3d. The life and bliss of the saints, are so connected with the life and happiness of Christ himself, that while he lives and is glorious, they also will live and be glorious. *Because I live, ye shall live also,* saith our Lord, John, xiv. 19. And Paul assures us that the saints are heirs of God, *and joint heirs with Christ.* Rom. viii. 17. Thus I think it evident that the final state of the righteous is taught on other grounds than those which Mr. F. has mentioned.

have only given the genuine meaning of καθ' ἑαυτὴν ὡς ὑπερβόλην in this rendering.

Here then is an instance in point to shew that a contrast is drawn betwixt two things, of different duration indeed, but neither of them *eternal*: for if the *aionion* glory be eternal, how can that which our light affliction worketh for us exceed it so very far as Paul affirms it to do*?

* On this answer of mine, to Mr. F. Scrutator has spent ten pages, in which, as usual, he has indulged every species of literary abuse. I will not imitate him; but will endeavour to notice calmly whatever he has said that looks like argument.

1. He has affirmed that I have said the utmost limit of an age, *aion*, does not exceed forty-nine years. This, though *contrary to his own knowledge*, is necessary to be said to support his following argument. The reader will refer to the note in p. 54.

2. He takes it as a self-evident truth, that 'every thing which is *not seen* is comprehended under the word *aionian*.' But I conceive that things both *seen* and *unseen* may be called *aionian* (as the word is applied to things of both kinds). Thus we read of the *aionion* mountains, which, surely, are *visible* enough; the *aionion* covenant of circumcision was a *visible* object, the duration of which has ceased; the *aionion* consolation of believers, as enjoyed in the present life, is *visible*, both in the gospel and in their own experience. 2 Thes. ii. 16. But the *aionion* glories of Christ's future kingdom, are, as yet, *invisible*.

3. Our author says that my translation 'converts the apostle's sublime language, into such feeble and turgid bombast as would disgrace a school boy.' But why so? The future *aionion* glories of Christ's kingdom, are, doubtless inconceivable. And I understand the enraptured apostle as saying; that his sufferings in the cause of Christ worked for him, a weight of glory, *excessively exceeding all other aionion glories*. Where is the bombast of this? The scripture affords instances of comparison of one *aion* with another; and of the glories of one *aion* with those of another; and also of the different degrees of glory in the same *aion*.

4. He affirms that 'my translation of the passage, is a violation of one of the fundamental rules of grammar; for I have rendered a *noun* as though it were a *verb*.' I readily grant there is a difficulty in rendering this passage into English; but this gentleman should have recollected, that this censure equally applies to our, '*venerable and learned translators of the bible*,' as to myself.

2d. You go on to say, that all these passages are totally silent as to any other state following that of destruction, damnation, &c. And you infer, that if any state is to follow these, it is strange that we have no intimation of it in any of the passages you have quoted, and that if the punishment threatened to ungodly men had been only a purgation or temporal correction, we might have expected that something like this would have been intimated. 'It is supposed, say you, that some who are upon the right foundation may yet build upon it wood, hay, and stubble, and that

They have said the glory here spoken of *far exceeds eternal glory*. Not understanding how *aionion* can be *eternal*; nor how *eternal glory* can be *far exceeded* by any *other glory*, I have rendered it *exceeding aionion glory to an excess*. The difference betwixt these renderings, is in substituting the word *aionion* for *eternal*: the grammar of each is intirely the same. Surely the great Scrutator must have known this: and, knowing it, he ought not to have imposed it on his reader, merely for the sake of passing a censure on me. I therefore repeat it again, that 'every proper judge who reads this must know that I have only given the genuine meaning of *καθ' υπερβολην εις υπερβολην* in this rendering;' nor do any of the great authorities, which this gentleman quotes on the occasion, intimate the contrary. The difference betwixt them and myself is only in the word *aionion*: whether I am right in the use of this word (instead of the word *eternal*) I leave to the judgment of the reader.

5. This gentleman adds, 'that my translation directly militates against my own principles,' and teaches, 'that afflicted saints shall have a *reward exceeding the ages of rewards to an excess!*' Let the reader look back to the second and third articles in this note. He will then see Scrutator's mistake. I conceive that there are *aionion* things both seen and unseen; that there may be a comparison justly made betwixt *aionion* things; and that the apostle is actually making such a comparison in the text before us. Our *reviewer*, with his usual pomp, brings forward Whitby, Poole, Doddridge, Blackwall, Guyse, Parkhurst, Chrysostom; Leigh, Erasmus, and Beza. His extreme labour reminds me of the sentiment of the poet.

'To patch-work learn'd quotations are allied;
Both strive to make our poverty our pride.'

the party shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, though it be as by fire. Now if the doctrine of universal salvation were true, we might expect some account of all *lapsed* intelligences, when their future state is described: but nothing like it occurs in any of the foregoing passages, nor in any others.' In answer to all which I remark,

---First, That you are talking against universal *salvation*, while I am defending universal *restoration**. These are certainly very distinguishable things, and I do not, nor ever did, believe the former; but for the latter I contend as a scriptural truth.

I will not say that it is with design, and contrary to known facts, that you represent me as an advocate of universal salyation; but it is certain that you have more than once or twice made this representation in your letters. The cause of your so doing is best known to yourself.

Secondly, As for all the scriptures which you have brought forward not saying any thing about any other state following that of destruction, damnation, &c. there is probably a reason for it, namely, that none of them are speaking upon that subject: and you might have found many more of the same kind. What then? Did I ever pretend that every text that threatened a sinner with punishment, always contained in it a promise of his final restoration?

Thirdly, I think something like '*temporal correction*' is implied in the threatened punishment of ungodly men, in Mat. xxv. 46. where the wicked are said to go into *κολασιν αιωνων*, rendered *everlasting punishment*. Petitpierre, in his Treatise on Divine Love †, says, 'There are two respectable authorities to prove that *κολασις* signifies *chastisement*; one is the illustrious Grotius, in his Rights of War

* See note, p. 36. of these Letters.

† Edinburgh Edit. p. 150.

and Peace; the other the celebrated Wyttenbach, in his Essay on Doctrinal Theology. Grotius, says expressly, that the kind of punishment which tends to the improvement of the criminal, is that which the philosophers called among other things, *κολασις*, or *chastisement*. And Wyttenbach, who writes this passage from Grotius, says, that God, in the infliction of sufferings, has three ends in view, the first of which is the correction of the offender, in order to his future amendment, and that the Greeks frequently gave to such sufferings, the name of *κολασιν**. To this quotation I add, that twice † in the New Testament we have *κολαζομενες*, which, together with *κολασις*, is from the theme *κολαξω*, applied, as Parkhurst observes, by Greek writers, in the sense of *restraining* and *repressing*. The only place beside in which *κολασις* occurs in the New Testament is 1 John, iv. 18. *Fear hath torment, (i. e. restraint) in it.* From the whole of those passages I think it clear that *κολασις* signifies such a punishment as *corrects* the criminal, *restraining* and *repressing* him, and thereby bringing him into his due and proper place‡.

* The passage referred to in Grotius runs thus: 'Dicemus ergo in pœnis respici utilitatem ejus que peccarit, aut ejus cujus intererat non peccatum esse, aut indistincte quorumlibet. Ad horum trium finium primum pertinet pœna quæ philosophis modo *νεθεσια*, modo *κολασις*, modo *παραισις*, dicitur; Paulo Jurisconsulto, pœna, quæ constituitur in emendationem, *σωφρονιστως ενεκα* Platoni, Plutarcho *ιατρεια ψυχης*, animi medicatrix, quæ hoc agit ut eum qui peccavit reddat meliorem medendi modo, qui est per contraria.' De jure belli et pacis, lib. ii. cap. 20. § 6.

† Acts, iv. 21. 2 Peter, ii. 9. translated *punish* and *punished*.

‡ I have said that we have the word *κολαζομενες* Acts, iv. 21. and 2 Peter, ii. 9. In the first of these passages I was mistaken, for the word is *κολασωλιας*. This mis-quotation Scrutator eagerly seizes, and says that '*I have never consulted the passages which I quote.*' That '*I merely set down, in a blundering way, the comments of a lexicographer.*'—That, '*if I thus impose on my readers I am one of the worst sort of deceivers.*' Letters, p. 82, 83. But why all this

I hope it will be acknowledged that here is something like an intimation that the punishment threatened by our Lord to ungodly men, is intended as a limited correction,

abuse about a single mis-quotation? Let the gentleman tell us himself.

'The reason of my pointing out this mistake is,' says he, 'NOT BECAUSE IT MAKES ANY DIFFERENCE IN THE STATE OF THE ARGUMENT, AS IT CERTAINLY DOES NOT, but to add another proof that Mr. V. quotes passages of scripture in the original which he never consulted.' Letters, p: 83. I hope my retailing this correction from my reviewer will be deemed proof sufficient of my sense of obligation to him. I observe,

1. That we have the authority of my corrector, that the state of the argument is not affected by my mistake. The reader, therefore, has no reason to suppose that I meant to impose on him.

2. That the word *κολασιαι* is of the same meaning as *κολαζομεναι*, and in the passage before us, Acts, iv. 21., bears the same sense as that which I gave to it, viz. that of *restraining* or *repressing*; for it is evident that the Jewish rulers meant to repress the apostles in the gospel, and to restrain them from preaching, through Jesus, the resurrection of the dead.

3. The substantive *κολασις*, which our Lord uses Mat. xxv. 46. is also used to signify *chastisement*, in Ezek. xliii. 21. *και αυλοι ληφονται την κολασιν αυτων περι πασαν των επισησιν*, which our translation renders, *And if they be ashamed of all they have done*. In the same sense it is used in the Apochrypha, Wisdom, xi. 13. *When they heard others were benefitted, δια των ιδιων κολασεων, by their own punishment, they had some feeling of the Lord.*

4. Parkhurst also says that *κολαζω* is from *αλω* to *keep back, separate, keep off, RESTRAIN, PROHIBIT.*

5. The above quotation from Grotius may be thus freely translated---'We observe, then, that punishment regards the benefit either of the offender, or of the offended, or, indeed, of any other persons. The punishment which respects the first of these three purposes, is called by philosophers sometimes *εθεσια*, sometimes *κολασις*, and sometimes *παραινσις* *. According to Paulus, a lawyer, the punishment designed for amendment is, by Plato, said to be *σωφροσισης ενεκα*---for the sake of making wiser. And it is called by Plutarch *ιατριαι ψυχης*, the *healer of the mind*; 'because, agreeable to the art of healing, it renders him who hath sinned better by means of contraries.'

6. In further confirmation that by *κολασις* our Lord meant *chastisement*, we

* These are terms, especially the first and last, nearly of the same import. *κολασις* means *chastisement*, and the other two *admonition*.

an (consequently as a mean to purification. Nor let this seem strange to you; the idea is an ancient one: *Thine own iniquity shall correct thee*, says the prophet. Certainly our Lord knows both the nature and the end of future punishment; and as he has called it a *correction*, we may rest assured that he is not mistaken. In the nature of the thing, no correction can be of endless duration.

Fourthly, You remark that none of the scriptures speak on universal salvation in the manner which Paul speaks of such as, being on the foundation, build wood, hay, and stubble there, are saved so as by fire. I hope I am not to blame for the manner in which the scriptures speak on any subject on which they treat. I have no right to dictate what they should say. My business is to submit to their authority. If they have not spoken a word on the subject of universal *salvation*, I am not disappointed at it. I am satisfied that they have spoken clearly on the subject of the *restitution of all things*; but if, on that or any other subject, they have not spoken to your mind, I cannot help it.

are to recollect the *character* in which he delivered the threatening in Mat. xxv. 46. namely, that of the great and righteous judge. It seems to me that those gentlemen who contend for *vindictive* punishments in the divine administration, do not sufficiently consider this; they seem to think judgment is confined almost intirely to punishment, and that punishment is, in itself, an end, instead of a mean to an end. But the scriptural idea of a judge, is that of a governor who is to order all things, and to appoint to every person his proper station and lot. In this manner Christ, who is the appointed judge, will rule till all authority, power, and dominion are subdued to him; and then he will give up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God (through the government of Christ) may be ALL IN ALL. The idea of *vindictive* punishment cannot apply to God, unless, as wicked men often do, he punish from a revengeful temper, or, like weak men, he cannot, in some cases, unite the exercise of public justice with the benefit of the sufferer, then there may be vindictive wrath in his heart and vindictive punishment in his dispensations.--- But will any Christian admit this? Thus I still think there is proof that *kolasis* signifies *chastisement* when used by our Lord in relation to future punishment.

3. You observe, of the scriptures which you have brought forward in contrast, that ‘the phraseology of the greater part of them is inconsistent with any other state following that which they describe;’ which you attempt to prove by saying, ‘On the supposition of salvation being appointed as the ultimate portion of those who die in their sins, they have not their portion in this life, but will, equally with those who die in the Lord, behold his righteousness and be satisfied in his likeness. Their expectation shall not perish, but shall issue, as well as that of the righteous, in gladness; and though driven away in their wickedness, yet they shall have hope in their death, and that hope shall be realised,’ &c. &c.

I have insisted upon the reality and equity of future punishment; contending, at the same time, that it is limited in its duration, and corrective in its nature. You, without having any regard to the loss which sinners will sustain by having no part in the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth ---without considering in the least the tribulation, indignation and wrath which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness---without allowing any thing for the few stripes and many stripes which, according to their character, they shall receive, insist upon it, that the difference I make betwixt the state of the righteous and the wicked, will not accord with those scriptures; or, in other words, if ever there be an amelioration in the future state of the wicked, then those scriptures cannot be true; because then, ‘those who die in their sins, will, *equally with those who die in the Lord,* behold his righteousness, and be satisfied in his likeness,’ &c. The fallacy of such reasoning, I conceive, must be evident to every reader.

And here let me ask, Sir, what universalist who holds with future punishment, ever supposed that, whenever sinners were restored from guilt and punishment, they would

then be made *equal* in holiness; happiness, and glory with God's first-born children? For my part, I do not know that all the angels of God, or all his prophets, apostles, and saints, either are now, or ever will be, *equal* in holiness, happiness, and glory; much less that those who die in their sins will ever be *equally* so with those who die in the Lord.

You represent also, that, according to my views, 'the broad way does not lead to *destruction*, but merely to a temporary correction, the end of which is everlasting life. The chaff will not be *burned*, but turned into wheat, &c. ---That those who in the present life have not believed in Christ should not perish, but have everlasting life, &c.---' Finally, that though they bear briars and thorns, yet their *END* is *not to be burned*, but to obtain '*salvation*.' You once, in the course of our correspondence, attempted to fix the *inconsistency* of holding both with annihilation and universal restoration upon me. I should at present take no notice of this---(as you have apologised for it elsewhere) were it not that you, in the above quotation, have recourse to arguments which belong only to the scheme of annihilation. You are not to be told, Sir, that *destruction*, *burning*, *perishing*, are not considered by the advocates of endless conscious misery, as implying an end of being; yet that you have reasoned upon these phrases in that sense seems clear; but is it so that annihilation is inconsistent with the universal doctrine only? Is it perfectly reconcilable with the idea of endless torment? And is an advocate for the never-ending misery of sinners allowed, upon occasion, to shift his ground to annihilation, to baffle his opponent or perplex his reader? The trifling manner in which you have reasoned upon the figurative expressions contained in some of the contrasted scriptures, is unworthy

of your general good sense; 'the chaff,' you say, on the universal scheme, 'will not be burned, but *turned into wheat---the tares will be the same---*and the *bad fish will be turned into good!*' It is pity for any body to follow a system at the expence of common sense.

The apostle to the Hebrews, in one of your contrasted passages, takes a figure from the production and treatment of bad ground, and applies it to illustrate the case of such as had misimproved the blessings of the gospel. *The earth which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.* What if an universalist, following, as you have done, the figure, should say, Though such ground be burned because of its unfruitfulness, yet the burning of unfruitful ground is, oftentimes, the only method the farmer can take to alter its quality and make it fruitful, and that the sacred writer had a reference to this process and its consequences in God's dealing with sinners: Would you admit this as argument? Yet surely it is upon par with any thing which you have said upon the above-mentioned figures of speech.

But I apprehend that in my last epistle to you, I shewed the proper scriptural method of considering such texts as you now have brought forward, and took a view of them as perfectly consistent with the restitution of all the intelligent offspring of God; namely, by referring them to the times and the seasons which God has appointed in which to reconcile all things to himself. Mercy and judgment are often united in the scriptures in the same individual; each in their proper season. I have given several instances of this in the letter referred to, and could point out more, but wish to avoid being tedious. I would only, therefore, observe, that the phraseology of the greater part of those texts which relate to the rejection of the Jews is

as inconsistent with any other state following that which they describe, as the texts appear to be which you have brought forward in contrast; and yet the former must, in due season, give place to a restoration of the Jewish people; and so must the latter to a reconciliation of all things to the Father by the blood of the cross*.

As there are several other things in your fifth letter which I shall have occasion to notice, and as I have already written somewhat at length, I conclude at present by an assurance of my usual, and unabated good-will towards you.

W. VIDLER.

* Scrutator has, in his sixth letter, poured contempt on what I have written in the close of this. I have no answer to make but that I am persuaded I have fairly met Mr. F.'s arguments. Let the reader judge for himself.

LETTER IX.

EXAMINATION OF THE GROUNDS OF MR. F.'S BELIEF OF
ENDLESS MISERY CONTINUED---THE MEANING OF AION
AND ITS DERIVATIVES CONSIDERED.

SIR,

IN stating the principal grounds on which you rest your belief of the doctrine of endless misery, you reckon, secondly,

‘ All those passages which speak of the duration of future punishment by the terms *eternal*, *everlasting*, and *for ever and ever*.’

In reckoning up such passages, you say, you have not mentioned Isa. xxxiii. 14. because you ‘ did not wish to introduce any but what would be allowed to refer to a future life.’ This I am glad to see, as it shews that you now treat the subject with rather more caution than you have done. In your letter in the Evangelical Magazine, which gave rise to our correspondence, and in your first and third letters in the Universalist’s Miscellany, *this passage* was brought forward, and the *devouring fire* and *everlasting burnings* of it, were reiterated by you with profound awe; but I congratulate you on having given it up, as it has certainly nothing to do with a state of future punishment.

The number of texts in which you find the above terms connected with the punishment of men or devils in a future state is twelve; out of these the Old Testament affords only one instance, according to your enumeration---Dan. xii. 2. Of these twelve instances I must object to Rev. xix. 3. *And her smoke rose up for ever and ever*. This text I con-

ceive not to relate to a future life, but to the vengeance of God upon mystical Babylon, in the course of his providence, in the present state of things, and when it shall take place, will afford much joy to the church of God upon earth, which is described in the language of prophecy, by *much people in heaven singing praise to God*. That the scene of the destruction of mystical Babylon is on earth, is evident, by consulting the preceding chapter, where the merchants and ship-masters, and passengers and sailors, and also the kings of the earth, are represented as bewailing her ruin. Most commentators have supposed that by Babylon we are to understand Rome. Without admitting that mystical Babylon is confined to Rome, or that its spirit and practices are found only in the Roman communion, we may suppose that the City of Rome, as being the source and long the seat of antichristian power, will meet with some very terrible destruction: it should seem, by the language of the revelator, it will become a volcano; and that a very signal subversion of the powers of this world, who exalt themselves against Christ, will then take place. I conceive the time of this destruction to be at the second appearance of our Lord, who has long been consuming antichrist with the spirit of his mouth, namely, his word; but he shall then *destroy them with the brightness of his coming*. Then I believe Christ will establish his kingdom, raise his first-born from the dead, and reign with them a thousand years upon earth. Rev. v. 10. Dan. vii. 24. Rev. xx. 1---6. If this view be right, the smoke of the city will continue to ascend during the millennial age, at the end of which it will mix with the smoke of the earth, in the universal conflagration, and continue to ascend with it till the new heavens and the new earth shall be formed, when it will necessarily cease. Whether your views of the millenium be in the same order as my own or not, yet, according to your own principles,

there will be a new earth, and, consequently, the smoke of volcanic Rome, as well as the smoke of the burning earth at large, will cease to ascend. Here then, on your own ground, is an instance, *from the New Testament*, of *εις των αιωνων των αιωνων*, *for ever and ever*, being used in a limited sense, though you have expressed your belief that this phrase is never there used but to convey the idea of endless duration.

I remark also, that the three texts, Rev. xiv. 2. xix. 3. xx. 10. which are the only places in the whole New Testament where the phrase *for ever and ever* is connected with punishment, are spoken in relation to *peculiar* characters, and not sinners in common. That in ch. xiv. 11. is against such as worship the beast and his image, or receive his mark. This description surely does not reach to all who are ignorant of God, or who are in rebellion against him. Ch. xix. 3. we have proved to belong to the destruction of Rome on earth; and as for ch. xx. 10. it speaks only of the devil, the beast, and the false prophet, who are to be tormented day and night *for ever and ever*. It is granted, that, if any one be endlessly punished, the doctrine of *universal* restoration falls to the ground; but as the phrase *for ever and ever* is found only in connection with the punishment of *peculiar* characters of sinners---while it is said elsewhere, that it shall be *more tolerable* in the day of judgment for some than for others; that some shall be beaten with *few stripes*; but that every man shall be dealt with according to his works---I think that you ought not to apply this peculiar phraseology to the case of sinners in common: for the scriptures do not denounce one indiscriminate punishment to sinners of all descriptions: on the contrary, they make a just and beautiful distinction of moral character: and from hence I conceive it reasonable to infer that future punishment is limited and corrective.

It may be doubtful also whether Jude 7. is much to your purpose, as the apostle seems to refer to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha and the neighbouring cities, as recorded in Gen. xix. 24---28. When he says that they are *πυρῶν αἰώνιον δίκην υπερχουσαι*, *suffering the vengeance of aionion fire*, it is most natural to conclude that he refers to the fire from heaven by which, when those cities were destroyed, *the smoke of them went up as the smoke of a furnace*. Gen. xix. 28. But this fire has not continued to burn ever since, much less will it burn endlessly; for many ages past the plain of Sodom has been covered with water, which has been known under the name of the Sea of Sodom, and the Dead Sea, &c. As for the inhabitants of Sodom, we know that they will be judged and punished; but *it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment* for them than for those who have rejected the gospel, Mat. x. 15. I consider Jude as speaking in perfect consistence with the current language of the Old Testament, where we read of the everlasting covenant made at Sinai, which long ago was broken and abolished; of the everlasting priesthood of Phineas and his seed, which has long been superceded by the priesthood of Christ; of the everlasting covenant of royalty with David and his seed, which ceased some centuries before Christ came in the flesh.

And of the destruction of Idumea it is said, *The streams of the land shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch; it shall not be quenched night nor day, the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever*. Isa. xxxiv. 9, 10. But it is evident that endless duration is not intended by this; for Idumea has long since been inhabited, and many thousands of Mahometans yearly pass through it in their pilgrimage to Mecca.

You give the derivation of *αιων*, *aion*, as compounded of *αι* and *ων*, and you say that its literal meaning is *always being*; and also that the meaning of its derivative *αιωνις* is *endless, everlasting, or eternal*. I know, Sir, that the lexicographers have given this derivation of *αιων*. and this meaning to it and to its derivatives: Kircher, Schrevelius, Leigh, Parkhurst, &c. do so. Great as their authority may be, I appeal from them to the common sense of the reader, and affirm, that *αιων* does not necessarily mean *eternity*, nor *αιωνις*, *eternal*, or *everlasting*, for which I assign the following reasons.---

1st. The above writers allow, that *αιων*, is taken for an hundred years---for the term of human life, which is about seventy years---for the duration of the world---for an age, or dispensation of providence---in its plural form, for the ages of the world---for any measurement of time, especially if its termination be hidden---yea, for a year. And Parkhurst adds, that *αιων*, in the Septuagint translation, generally answers to *מלך* in the Hebrew, which is well known to describe periods both of very long, and very short duration. Now I conceive, that these concessions-----which they were constrained to make, from the common use of the word in the scriptures and in Greek writers-----greatly weaken if not totally overthrow, the force of the assertion, that '*αιων* means *eternity*;' seeing it is so often taken for a limited period, and sometimes even for a very short one too.

2d. The writers of the New Testament do not use the word *αιων* to convey the idea of eternity, because there are *different aions* spoken of, and one *aion* is represented as succeeding another. The phrase *this aion* occurs two and twenty times in the New Testament, and wherever we meet with it, it necessarily stands opposed to *some other aion*; and therefore we read of *των αιωνι τούτω αλλα και εν των μελλοντι*, *this aion and also that which is to come*, Ephes. i. 21. and Matt. xii. 32.

3d. We also read of *the end of the aion*, τῆς συντελειᾶς τοῦ αἰῶνος, Matt. xxviii. 20. and even of *the end of the aions*, plural συντελειᾶς τῶν αἰῶνων, Heb. ix. 26. which evidently refers to the aions *past*. There are also *the aions to come*, Ephes. ii. 7. And we have the idea given us of time *απο τῶν αἰῶνων*, *before the aions began*, 1 Cor. ii. 7. I ask, Can the word aion mean *always being*? Can it express *eternity of duration*? Did the sacred penmen mean to give *this idea* in any of the above passages? Is it not clear that the word admits of the existence of time *before* the period which it describes began? and also *an end* to the periods which it describes as yet to come*?

* The present Bishop of London, in his 'Nineteenth Lecture on the Gospel of St. Matthew,' treats on our Lord's prediction of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, Matt. xxiv. 3. His lordship observes, that 'by the end of the world is to be understood, not the final consummation of all things here below, but the end of that *age*, the end of the Jewish state and polity, the subversion of their city, temple, and government.' In a note he adds, that the word αἰών, here translated *the world*, frequently means nothing more than *an age*, a certain definite period of time.' The Critical Reviewers have thus remarked on it, 'Surely his lordship might have confirmed this opinion with greater strength of argument; and instead of the conditional term '*frequently*,' which implies that the other acceptance of the term is occasionally adopted, might have informed his readers that the PRIMARY signification of αἰών is *an age*, and that in this sense it is used, WITHOUT ANY EXCEPTION WHATSOEVER, throughout the whole of the scriptures.' Crit. Rev. Octr. 1802. p. 167.

The learned Dr. Hammond, in his Annotations on 1 Tim. i. 17. says 'The αἰῶνες here, of which God is said to be king, may possibly signify the several *ages* of the world, and no more, that being the ordinary notation of αἰών.' Dr. Benson and Dr. Macknight give the same sense of this passage, distributing the ages into three, namely, the patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian age. My reason for mentioning these great authorities to prove that aion means an *age* only, is, that Scrutator has frequently insinuated that I am so ignorant as not to know the meaning of the word; be that as it may, he will not say so of these gentlemen in whose company I have the happiness to be found. He certainly thinks better of them than of me. I am content it

4. It is a rule, which no grammarian will dispute, *that no adjective can have greater force than the substantive from which it is derived*; thus *black*, cannot mean more than *blackness*, *white* cannot mean more than *whiteness*, so neither can *aionios*, *aionion*, &c. mean more than *aion*. It is granted, that there is a palpable departure from this rule in our common translation of the scriptures in the instance before us; and much as I esteem the translators of the Bible, and confess myself obliged to them for their learned labour, yet in this case, and probably in some others, we may, without a breach of charity, consider them as under the influence of system or of authority, or both of them together; otherwise I cannot account for men so pious, wise, and learned as they were, to render *aionion* by everlasting and eternal. They have never translated *aion* by *eternity* any where; though they have rendered it frequently *world*, and its plural *worlds*, its singular *age*, and its plural, sometimes, *ages*.---I apprehend that the singular means *age*, and the plural *ages*, every where; because it *must* be so rendered in some places; and *may be* so in ALL*.

should be so. They certainly had no cause to serve in what they have said. They have borne an unbiassed testimony, and said that *aion* means *an age* only. I have a right to make use of their evidence: and I appeal to all the world to judge of the justice of my inference, that if *aion* mean only *an age*, then *aionion* can mean only *age-lasting*.

* Scrutator objects to the latter part of this rule: 'if it *may* be so in all, says he; this seems to suppose that it *may not* be so in all.' But what then? does this weaken the rule? surely not. I am enquiring for the ideal meaning of the Greek word *aion*, and its derivatives, and I find the English word *age*, and its relative *age-lasting*, will give a good sense of them every where, but that in many places no other English words will do so. I conclude therefore, that *age*; and *age-lasting* are the proper renderings. Let this gentleman take the word *eternity* and its relative *eternal* which he contends for; or let him take the word *world*, (by which our translators usually render *aion*) and its relative *worldly*, and he will find insuperable difficulties. Notwithstanding, therefore, what this writer has urged, the rule stands in full force.

As to *aionios*, *aionion*, &c. as they are derived from *aion*, and have relation to it as adjectives to their substantive, they can only describe the duration of something relative to that particular *aion*, or age, spoken of, and with which they are connected.

That this is the meaning of the word *aionion* in the Septuagint is very certain, for we there read of the *aionion* covenant of circumcision, Gen. xvii. 13.---the *aionion* covenant of priesthood, Num. xxv. 13.---the *aionion* statute of the day of atonement, Lev. xvi. 34. &c. &c. &c. It would be an affront to scripture and common sense to ascribe *eternity* to these things, merely because they are said to be of *aionion* duration; for it is certain that the *aion* or age, to which all these things related, is expired and gone---the *aionion* covenants and statutes, &c. waxed old, and have long ago vanished away, (Heb. vii. 13.) and a new *aion* has been introduced, even the Christian *aion*, which itself shall come to an end, as our blessed Lord hath told us in his gracious promises to his church, *And lo, I am with you always, even to the END OF THE AION*, Matt. xxviii. 20. And when *this* *aion* is ended, there are *aions* yet to come, Eph. ii. 7. Yea, the apostle represents a succession of *future aions*---*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus* $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \alpha\iota\omega\alpha\varsigma\ \tau\alpha\varsigma\ \gamma\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \tau\eta\ \alpha\iota\omega\alpha\upsilon\ \tau\omega\upsilon\ \alpha\iota\omega\alpha\upsilon\upsilon$, Eph. iii. 21. Here we have the idea of one age generating another; for the apostle ascribes praise to God our Father *to all the generations of the age of ages**.

* I conceive the *age of ages* to be the grand closing age of the mediator's reign, when he, having subdued all things to himself, and reconciled all things to the Father by the blood of his cross, shall reign a long and happy period over all, in peace, and righteousness, and joy; and then give up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that *he may be all in all*. If I err, may the Father of mercies pardon my involuntary error, and correct my judgment by his truth.

Now, Sir, take your meaning of the word *aion*, *always being*, and its derivatives as *eternal*, &c. and apply it in the face of all these facts and scriptures, and see how it will accord. We shall then see that an hundred years is an *eternity*---a man's short frail life is an *eternity*---a dispensation of providence, long or short, is an *eternity*, &c. &c. There are eternities *past*---an eternity *now existing*---and when *this* eternity is *ended*, there are generations of eternities *to come*---There are eternal things *that* have long ago *come to an end*; and the *eternal* hills now existing will one day be burned up, &c. !!!

Upon the whole, the proper meaning of *aion* appears to be *age*, and the proper meaning of *aionion* *age-lasting*. Thus we have a rational conception of the ages that are past, of the age which now exists, and of the ages to come. And thus, also, we can well conceive of the age-lasting covenants above mentioned, which continued during the Jewish age-----the age-lasting hills, which shall continue during the age of the world---the *ευαγγελιον αιωνιον*, age-lasting gospel, which shall continue to be preached during those ages in which the mediator shall be subjecting all things to himself, and reconciling all things to the Father-----the *πνευματι αιωνε*, (Heb. ix. 14.) *i. e.* the holy spirit, which has presided over the church in all ages, and will continue so to do, till, by his influence, in the fulness of the dispensation of the times, all things will be quickened---*αιωνε θεε*, the God who reigns through all the ages, whether past, present, or to come; or, as St. Paul expresses it, *βασιλεια των αιωνων*, *the king of the ages**; 4 Tim. i. 17.

* Probably the apostle had the Septuagint in view when he wrote this---
η βασιλεια σου βασιλεια ωαντων των αιωνων, *Thy kingdom is a kingdom of ALL THE AGES*, Psa. cxlv. 13.

In your sixth letter you jeer me because I had pointed out the difference betwixt the meaning of the Greek words *aion* and *aionios*, and the English words *eternity* and *eternal*, and then ask, 'Is it not possible for a person to know that the Greek *aion* and *aionios* will not always bear to be rendered by the English words *eternity*, *everlasting*, or *eternal*, and yet perceive no evidence that the one are less expressive of endless duration than the other?' How far it may be possible for you, or others, to know a true datum and not come to a right conclusion upon it, I cannot tell; but this I know, that if those Greek words will not always bear to be translated by these English ones, there is a reason for it; and perhaps the reader, when he has considered the evidence above given, may be of my mind, that the Greek words are *rather less expressive of endless duration than the English ones*; for the fact is, that they do not, *in themselves*, express endless duration at all.---If you have a better reason to give, I call upon you for it.

You have also allowed, that there is, 'some difference' betwixt these words; inasmuch as the English words that are 'properly expressive of endless duration may not ordinarily admit of a plural, nor of the pronouns *this* and *that* before them.' This, Sir, is allowing a great deal, and I think much more than your cause will bear; for if the English words *eternity*, *everlasting*, and *eternal*, will not endure that we should say *eternities*-----*this* eternity and *that* eternity-----the *eternities past*, and the *eternities to come*; then I think it as evident as reason can make it be, that *aion* and *aionios*, &c. cannot mean *eternity*, *eternal*, or *everlasting*.

---The two instances which you gave of *aion* in its plural form being used to convey the idea of endless duration, I conceive are inadequate to the purpose, nor can I account for your bringing forward the first of them, Eph. iii. 11.

ἀρχὴ ἀποθεῖται τῶν αἰώνων, but by supposing that your predilection for eternal purposes is the cause. The apostle is speaking of *the disposition of the ages, which God made for Christ Jesus our Lord**, and not of any eternal purpose in him.

As for 1 Tim. i. 17. I have noticed the former part of it above, as reading literally, *the king of the ages*; and as to the latter part of the text, where praise is ascribed to God *αἰς τὰς αἰωνὰς τῶν αἰώνων*, it is literally *to the ages of ages*. And as I have observed to you before, all the ages which the scripture speaks of, are included in the mediatorial reign of Christ, beyond which we read of no ages, but are briefly informed that the son shall be subject to the father, and God shall be all in all. 1 Cor. xv. 28.

I think it, therefore, a grand idea of the apostle to ascribe to him who is the king of the ages, honour and glory, to the ages of the ages, or throughout them all.

This does not imply that there are any bounds to the reign of the immortal God, or that his honour and glory will cease when the ages of mediation shall end; but it is contended, that neither this text nor any similar one goes farther than these ages.

Thus I hope *justice is done to these texts, without giving them the idea of unlimited duration.*

It is a feeble attempt of yours indeed to venture to accommodate your own mode of speaking of *'THIS eternity of bliss,'* and *'THAT eternity of bliss,'* to the mode of using the Greek *this age* and *that age*,----for unless one of your *eternities* of bliss can expire, and another of your *eternities* of bliss can succeed it, there is no parallel betwixt them.

I have no hesitation in admitting that *'the עולם of Dan. xii. 2.'* answers to the Greek *αἰών*, nor that the antithesis in

* See Macknight on the text.

this passage, and in Matt. xxv. 46. determines it to mean the same when applied to shame and contempt, as when applied to life.'---You seem greatly to have mistaken me in what I said about the eternity of future happiness. I believe I have never pleaded for that on account of its being expressed either by the word $\alpha\lambda\omega\upsilon$ or $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon$. I conceive it to stand on much firmer ground than these words can afford. But I may say something further on that subject in another letter.

Your quotation, in which the authority of Aristotle is brought forward, proves little to your purpose. The critic who furnished you with it, says, that the ancients *admirably* expressed eternity by the word *aion*; for they call the term of each person's life his *aion*!!! Most *admirable* indeed! Are you in the habit of speaking to your hearers in this admirable manner about eternity? If I had brought a quotation of such a nature, I should probably have been told, *that it was a proof of the scarcity of evidence in the paths which I am in the habit of treading*.*

In my next I may go on to consider further what you have said in your fifth letter. Meanwhile,

Your sincere friend in the love of the truth,

November, 1800.

W. VIDLER.

*A reader of the Universalist's Miscellany, p. 444. Vol. IV. has the following remark:

'Granting to Mr. F. that $\alpha\lambda\omega\upsilon$ answers to $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon$, and that the latter is compounded of $\alpha\alpha$ and $\omega\upsilon$, and may be rendered into English by 'always being,' is not the English term of general application? Must not, therefore, the meaning depend upon the nature of the event, or object, to which it is applied?

That this must be the case with $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon$ I desire no better authority and testimony, merely human, than Aristotle, and no more of his than Mr. F. has quoted. From him we learn, that the term in question has the meaning of

LETTER X.

NO SCRIPTURES RELATING TO FUTURE PUNISHMENT IMPLY MORE THAN WHAT IS ELSEWHERE EXPRESSED ON THAT SUBJECT-----BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST, AND THE CASE OF JUDAS CONSIDERED-----UNQUENCHABLE FIRE EXPLAINED.

SIR,

IT is my unhappiness that I have to apologize again for my long silence; but a lingering nervous complaint, which for a long while nearly deprived me of the power both of thought and action, has been the occasion. Being in measure, by the goodness of providence, restored again to health, it is with pleasure that I re-commence my correspondence with you.

In my last I intimated my intention to consider next what you had further advanced in your fifth letter.

endless when applied to beings whom 'time does not make old.' But, says Aristotle, more ancient Greek writers than myself call the time of each person's life his *aion*. Why? Is it to affirm that time endless? No, truly; but because, according to the laws of nature, nothing respecting any man can exist out of the limits of his life. This, I admit, is conclusive; but the conclusion entirely overthrows the argument Mr. F. would found upon the term *aion*.'

But I add, that however great the authority of Aristotle may be, in matters of ancient science in general, it can have small weight in the present case; because we are not inquiring what is the sense in which the ancient Greeks used the word *aion*, (though it appears that even among them its *primary* meaning is age,) but, in what sense do the sacred writers use it? and we have already seen, by the testimony of the Critical Reviewers, that it is *always, without any variation, used in the scriptures to signify AGE.*

In proof of the eternity of future misery, you add thirdly, ‘ All those passages which express the duration of future punishment by implication, or by forms of speech which imply the doctrine in question.’

If what I have said of the meaning of *aion* and its derivatives in my two last be forcible---of which I have no manner of doubt---I am under no obligation to attend to this head of argument; because if no scripture express the doctrine of eternal misery, but, on the contrary, only limited and corrective punishments, it cannot be inferred, that any scripture *implies* further than what is elsewhere *plainly* expressed.

But that I may not seem wanting in reply to what you have said, I will just notice some of the most striking passages which you have quoted, and your reasoning upon them.

I pray for them, I pray not for the world. Your argument is, ‘ If there be some for whom Jesus did not pray, there are some who will have no share in the benefit of his mediation, without which they cannot be saved.’ This is Calvinism with a witness; and such Calvinism also as will but ill accord with your own views elsewhere expressed. But I am happy that neither this text, nor any other, teaches that any of the human race will have no share in the benefits of Christ’s mediation.

Our Lord was praying for his immediate disciples in those words; these, because of their faith in him, he distinguished from the world: yet there were many then living, under the denomination of the world, who afterwards believed through the word which his disciples preached; for them he prayed, as distinguished from his immediate followers, John, xvii. 20. He even goes on to pray for such an union in his church that the *world*-----as dis-

tinguished both from his apostles and his church at large, *might believe*, ver. 21 and 23.

In the prayer of Christ, four different parties are concerned; first, *himself*, ver. 1—5.; secondly, his *apostles*, ver. 6—19.; thirdly, *all believers*, ver. 20—23.; in which part, fourthly, he prays for the world, *that they also may believe*, through the union of his church. I may with as much propriety say that Christ never prayed for any but his apostles, as for you to say that he never prayed for the world; and that *you* will never have a share in the benefits of his mediation, as for you to say that there are any of the human race who will not.

*The blasphemy against the holy ghost shall not be forgiven unto men, neither in this world, neither in the world to come----He hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.----*I apprehend when a proper translation of these words is given, there will be nothing found in them contrary to the restitution of all things. You are already in possession of the reasons why I translate *aion* by *age*, and *aionion* by *age-lasting*, which reasons, IF YOU OR ANY OTHER MAN CAN INVALIDATE, I WILL FREELY GIVE UP MY POINT.* But, at present, under a firm persuasion of their unshaken truth, I proceed to give a rendering in conformity to them----‘ But the blasphemy against the holy spirit will not be forgiven unto them, either in this, or in the future *age*,’ Mat. xii. 31, 32. ‘ He hath not remission to the *age*, but is liable to *age-lasting* punishment,’ Mark, iii. 29.

* If the scriptures had *clearly* revealed the doctrine of endless misery, there could have been no ground for the present controversy; but then there could have been no room in the scriptures, consistently, for the paternal character of the deity, the destruction of death, the reconciliation of all things, nor for punishment according to works.

That punishment shall certainly be inflicted upon such as blaspheme against the holy spirit is clear; but that their punishment will be endless, is not quite so clear, as our Lord is not speaking of *this eternity* and the *eternity to come*, nor of *eternal punishment*, but of this age and the coming one, and of the punishment belonging to that age, which such as blaspheme against the holy ghost are liable to; for, says he, 'they will not be forgiven.'

I agree that the above passage is equal to John, x. 28. which I read thus----'I give unto them *age-lasting* life, and they shall not perish in the *age*,' namely, in the coming age of judgment; for it is the peculiar privilege of such as believe in the gospel, that they shall have part in the first resurrection, and over them the second death hath no power, Rev. xxi. 6.

If I mistake not your argument on these passages is dissolved by the above rendering, as you rested it upon the words *eternal*, *never*, *ever*, which I have shewn to be a wrong translation. And I readily grant that those who are not forgiven, will not be *saved*. It is not their salvation which I am contending for; but I contend that the threatenings under consideration do not teach endless damnation; and I am fully persuaded, on the ground of the divine promises elsewhere delivered, of their final restoration.

The sin unto death, for the forgiveness of which Christians are forbid to pray, I fully admit of; but it behoves you to prove that the apostle has pronounced *endless* death in this case; and even then it would hardly serve the cause of endless *misery*. And I conceive there may be a peculiar punishment called *a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation*, for those who have fallen away from the truth; and yet all this will not amount to endless tor-

ments. Neither do I think that every sinner will be exposed to the same penalties; for this is a peculiar threatening to sinners of a peculiar character, who once had knowledge of, and hope in, the sacrifice for sin, which many, who will be condemned, had not. Every man shall be judged according to his works. Any person being *lost*, i. e. *destroyed*, will not militate against the restoration of that person, unless this state of destruction could be proved to be endless; but even the phrase, *ολιθρον αιωνιον* *, *age-lasting destruction*, will not prove this, and surely Christ, when he spoke of the destruction of the soul, did not imply more than what the apostle plainly expressed.

The saying of Christ concerning Judas, *It had been good for that man if he had not been born*, is a Jewish proverb, or, as Dr. Gill † says, ‘ a rabbinical phrase, frequently used in one form or other, and sometimes as our Lord spoke it; and it is applied to such as speak false and lying words, and regard not the glory of their Creator.’ There are similar forms of speaking even in the Old Testament. Job, under his troubles, (chap. iii. 19. x. 18, 19.) thought it would have been good for him if he had not been born, for he wishes that he had died in his mother’s womb. And Jeremiah, because he saw labour and sorrow, and his days were consumed with shame, utters the same wish, ch. xx. 17, 18. And it appears from Eccles. vi. 3---6. that a phrase much of the same kind was used by Solomon. *If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no bu-*

* 2 Thes. ii. 9.

† See his note on Matt. xxvi. 24 and Mark. xiv. 21. where he brings proof of this proverb being used in other forms beside that which our Lord uses.

rial, I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. This is, in effect, saying, that he had better have been an abortion, than to have lived a long and happy life, and then, at last, have died in disgrace: much more, then, might this proverb be applied to unhappy Judas.

Your argument is formed upon the supposition that Judas had better not have *existed*; but the words of Christ must be greatly perverted to extract such a sense from them. It seems a very possible thing for a person to exist and to be happy without being born. What do you think of the multitudes of infants whose mothers, as Jeremiah expresses it, are their graves, and whose mothers' wombs are always great with them? Would it not have been good for Judas to have been one of this class, rather than to have been born to do and suffer what he did, even in the present life? I would always recommend it to you, and to all others who maintain the doctrine of endless misery, to consider how weak a foundation a common proverb is to support such a tremendous idea.

The worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched, are certainly expressive of the punishment of the wicked; but I think there are sufficient reasons to be given why these phrases do not mean endless duration. Our Lord was a Jew, and his personal ministry was amongst Jews, and he spoke to them in language to which they were accustomed. Both they and he well knew that the Old Testament had mentioned several unquenchable fires, which, nevertheless, had expired, when the end for which they were kindled had been answered. I will refer you to a few such. Ezek. xx. 47, 48. *And say to the forest of the south, (Judea) Hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: THE FLAMING FLAME SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED, and all faces*

from the south to the north shall be burned therein. And all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it: IT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED. Isaiah, xxxiv. 9, 10. The streams (of the land of Idumea) shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. IT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED NIGHT NOR DAY; THE SMOKE THEREOF SHALL GO UP FOR EVER: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. Jer. xvii. 27. But if ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the sabbath day, and not bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then I will kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, AND IT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED. We will add one more instance, from which the language of our Lord is evidently taken. Isaiah, lxvi. 15, 16. For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots, like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire, and by his sword, will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. Ver. 23, 24. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: FOR THEIR WORM SHALL NOT DIE, NEITHER SHALL THEIR FIRE BE QUENCHED, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh. I think it evident from these scriptures that an unquenchable fire, (in the Jewish sense of that phrase,) is not a fire of endless duration; but a fire that answers the end for which it was kindled. And this end, I have no doubt, will be answered by the fire of hell, towards sinners.

I doubt not but the threatening of Christ is very terrible, and justly alarming to all such, as, rather than deny themselves, will venture on the divine displeasure; but certainly the words of Isaiah convey the idea of limited duration; because they speak of burning the carcasses of dead men in a putrid state, the worm being alive in them; nevertheless, the fire, we know, in the nature of things, must destroy both the carcase and the worm which it fed.

Christ took up the literal language of the prophet and applied it figuratively to the awful subject of future punishment---I say figuratively, for at any rate the worm applied to sinners in hell must be a figure---but as he used no language, either here or elsewhere, on this subject, that expresses *eternity*; and as the Jews to whom he spoke knew the language which he used to be of limited meaning*, it is natural to suppose that he meant it in that sense. My observation above, applies here, that if no scripture anywhere *express* the eternity of future misery, it cannot be inferred that any scripture which treats of it by implication can mean more than what is elsewhere *plainly* expressed.

I do not think myself under any obligation to notice any more of the texts which you have brought forward upon this head; nor to dwell upon those under the following one, *viz.* ‘All those passages which intimate that a change of heart, and a preparedness for heaven, are confined to the present life.’ I consider them as having respect to *salvation, and the kingdom of Christ*; for the possession of which, I fully believe a change of heart to be necessary in the present life.

The case of Esau, which you have brought forward, is quite in point. He, by unbelief, lost the birth-right; and

* The reader may also consult places where unquenchable fires are mentioned. Jer. iv. 4. vii. 20. xxi. 12. Amos, v, 6.

with it he lost the blessing of the first-born. Yet he had a blessing, which, though inferior to that of his brother, was pronounced by the same faith in Isaac, for, *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob AND ESAU concerning things to come.* I judge that this type teaches us that God our father is not poorer than father Isaac; and that he has a blessing, even for his Esaus, though inferior to the double portion which he will bestow upon his Jacobs.

I pray God most sincerely, that neither you nor I may imitate profane Esau; that we may not stand without, when the door is shut, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. For I am well persuaded, now is the acceptable time, and now is the day of salvation. That awful scripture, Rev. xxii. 2. has long rested with weight upon my mind. And I conceive that it implies at once the sufficiency of the means which God has afforded for the salvation of men, and that he will not afford any further means in the present state; but that men, in the *age to come*, shall abide the consequence of their conduct in *this present age*. In this view of the words they are very solemn and important. God closes the whole revelation of his will, by saying to men, that they shall be judged according to the words he hath spoken unto them.

If providence spare my health, I mean to address another letter to you in the next magazine.

Mean while,

I remain,

Yours, &c.

W. VIDLER.

LETTER XI.

EXAMPLES OF MR. F.'S MANNER OF REASONING; AND A
RULE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF WORDS.

SIR,

HAVING already considered such part of your fifth letter as contained your arguments for endless misery founded on the words *eternal*, *everlasting*, and *for ever and ever*, I now proceed to notice some other things.

I freely confess that I feel more difficulty in remarking upon your fifth letter than I have felt in any part of my correspondence with you; not from the arguments which it contains, but because of the design, which I think is evident throughout, namely, that of rendering your opponent contemptible. A good cause needs no such attempt, and a bad one cannot long be supported by it.

As a specimen of your design I will exhibit a few instances, in which your maltreatment of both myself and the subject, will appear to the reader.

I had said '*When I reflect that the word which we render everlasting and eternal, was, by Old Testament writers, most generally applied to things limited in their duration, and that the same word is used by a few of the writers of the New Testament only a few times in relation to future punishment, I cannot think that any man who reads the scriptures with candour and attention can say that they appear to teach the doctrine of endless punishment---unless there be something in the nature of future punishment itself which necessarily leads us to receive the word in an endless sense.*

In this case it is not the *word* but the *subject* which gives the idea of endless duration.' P. 34. You remark,

'In a former letter I suggested, that whether the scriptures teach the doctrine of endless punishment, or not, they certainly *appear* to do so---You attempt, however, to discredit it by alledging the few instances in which the terms *ever*, *everlasting*, &c. as connected with future punishment are used in scripture.'

Now does it appear, Sir, that I attempted to discredit your suggestion by alledging *the few instances* in which the terms *ever*, *everlasting*, &c. as connected with future punishment, are used in the scriptures? Are there not two arguments connected with the few instances of the application of these terms to future punishment? First, that Old Testament writers most generally use the word in application to things limited in their duration; and, Secondly, that as we find nothing in the nature of future punishment to render its continuance endless, therefore, the term *everlasting* as used a few times, by a few of the New Testament writers upon that subject, did not prove that the scriptures *appeared* to teach the doctrine which you contend for.---You found it convenient to present my reasoning in a mutilated manner.

Again, I said, 'The only method I can think of to conceive with any satisfaction of eternity, is to connect it with the necessity of the divine existence----To me it appears that the scriptures have revealed nothing either past or to come, but what is connected with successive duration; and that concerning proper eternity, we are left to infer it from the nature of Deity.' You observe,

'If the application of the term *everlasting* to future punishment only five or six times discredit the very *appearance* of its being endless, the same or nearly the same may be said of *the existence of God*, to which it is applied not

much more frequently. You might go over a great part of the sacred writings on this subject as you do on the other, telling us that not only the Old Testament writers make no use of it, but a large proportion of the new; that Matthew never applies the word to this subject, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John; that it is not so applied in the Acts of the Apostles; and though Paul once uses it in his Epistle to the Romans, yet he closes that and all his other Epistles without so using it again; that James did not use it, nor Peter, nor John, either in his three epistles, or in the Apocalypse. And when you had thus established your point, you might ask, with an air of triumph, Is this a proof that the scriptures *appear* to teach the eternal existence of God? Truly, Sir, I am ashamed to refute such trifling; yet if I were not, your readers might be told that doubtless I had *cogent reasons* for my silence.

That you had *cogent reasons* for speaking thus, I will not dispute; but that the words eternal and everlasting are, *in the scripture use of them*, expressive of the existence of God, I do dispute; for the reason before given, namely, that they are applied to the duration of things which have ended, or must end. I do not therefore learn *the proper eternity of God* from these words, but from *the necessity of his existence*. Besides which the scriptures tell me that God is immortal; he *only* hath immortality; that he hath life in himself; that he quickeneth all things; that it is he *which is, and which was, and which is to come*. These expressions are peculiarly applied to the Deity, and from them I learn, also, the proper eternity of his existence.

The word *generation* is often applied to God; to the *years* of God, Psa. cii. 24. to the *throne* of God, Lam. v. 19. to the *fear* of God, Psa. lxxii. 5. to the *thoughts* of God, Psa. xxxiii. 11. to his *truth*, Psa. c. 5. to his *domi-*

nion, Dan. iv. 3. to his *kingdom*, Dan. iv. 34. to his *faithfulness*, Psa. cxix. to his *reign*, Psa. cxlvi. 10. to his *memorial*, Psa. cxxxv. and to his *remembrance*, Psa. ciii. 12. This, according to your own account, is oftener than the words eternal or everlasting are applied to God. Now if any man should say that the word *generation* is expressive of endless duration; you would certainly deny it: and if he was to plead, in proof of his assertion, that the word stands in connection with the *years* of God, with his *throne*, with his *thoughts*, &c. &c.; and if he was to say that the scriptures do at least *appear* to describe eternity of duration by this word, yet still you would be unconvinced: I leave you, Sir, to make the application of this circumstance to the matter in dispute betwixt you and me. As for the number of times the words eternal and everlasting are connected with the future punishment of men, I think it a matter of little import: and my chief reason for mentioning it at all was to shew that much less is said in the scripture even concerning *age-lasting* punishment than is generally supposed. You well know I did not mean to say that *endless* punishment was mentioned five or six times in scripture. I have uniformly denied its being mentioned even once; and yet you have devoted near two pages to refute an idea I have never advanced, *viz.* that the doctrine of endless punishment is not true, *because it is only mentioned five or six times in the sacred writings, &c.*

You have said much to invalidate the rule of interpretation of words which I have laid down. I thought, by the instances I have given, that I had explained myself so as not easily to have been mistaken; but you have either greatly mistaken me, or, as I think, wilfully misrepresented me.

I have said, 'The rule I go by is that which was laid down by the best critics without any relation to the present

subject, viz. That where a word is used in relation to different things, the subject itself must determine the meaning of the word---Thus, if the name *Jehovah* be given to an altar, a city, or to the church---or the word *God* be applied to Moses, to rulers, or to Satan, we must understand these words in a very different sense than when applied to Christ and to the Father---Or again, when the word *infinite* is used in reference to the understanding of God---to the resources of Ethiopia and Egypt, or to the sins of Job, no man would hardly understand the word in the same sense at each place. So when *everlasting*, &c. is applied to the hills, to the covenant of circumcision, to future punishment, to the life of believers, and to God, no considerate man will surely attach the idea of equal duration to all these subjects, but will judge of the duration of each according to their nature.

-You say, 'I make much of this rule,' indeed I think I ought so to do, as it is so congenial to common sense that it cannot be objected to in a direct manner. You indeed have laboured hard to lessen its force, calling it '*disrespectful to the scriptures, and inadmissible.*' You complain that I do not, hereby, *allow words to have a proper meaning of their own*; nor respect the scope and design of the writer*

Now, Sir, nothing can be more evident than that under the term 'subject' I include the scope and design of the writer. All the instances prove it; and the whole chain of my reasoning necessarily includes in it a retention of the proper meaning of every word, so far as the subject will admit. Thus the word *infinite* signifies boundless; in its

* Scrutator devotes about seven pages, in an attempt to invalidate this rule. I have only to request the reader to compare what I have written upon this subject with what this gentleman has written. Letters, p. 116--122.

proper sense it is applied to the understanding of God; but, surely, only in a comparative or figurative sense, when applied to the other subjects. So the word *aionion*, has the general sense of duration, *age-lasting*. When spoken concerning God I give it its full latitude; for this reason among others, that he is the king of the ages; when it relates to the life of believers, I find it restricted to the ages of Christ's kingdom which are yet to come; when connected with future punishment it is bounded by the same; when applied to the hills its duration is much less, for they will be burnt up long before the kingdom of Christ will end; but when applied to the covenant of circumcision, its duration is much shorter. The word in each of these relations retains its sense, it is, *age-lasting*; yet regulated in each instance by the *subject*. So the word *God*, as expressive of power, retains its original idea in all the applications of it which I have mentioned; but had Moses, have rulers, has Satan, or has Christ, dominion in the same sense and degree as the Most High God who is the possessor of heaven and earth? I confess I do not know that the word *Jehovah* is expressive of the *existence* of God, but I think it rather indicates his faithfulness; however, this is of no account in the present debate, for whether the word convey one or the other of these ideas, yet when applied to the Father, to Christ, to the church, to an altar, or to a city, it must necessarily be regulated by the subject: for whether existence or faithfulness be meant, it cannot be applied to all these subjects in the same manner and in the same degree.

Now let us see your own rule, which you represent as being *different from*, if not *opposite to* the above. 'This rule is, that every term be taken in its PROPER sense, except there be something in the SUBJECT or connection which

REQUIRES *it to be taken otherwise.* It would puzzle a conjuror to find a difference betwixt what you have said and what I have said about this rule. But it seems you are determined to contradict me, even in those things in which I perfectly agree with you; probably you do this to shew your *temerity*, or you may have other reasons for it, though you have not vouchsafed to name them. However, if I might venture to guess, I should think that one reason of your being so captious, is, that you might impress the reader with the idea that *I treat the doctrine of future punishment abstractedly, without admitting the force of the terms by which the scriptures professedly teach its duration*: whether I have so done, my former letters, but especially the VIIIth. will shew. I cannot help thinking that the great reason of all your objections to this rule is the use which I have made of it; yet you are constrained to receive it as a good canñon of criticism, and almost in the very words in which I had stated it.

Towards the close of your fifth letter you cashire me for pretending to learning, which, you say, I do not possess. I do not know, Sir, that I have pretended to any thing more than merely to be able to prove that *aion* does not mean eternity; and that *aionion* does not mean eternal; whether I have not proved this, I leave you to reflect at your leisure. It would be easy to retaliate, and observe that you have rendered 1 Tim. i. 17. *τω δε βασιλει των αιωνων*, *Now to the king eternal*; yet surely a man of your critical acumen could not but know that the text reads *King of the AGES*. And Ephes. iii. 2. *χετα προθεσιν των αιωνων*, you have rendered according to his *eternal purpose*; Ephes. iii. 21. *εις πασας τας γενεας του αιωνος των αιωνων* you have rendered *throughout all ages, world without end*. To say you followed the common translation, will be but a poor defence, because you were reproving me for this very thing relative to Hab.

iii. 6. Surely then it behoved you to know that in Ephes. iii. 11. the apostle has not mentioned any thing of an eternal purpose; but that he said *according to the DISPOSITION OF THE AGES*. And in the latter passage, you ought to have known that there is neither *world*, nor *end*; but Paul's language is, *to all the generations of the age of ages**.

Whether your corrections of my language be just, I shall consider in my next.

Mean while,

I am,

With great good will,

Yours, &c.

W. VIDLER.

* Scrutator affirms that the above rule of interpreting words has '*falacy and absurdity in it. That it renders knowledge of every species nterly unattainable; and reduces all language to a mere cypher.*' He bestows five or six pages to prove this assertion, in which, with his usual freedom, he ascribes to me all the nonsense which he himself saw fit to utter upon the subject. See his Letters, p. 116---122.

LETTER XII.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS TO MR. FULLER.---SOME PECULIAR
FORMS OF SPEECH EXPRESSIVE OF DURATION IN THE
SCRIPTURES.

SIR,

ON considering the close of your fifth letter, I find some things for which I ought to thank you; and some in which I think I ought to correct you. As the former is the most pleasant business of the two, I will begin with that.

I thank you for your remarks on the word *ακαταλυτος*, Heb. vii. 16. which our translators render *endless*, and which I had mentioned as a stronger word than any which is used to describe future punishment by the writers of the New Testament. I very freely own that I was misled by the translation, without considering the full import of the word in the original, which you have very properly given as signifying *indissoluble*, which cannot be applied to future punishment.

2d. I confess the same obligation to you concerning Isaiah, xlv. 17. *Israel shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*---These are certainly nothing but the English translations, and at most can only prove that the translators have given a much stronger sense to some phrases relating to future happiness, than they have *dared* to do to any that relate to future misery; perhaps they had their reasons for it; however that may be, I have been mistaken; it is true, I have erred with great men; and no

marvel, surely; ‘for good and holy men I thought them.’ But I do not wish to hide my failings under the shadow of their name. I therefore thank you for better information.

3d. I thank you for your *humility*; this is truly edifying. ‘Without pretending to any thing like a critical knowledge of either the Greek or Hebrew language,’ you can perceive that *all* my ‘arguments have been founded upon ENGLISH *phraseology*,’ and you modestly add, what you had before said, that I ‘had better not have meddled with these subjects.’

Having duly discharged my obligations to you, I now proceed to notice some things in which I think you are justly to be censured, and,

1st. I doubt your prudence in the *manner* in which you have corrected me. You pretend to no *critical* knowledge, either in Greek or Hebrew, and yet your little knowledge has sufficed to correct me.---Why, Sir, you represent me as a man of straw, and then you beat me to pieces. Can there be any honour in destroying a man of straw?

2d. Your critique on Ephesians, iii. 21. is justly reprehensible---εἰς ἡλικίας τῶν γενεῶν τῶ αἰῶν^{ων} τῶν αἰῶν^{ων}---You have asked, ‘Are the Greek words *there* used, stronger than αἰῶν and its derivatives? On the contrary,’ say you, ‘they are the very words made use of, and in a plural form too.’ You cautiously avoid giving a translation of these words, and content yourself with the common rendering, which is---*throughout all AGES world without end*. Here, Sir, you have a confession of the translators that αἰῶν^{ων} is *ages*, not *eternities*, as your hypothesis requires it---at which common sense revolts.---And further, I observe that there is something more than αἰῶν and its derivatives in the passage; for literally it runs, *to all the GENERATIONS of the age of ages*. This is a peculiar form of speech, which, I believe, occurs no where else in the sacred pages,

though it is perfectly congenial with the view that the scripture gives us of the *ages*, namely, that one age *generates* or introduces another: hence these common phrases, *this age*, and *that age*---*this age* and *the coming one*---and *the ages to come*. But your views labour under an insuperable difficulty, because they require the scriptures to say, *this eternity*, and *that eternity*---*this eternity* and *the coming one*---and the *eternities to come*---And I further observe that though glory be ascribed to God, in the church, throughout *all* generations of the age of ages, yet, future punishment is no where said to exist through *all* the generations of the age of ages. As I have given the substance of this before, it may hence appear that *all* my arguments have not hitherto been merely founded on ENGLISH *phraseology*.

Sd. I still think that what God *has* said, and not what he *could* have said is the proper subject of our enquiry. And here, I suppose, the language of the New Testament must be our guide; though every Greek scholar will own, that there is a copiousness in that language which the forms of speech in the New Testament do not exhibit. I refer you, in compassion to your prejudices, to 2 Pet. ii. 14. *Having eyes that ἀναπαύσῃ cannot cease from sin*. This, Sir, is not *mere* ENGLISH *phraseology*---it is the proper meaning of the Greek word. I grant that it is no where, in Scripture, applied to future punishment. But why not? If future punishment *cannot* cease, in its own nature, or if God meant to point out its eternal duration, he might have used this phrase, as it is clear that the Greek tongue affords it; but we are never told that future punishment *cannot* cease, or *shall* never cease; yet the possibility of such a form of speech is plain. Thus you see, Sir, that, according to the New Testament *phraseology*, a stronger

phrase might have been used to express the duration of future punishment than any which we find in that sacred volume*.

4th. I am not sure but that the Hebrew language contains more forcible expressions concerning future duration, than any which are used in connection with future punishment; for instance, Exodus, xv. 18---ועד ועד ועד *Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever and further.* Dan. xii. 3. *They shall shine as the stars* ועד ועד *for ever and ever and farther.* You will find the same form of speech Micah, iv. 5. and a similar one Isaiah, xlv. 17. If you can make sense of the phrase for ever and ever and further, it is more than I can do. Yet if לעולם mean *for ever and ever*, then ועד must mean something *farther*, or *beyond* for ever and ever; but admit my rendering, which you so much despise, and the sense is clear---*Jehovah shall reign to the ages and further, or beyond them.*---*They shall shine as the stars in the ages and farther, or beyond them, &c. &c.*

5th. Mr. Whiston, in his book called, *The Eternity of Hell Torments considered*, p. 21. has given the version of the LXX. in some of the above passages, thus---

Exod. xv. 5. *τον αἰῶνα, και εἰς αἰῶνα, και εἰς, for ever and for ever and farther.* Dan. xii. 3. *εις τον αἰῶνα, και εἰς, for ever and farther.* Micah, iv. 5. *εις τον αἰῶνα, και ὑπερταυτα, for ever and beyond it.*

I have not produced these texts as expressive of eternity, for I do not think they contain that idea; but it is certain

* Candour constrains me to say that, consistent with my own view, the word ἀκαταπαύτως proves nothing to my purpose in this argument; but this concession does not affect the ground of the controversy at large: for it is still true that it is what God *has* said, not what he *could* say, that is the proper subject of our enquiry.

that they express more than any word or phrase that stands connected with future punishment; so that the New Testament writers might have used stronger language in relation to that awful subject than they have used, because such language was ready to their hand, both in the Hebrew original and in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

This, Sir, I hope will convince you that *aion* and its derivatives are not the most forcible words which might have been used by which to express future misery.

Yours, &c.

W. VIDLER.

LETTER XIII.

REPLIES TO MR. F.'S EXAMINATION OF PRINCIPLES.

SIR,

I ASSURE you I am not of so unforgiving a temper as to refuse the pardon, which you have the candour to ask, for mistaking the view which I had given of the universal doctrine as opposed to *annihilation* on the one hand, and to endless misery on the other. My conjecture about your motives in doing this was really a charitable one, namely, that 'you had a contemptible opinion both of the universal doctrine, and of myself as an advocate for it; and this led you to write at random, without much consideration upon the subject.' This, I think, was a moderate conjecture, especially as you were led, merely through your own mistake, to compare me to a *maniac*. However, I have had my mistakes also, and have confessed them.

'To err is human, to forgive divine.'

Part of your sixth letter is taken up in what you call 'An examination of my system,' by which, it seems, you mean the maxims which I had brought forward, Letter IV. p. 35. But whether these are true or false, the doctrine of the universal restoration will stand without them. And, indeed, I am persuaded that you cannot oppose them, with any consistency as a *Calvinist*: of which the attempt that you have made in this letter furnishes sufficient proof, for, 1. You have attempted to draw an inference from them, of which you know I did not admit, namely, 'that sin and all

the evils that follow upon it are transferred from the sinner to the account of the Creator:’ and ‘ that man is not blame-worthy in his rebellion against his Maker, nor justly accountable for any of its consequences.’ Now whatever be the natural consequences of the maxims, yet it is clear I did not admit these conclusions; for in the same letter I have said that ‘ God is the source and proper spring both of the life and blessedness of his creatures; but not so of the sin and misery of the wicked: these have no root or foundation in God. *Sin is the act of the creature only,*’ and yet you have charged me with reproaching my Maker. And have said, ‘ Think not that you shall be able to roll away this *reproach* which you have had the temerity to charge on your Creator,’ &c. Far be it from me to reproach my Maker, or even to indulge a thought that is dishonourable to his word or character: and you, Sir, could not but know, from the above, that I did not mean such a thing; yet, no doubt you had your reasons for charging me with it; but do you think yourself at liberty to use slander for argument?

2d. I have yet to learn that there is any thing in the maxims, which presses harder on my system than on yours. You are, professedly, a Calvinist, and as such believe that ‘ God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his will, *freely and unchangeably ordain WHATSOEVER comes to pass* *.’ This is, in my judgment, much beyond any thing that is contained in the maxims, which you so much abhor. They only speak, as I conceive, of the first purpose and final end of the Deity in the creation of man; without supposing that God ‘ *freely and unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass.*’ You cannot, consistently, deny but that your own system of *Calvinism* makes God the author of sin, *yea of every sin*; and that

* Westminster Confession, chap. iii. § 1.

‘by his own *free and unchangeable counsel.*’ If you deny this you are no longer a Calvinist, and will be as really chargeable with heresy, by the *holy and orthodox* brethren (for daring to differ from your *bettors*) as I am. Here, therefore, I could apply all your own inflated language, and say---but I will not do it-----

It is somewhat curious to see the manner in which you treat this subject; as if conscious that you were opposing your own views, you say, ‘It is true, that *whatever exists, must, in some sense, accord with the will of God.* Let the blasphemer make what use he may of it, it may be asked, Who hath resisted his will?’ And again, ‘If I admit that God in just judgment has *purposed* to give some men up to stumble, and fall, and perish, it is no more than the scriptures abundantly teach.’ Let it be remembered that these concessions were made by you as a professed advocate for the doctrine of endless misery! If I understood the maxims directly in the sense that you do, I could say no more than what you have expressed in these quotations. It is a poor salvo for you to add, ‘*God willeth not evil, however, as evil, but permits its existence for wise and good ends,*’ since, it seems, one of the ends, according to your account, is the *endless misery* of by far the greater number of the human race: I own I have not yet learned what wisdom, or goodness, are apparent in this end.

There is great and, perhaps, to us with our limited capacity, inexplicable difficulties in the entrance and existence of sin. You and I agree in asserting that God is not the author of it; yet we know that nothing could happen but by his permission; our difficulty, therefore, returns upon us; but on your ground it lays heavier than on mine; you believe that sin, in its nature and consequences, will eternally exist; on the contrary I believe that the dispensations of grace will not end till God has abolished sin and all

its attendant evils: I am inclined to think that I stand on much higher ground than you : for this, at least, must be granted me, that the display of wisdom, goodness, and power, in *the restitution of all things*, is much greater than in the eternal sin and misery of any part of them.

The second maxim, you say, you have no objection to, *viz.* ‘ that whatever God does is intended by his goodness, conducted by his wisdom, and accomplished by his power.’ Yet you dislike my application of it. Give me leave to state, then, your own doctrine of endless misery, in application to these principles. You deny not that God works every thing according to the *purpose* of his own will. It may, therefore, be affirmed, of those who will be endlessly damned, God, *in his goodness, intended them for it, in his wisdom he conducted them to it*; and in his *power* he will accomplish it upon them!!! Your views and mine cannot be both true. You have your choice. Don’t be offended that I have dropped the sophisms under which you have sought shelter, and have brought out your doctrine free from embarrassment. You may ‘ write about it and about it’ as long as you please, but, I think, I have stated the plain fact.

It will not avail your cause to plead, as you have done, ‘ that this may be applied to *all* future punishment.’ For it must be allowed on every hand, on your system, that future punishment will be an endless evil to millions; while on mine it will be an endless good to the whole creation: future limited punishment, therefore, can answer a valuable end.

Your reasoning from the punishment of culprits by the civil magistrate, does not apply to the subject of future punishment by the Deity; because the former is weak, and cannot do all that he would do; but ‘ power belongeth to God, and he will perform his pleasure.’ When an En-

glish magistrate pronounces sentence of death upon a malefactor, he adds, '*The Lord have mercy on your soul,*' implying his desire for the good of the unhappy wretch whom he is constrained to condemn. Shall we say that man hath more mercy in his nature than he who is the God and Father of mercies? You may think so; I cannot. If men have not yet learned to combine the welfare of society with the individual good of such as suffer the penalty of the law; may they not learn this while yet on earth? much more may the *Father of the spirits of all flesh* be supposed to combine these desirable ends.

Whether the Deity could have produced the greatest possible good to his intelligent offspring without the permission of sin, does not concern the present question: but as sin does exist, together with its attendant evils, experienced in this state and threatened in the next, I conclude that he has thought it wisest and best, that it should be so: and I have a right to suppose that your views in this point are the same.

I have only to add, on this head, that what you have said of punishment *as an example*, does not apply to punishment of endless duration; for who is to profit by such an example? not the wicked, they will have unceasing pain, but no profit: the righteous, then; but they will be confirmed in Christ, and can never fall: their case, therefore, cannot need it: is the Deity profited by it? who dares to say yes? '*fury is not in him,*' Isa. xxvii. 4.

But after all, you might have considered those obnoxious maxims with much greater advantage than you have done. Let me remind you of their introduction; '*Every thing proper to be believed concerning our maker, must be founded in the manifest fitness of that thing-----or, on the general evidence of God's providence-----or, on revelation.*' ---Why did you not meet the argument on one or other of

these *three* obvious grounds; for a *fourth* cannot rationally be conceived. Instead of doing this you have made an outcry that I have *reproached my maker*. Ah! Sir, why did you this?

I leave the maxims, therefore, to take their chance, till I can see them fairly and rationally overthrown; and then I will give them up.

Your answer to what I had observed on sin and misery, as having no root or foundation in the nature of God, amounts ultimately to this, that though sin be the abominable thing which he hateth, and judgment be his strange work; (that is, foreign to his nature) yet he will suffer the object of his hatred eternally to increase, and will continue his strange work throughout all periods of his existence! You have put my argument into syllogistic form thus,

Whatever has its root in the creature must come to an end:

But sin and misery have their root in the creature:

Therefore, sin and misery must come to an end.

And you say I have no proof at all of the major proposition: I therefore call your attention to the following facts.

Every thing in the creature is of God, except the sin and misery. 'It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.'---He is the father of our spirits and the former of our bodies, and all our natural and moral powers are his gift: *in him we live and move and have our being*. But sin is the work of the devil, and misery is its consequence: Christ was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil; and he is both able, and willing to do the work for which he was manifested, *for he is able even to subdue all things to himself*. It follows therefore that *whatever*

has its root in the creature must come to an end. Thus it appears that my views on this head are not so imaginary as you have represented them. You have given scope to your fancy in supposing what other persons might imagine. I will take the liberty, by way of sample, to put one of these imaginations into form, and see what it will amount to.

All that has its origin in the present state, will terminate in the present state :

But sin and misery have their origin in the present state:

Therefore, sin and misery will terminate in the present state, and there will be no future punishment.

Neither the major nor the minor propositions are true ; and the conclusion is a flat contradiction to the whole tenor of scripture: if you can bring forward nothing better than this, you would do well to check your imagination intirely.

I remark that you have, in the course of our correspondence, often insinuated that my reasoning is merely *a priori*, and not on the principles of revelation and fact: this is not ingenuous in you. You have particularly done this in the letter before me, and have affected to tremble for me as being in an unwary path, and measuring the divine administration by my own unhallowed notions of moral fitness ! What is this, Sir, but the feeble effort of a man who cannot defend his own cause endeavouring to frighten others from examining it? I appeal to the whole of my correspondence with you in proof that I have reasoned from scripture doctrines ; from the revealed character of God ; and from the divine purposes as yet to be fulfilled, but now manifested in Christ. Indeed I have been guilty of one fault, I have dared to differ from you ; yet even in this I hope to be forgiven.

Yours, &c.

W. VIDLER.

LETTER XIV.

DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING MR. F.'S SCHEME.---CASE OF SODOM FURTHER CONSIDERED.---TWELVE DIFFICULT THINGS TO BE DONE BEFORE THE UNIVERSAL DOCTRINE CAN BE OVERTHROWN.

SIR,

I HAVE remarked you frequently insinuate that it is improper for sinners to judge of the nature of that punishment which they will meet with for their sins; 'the decision of sinful creatures in such a case as this, say you, is like that of a company of criminals who should sit in judgment on the nature of the penalties to which they are exposed, whose prejudices are much more likely to cause them to err on the favourable side than on the unfavourable.' If there had been no revelation on this subject; or if revelation had pronounced endless misery on impenitent sinners, there would have been some weight in this observation; but as revelation informs us that *we shall be judged by the word which is spoken to us*, I ask where is the impiety of enquiring what is the meaning of the scripture on this subject? It is easy for those who fancy themselves to be the peculiar favourites of heaven, to condemn, in a cold blooded manner, the mass of mankind to endless misery.

You have frequently intimated, also, that on my system, there is no need of a mediator, and that I dishonour Christ by denying the doctrine of endless misery. This applies only to your own views of Christ as a mediator. I do not believe that any change has been made in the divine character by the work of Christ. *God is love*, and always was so, and would have been so if Christ had never died. Do I dishonour Christ by saying this? Surely the God

who is love needed not to be reconciled to his creatures: he always loved them as much before Christ died for them as afterwards. He gave his son as the *proof* of his love. If your system represent the father of mercies as a being who never gives any blessing of his grace freely, but on the contrary sells them all to the mediator; mine does not so: I conceive that Christ is not the *cause* of the love of God, but that he is the medium of it to mankind. Divine wisdom has been pleased to manifest love in him as the mediator; and my business is humbly and thankfully to accept that love, in the appointed way.

I had remarked that this earth, which in its state of conflagration is to be the hell of wicked men, will be renewed; whereby hell itself will be no more-----you reply, 'the scriptures speak of a *hell already existing*, both for devils and wicked men: but this cannot be upon the earth, as its present state doth not admit of it.' I remind you that there are several Greek words which in our common translation are rendered hell, as GEHENNA, *the valley of Hinnom*, Mark, iii. 49. &c.---TARTARUS, 2 Pet. ii. 4. *the outer bounds; or lower parts*: as this is applied in scripture only to fallen angels, and as the devil is said to be the prince of the power of the *air*, I conclude that the *present* place of confinement for the devil and his angels is the air surrounding this earth---ADES, *the unseen world, or state*. Neither of these appear to me to be the hell of *future* punishment, which is described by the revelator as *a lake of fire and brimstone*, and the devil, the beast, the false prophet, death, *ades*, and all wicked men, are repre-

* The reader may see the notion of satisfaction for sin very ably treated, by my valued friend Mr. R. Wright, in the Universal Theological Magazine for September 1802. and continued in the same work to April 1803.

sented as being cast into it, Rev. xx. 10---15. The language of Peter when he says the earth and the heavens, *i. e. the air*, shall be melted and dissolved, at the day of judgment, and for the perdition of ungodly men, is very similar to that of John, only we learn from the latter that this catastrophe will *close* the day of judgment which is naturally represented as preceding the final punishment. If *gehenna, or the place of burning; ades, or the invisible state*, (of the wicked at least) be not *upon* the earth, I do not know but they may be *in* the bowels of it: at any rate, it is a queer idea that must follow on your views, namely, that *hell* shall be cast into *hell*, Rev. xx. 14; but if it mean that the wicked who have been in the invisible state, shall, at the close of the day of judgment, be cast into the burning lake,---the melted and dissolved earth,---I see no difficulty in it, though you may see a great one, because it would prove that '*for once I had hit upon a clear proof of my point.*'

In the second reason which you have given for differing from me on this part of the subject, I conceive you have reasoned as though every thing which is spoken of any period must necessarily take place at the beginning of that period. Was every thing which Moses foretold of the Jewish dispensation accomplished at the beginning of that state? The gospel dispensation is called in prophetic language *that day*; but was every thing which the prophets foretold of that day, accomplished in the apostolic age? or is it all accomplished now? Every common day hath its beginning, its ascension, its declination, and its end; every prophetic day, hitherto, had the same, Why not the day of judgment, then? and the day of punishment also? and all other days which come within the period of the mediator's reign? As for any thing beyond, it is not yet revealed; any farther than that God shall be *all*

in *all!!* I stop where revelation stops; beyond I know nothing: if you do, have the goodness to communicate it to me.

You attempt to prove that limited and corrective punishment is equally opposed to the divine character as vindictive and endless punishment. Nothing can be more unlike each other than these: none but a man who is enslaved to system could affirm them to be alike congenial to the nature of him who is *love*.

I do not think it necessary to say any thing more on the subject of proper eternity; nor on the Scriptures which I had mentioned as containing the doctrine of the restoration, as you have said nothing further on those topics that requires notice.

I had mentioned two dilemmas which, on your ground, as a Calvinist, naturally follow the doctrine of endless misery. I perceive you feel the force of them because you labour to shift their weight from off you-----

1st. I observed, that, 'if any be finally incorrigible, it must be in consequence of the divine purpose, or else the purpose of God is frustrated.' You say, you '*have replied to the SUBSTANCE of this before.*' Indeed, Sir, it is well you tell me so, otherwise I should not have known it: and you add, I '*need not be afraid that you should give up the unfrustrableness of the divine purpose.*'---But, Sir, I am afraid: for I know that no Calvinist on earth can meet this dilemma fairly, without acknowledging that God made the greater part of mankind on *purpose for endless damnation*; and you *are* afraid, in direct words, to say this.

2d. I had said, 'on your ground it must follow, either that God cannot, or will not, make an end of sin; that there is not efficacy enough in the blood of Christ to destroy the works of devil; or else that the full efficacy of

the atonement is withheld by the divine determination. You labour much to transfer these difficulties to me: but they do not belong to my views. I only believe that the life, doctrine, death, resurrection, and government of Christ, are the *means* of the restoration of men, not the *cause* of it. The cause is the love of God: this is the grand spring of all the work of Christ. I view the Creator as governing his sinful creatures, through the mediator, by means suited to their moral agency, and which are all directed to one great end, namely, that of *gathering together all things in himself*. This dilemma, therefore, is all your own: you may take which side you please; one you must take; but each presents equal perplexity: well might you say to me, ‘*I answer again, you need be under no apprehension of my limiting the power of God, or the efficacy of the saviour’s blood.*’ Alas, Sir! What figure of speech do you call this? Whatever it be, my apprehensions are not abated by it.

As for the case of Sodom, I am still of the persuasion that her restoration is intended in Ezek. xvi. You attempt to be witty on that subject, and very archly ask, whether I believe that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Samaria and Jerusalem, will be rebuilt and inhabited after the last judgment? I answer that my views imply no such thing: the question arises only from your own mistake about the phrase, *they shall return to their former estate*. Have I need to tell you, that the original estate of human nature was holy and happy? If Sodom, &c. is to be brought to its former estate, it is not the city which is meant, but the inhabitants; and I think your own words admit this, for you say, ‘the latter part of this chapter, from ver. 60---63. contains the language of *free mercy*.’ You add, indeed, ‘not to the same individuals against whom the threatenings are

directed, but to their *distant posterity*. When you wrote this, you probably had not observed that Sodom is called the sister of Jerusalem, ver. 48, 49. 56; that she is expressly called the *younger* sister, ver. 46.; and in ver. 61. (which I think, with you, contains the language of free grace) God says he will give this younger sister to Jerusalem as a daughter: this shall be done also according to the new covenant, ver. 60---62. Now as the people of Sodom were all cut off, and left *no issue*, it cannot apply to their *posterity*; therefore it must mean the very persons who were destroyed by fire from heaven; and if they are to be restored by free grace, why not also the sinners of Samaria, who were all cut off in their sins; and also the sinners of Jerusalem, who died in the same state?

Having attended to your arguments in behalf of endless misery, I will conclude my present correspondence with you by pointing out some things which must be done before you can overthrow the doctrine of the universal restoration.

1. You will have to prove that God did not create his rational creatures *for his pleasure*, Rev. iv. 11.-----or, that he will be *disappointed* in his end respecting them;----or, that *his pleasure was* their eternal damnation.

2. You must prove that *God, who is love*, never did love all his creatures;----or, that he is changeable in his nature, and will eternally hate those whom he once loved. No part of this will apply to the universal doctrine, for that teaches, as the scriptures do, that *God is good to ALL, and that his tender mercies are over ALL his works*, Psa. cxlv. 9.

3. That when God said to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob severally, *In thee and in thy SEED, shall all nations, all kindreds, all families of the earth be blessed*, he meant,

only one individual, perhaps, in a thousand, among the different nations, kindreds, and families of the earth.

4. That though Christ is called the light of the world; life of the world; saviour, *i. e.* restorer of the world; that the world will remain in eternal darkness, eternal death, and will not, to all eternity, be restored----or, that by the world is meant only the elect, the church; though these are in the scriptures uniformly distinguished from the world.

5. You have to prove, though Christ is said to have died for the world; the whole world; for all; and for every man; yet that the world will not ultimately be benefited by his death---or that these phrases mean only the elect, the church; though, still in scripture, the elect, the church are always distinguished from the world.

6. Your creed teaches you that the merits of Christ are sufficient to save the universe, if it were fallen; yet you deny that one world will be restored to holiness and happiness by him. It matters not what idea you attach to the phrase *merits of Christ*; whether virtue, worth, power, wisdom, or grace; or all these be included; on your scheme he either will not, or cannot deliver one fallen world.

7. You affirm this want of will or power in Christ in the face of the following scriptures. *If I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all unto myself-----God will have all men to be RESTORED (Sothenai) and come unto the knowledge of the truth---The living God---who is the RESTORER, (SOTEROS) of all men, especially of those that believe---It pleased the father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven---*

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them; heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever---The creature (or creation) itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God:’ and many others of like kind. It behoveth you, Sir, to shew the consistency of these scriptures with the doctrine of endless misery.

8. We are informed that *the wages of sin is death*---this includes both the first and second death; yet we are also told that---*Our saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death---that he will swallow up death in victory*---that *death the last enemy, shall be destroyed*---that, **AMONG MEN,** *there shall be no more death*---Now as death cannot be destroyed but by the prevalence of life, you will have this difficulty to reconcile with your doctrine of the endless reign of death.

9. When the scriptures speak of this age, and that age: of the ages which are past, and the ages to come; you will have to prove that this is a wrong distinction of the periods and dispensations, and that it ought to be rendered this eternity, and that eternity; the eternities past and the eternities to come.

10. When you read of the times of the **RESTITUTION** of all things---of dispensation of the fulness of times, in which all things are to be gathered together in Christ---of, *προθεσιν των αιωνων*, **THE DISPOSITION OF THE AGES** for Christ Jesus---you will have to prove there is no restitution of all things intended; *no gathering together of all things in Christ*; *no times*, much less a fulness of them, to be dispensed for this purpose; *no disposition of the ages for Christ to do his*

work in ; but that the proper distribution of the periods is *time and eternity.*

11. Though the Old Testament teaches us, in type, the connection which exists between the first fruits and the future harvest ; and the New Testament applies the type to that relation which exists between the church and the other creatures of God who are in the of bondage of corruption * ; yet you must prove that the apostolic application of the type is wrong, and though the first fruits of men are now gathered in by the gospel, yet the harvest of mankind will be eternally destroyed.

12. Though we are informed that Christ shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet ; till all things are subdued unto himself ; till every knee bow to him, of things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth ; till he hath made all things new ; till *there shall be no more curse* ; you, Sir, will have all these to contradict ; and instead of saying with the apostle *where sin abounded grace hath much more abounded* ; you have to say, as the conclusion of all, ‘ though grace hath abounded, yet sin hath much more abounded.’

When you have done all this, and have proved that you have authority thus to reverse the scriptures, you will overthrow the universal doctrine.

Wishing you a part in the first resurrection, and an escape from the awful pains of the second death,

I remain,

with real good will,

Yours, &c.

December, 1801. W. VIDLER.

* Lev. xxiii. Jas. i. 18. Rom. viii. 19--24.

LETTERS to an UNIVERSALIST:

CONTAINING

A REVIEW

OF THE

CONTROVERSY BETWEEN

Mr. VIDLER and Mr. FULLER;

ON THE

Doctrine of

Universal Salvation.



BY SCRUTATOR.

“SEEK not the things that are too hard for thee, neither search the things that are above thy strength: but what is commanded thee, think thereupon with reverence: for it is not needful for thee to see with thine eyes the things that are in secret. Be not curious in unnecessary matters, for more things are shewed unto thee than men understand: for many are deceived by their own vain opinion, and an evil suspicion hath overthrown their judgment.—Profess not the knowledge therefore that thou hast not.”

Ecclus. iii. 21—25.

“SERMONÈ es debemus uti, qui notus est nobis; ne, ut quidam, Græca verba inculcantes, jure optimo irrideamur.”

CICERO.

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The *Letters* referred to in the marginal notes of the following pages, are Mr. Fuller's Letters to Mr. Vidler, lately published. See last page.

PREFACE.

THE circumstances which led to the following Strictures on the controversy between Mr. *Fuller* and Mr. *Vidler*, are mentioned in the first letter: and nothing seems necessary, by way of preface, but to remind the reader that he ought to expect nothing more, from the title of this publication, than a comparative view of the merits of the two productions under consideration. To have entered into a full investigation of the subject in debate, would be to confound the office of a Reviewer with that of a Disputant, and would have led the author far beyond the limits he had prescribed himself.

If the *nature* of this work be not kept in view, he is aware that it would be sometimes difficult to exculpate himself from the charge of using a degree of severity and sarcasm, which are ill suited to any controversy, and much less so, to the awful and important one now before his readers. He is not ignorant that when a man sits down to debate a point with another, he should avoid every appearance of personality; and

as far as possible, whatever might even indirectly hurt the feelings of his opponent. The investigation of truth is the only object at which he should aim. But the office of a Reviewer is widely different. It is his province to hold up the disputants to the view of the world---to praise what is commendable, and to correct what deserves censure. It belongs to him to point out the perspicuity, strength and conclusiveness of an argument, as well as the candour and ingenuousness with which it is conducted: nor is it less his duty, however painful, to expose the petulance of little minds, the arrogance of the sciolist, the unsupported claims to candour of the illiberal, and to wrest the palm of victory from the hand of the vanquished.

The author could heartily wish that the controversy before him, did not so frequently call for the exercise of this disagreeable function. But surely if ever there was a man who deserved the castigation of the Reviewer, he will be found a party in this debate. Almost every page of his productions will afford abundant proof that he boasts of superior candour, while bestowing

the most illiberal abuse; that he lays claim to extraordinary acuteness, discernment and research, while destitute of a sound and discriminating judgment, and scarcely possessed of common penetration. His treatment of the translation of the scriptures is indecorous in the extreme. He pretends to have detected numerous mistakes; and sometimes imputes them, not indirectly, to gross ignorance or mere culpable design. His tone in criticism is high and imperious. He indecently usurps a post for which he has scarcely the shadow of a qualification; but what he wants in capacity, he amply supplies by boldness of assertion, and arrogance of decision. In order to carry conviction of his profound erudition, he presents the reader with a page crowded with greek and hebrew words, often as irrelevant in their application as they are ungrammatical and false in their quotation. The only motive which can be assigned for by far the greater part of them, is to overawe, by an affected skill in antient languages; and the only truth they generally convey is, That either he or his friends have learned two or three different alphabets.

If he is highly ambitious of being reputed an adept in classical knowledge, he is not less so of appearing in the first ranks of the *rational and candid* enquirers after truth. He has acquired, to admiration, a facility in the use of the fascinating words, liberality, moderation, candour, rational religion, and the whole vocabulary of this *exclusively* wise and learned fraternity; and with a consistency, peculiarly characteristic, treats those who cannot see the truth of his dogmas with superlative contempt.

Upon the whole, the author conceives it a duty which he owes to his fellow christians, as well as to the importance of truth, to give a full length portrait of this controversialist. That his doctrines are dangerous in their tendency, the author is not the only one who believes: but still, if they were defended with decorum, and a dignity suited to their moment, they would require a respectful refutation: but when, in addition to error,---we see arrogance, abuse, falsehood and contempt of superiors, usurp the place of modesty, candour, and truth, it is time to exercise the painful office of public castigation.

LETTERS
TO A UNIVERSALIST.

LETTER I.

Strictures on Mr. Vidler's conduct as Editor of the Universalist's Miscellany, and the circumstances which gave rise to the Review.

Dear sir,

AS the sentiments of the late Mr. Winchester have been the occasional subject of our friendly conversation, there seems to be a degree of propriety in addressing the following strictures to you.

Notwithstanding we have frequently discussed the Universal system, we have not yet had the happiness to come to a perfect accord: you still think, in general, with Mr. Winchester; and I continue to think differently. I can sincerely say, that *truth*, not *victory*, has been the object I have sought after; and if I do not see as you do, it is for want either of more cogent arguments, or a clearer intellect.

You have more than once pressed me to state my difficulties in the Universalist's Miscellany, and encouraged me to expect that they would be candidly discussed. I was long averse to trouble the Editor of that work with my objections, both because they must be very uninteresting to the greater part of his readers, and might engage more of his correspondents' time, than they might be thought to deserve. But when I saw this Miscellany addressed "to all serious enquirers after truth," and that the Editor repeatedly invited the world to come forward and propose their objections in this publication, and seemed to think it a favour to have the opinions therein advanced, candidly discussed; I rejoiced in the offer, and immediately determined upon writing something. I said within myself, I shall be without excuse, if I continue in an error now so fair an opportunity presents itself of obtaining information. I may be sure also to have a candid hearing in this business; because the Editor pledges himself, on the honour of a gentleman and the word of a christian, that he will observe the strictest impartiality, and give his opponents a fair opportunity of speaking for themselves. I did indeed feel a little disappointment in reading some parts of the Editor's controversy with Mr. Fuller, which seemed to favour of personality and petulance: but, thought I, perhaps he has been provoked to it by the

keenness and severity of his antagonist; and I remembered the old adage, “Ira est brevis furor.”* Hence, though he retorted, in rather vulgar language, on his opponents, as “brawling damnation,” I thought I should incur no such treatment; because I was determined to use no provocation.

I therefore opened the Miscellany, with the intention of putting down such thoughts as the subjects it contained might occasion: and I believe one of the first things I cast my eye upon, was a letter on *Reprobation*, signed R. W. The reading of this letter called forth a few reflections, which I put on paper, and sent to the Editor. This letter was immediately inserted; and I was not a little gratified. I thought this promptitude a good omen of a similar reception in future; and also that my difficulties were not of so trifling a nature, as to be deemed unworthy of attention. I think there was only one thing in which I was a little mortified; and that was, (what I *then* deemed a blunder of the composer for the press) the occurrence

* “Anger is a short madness.” As these letters, now they are laid before the public, may possibly fall into the hands of some, who are not so well acquainted as Mr. Vidler with the ancient languages, I beg leave for *their* accommodation, to add a *translation* of such quotations as may occur in this review.

of two mistakes, in the two words which composed the signature of that letter. You must know, sir, that I had subscribed myself *Philalethes*: but as a former correspondent had assumed this name, the *printer*, (as I then supposed) exchanged it for AMOR VERITAS. Now, sir, as you know I have always pretended to a little acquaintance with the learned languages, I was mortified at finding *two* blunders in *two* words, appearing at the bottom of my letter, and that without any intimation of the change my signature had undergone.

In the interim, between my letter appearing, and the answer to it, I employed myself in putting a few questions to another correspondent, who signed himself *Philalethes*, on the “antiquity of the universal doctrine.” In a postscript to this letter, I returned my acknowledgements to the Editor for his early insertion of my former letter; and begged him to notice in his next, the mistakes in the translation of my signature. He made the correction three months after; but did not inform us how so unclassical a translation had been suffered to pass. In the next number after that which contained my letter, an answer appeared from R. W.: and at the end of this, was inserted the following note from the Editor. “Since we inserted the remarks of *Amor Veritas*, upon Mr. W.’s letter, we have observed that the substance

“ of his criticisms *are* to be found in Dr. Ham-
 “ mond on Rom. i. 28. We hope our friend,
 “ *Amor Veritas*, will excuse us in having *Latin-*
 “ *ised* his signature, as we had a prior correspon-
 “ dent, who had assumed the *Greek*. EDITOR.”

In this note Mr. Vidler acknowledges himself the “ *Latinifer*” of my signature; and twice together inserts a blunder so very palpable and extraordinary, that one should be at a loss to account for it in a boy, who is learning the rudiments of the latin tongue. You may think it trifling to dwell so long on a mistranslation; and so it would, had the mistake escaped a less accurate scholar and critic: but considering the high claims of the Editor to classical erudition, I mention the fact as a literary phenomenon.
 “ Nonnunquam dormitat Homerus.”*

To the answer of R. W., I immediately sent a reply; but, from the receipt of this letter and also that to Philalethes, a space of *seven* months had elapsed, before the least notice was taken of them. Hence I concluded that they were either forgotten, or thrown aside for reasons of which I was totally ignorant. I found it difficult to reconcile this treatment with the professed impartiality of the Editor. Surely, thought I, candour would require him to state his reasons for discontinuing the insertion of a controversy, which he had himself invited; and especially as

* “ Sometimes the *Great Homer* takes a nap.”

I had yet written but *one* letter on the subject. To reconcile this conduct with his extraordinary professions of liberality, appeared to me impossible. He seemed as wishing to maintain a character, in the estimation of his friends, which by no means belonged to him. I know, my dear sir, that you have been in the habit of considering the Editor as a man of uncommon candour; and perhaps this opinion of him has not a little prepossessed you in favour of his religious sentiments. In this case however, judge of the sincerity of his professions.

But you will tell me, that the Editor assigns a reason for his non-insertion of my letters. *When* did he assign it? *Seven months* after they were sent! But why not state his reason before? It was as good the first month, as it was more than half a year afterward. Let us however state his reason. In No. xlv. among his acknowledgments to correspondents, the following appeared. "If *Amans Veritatis* will drop his *signature*, and sign his proper name; his pieces will be inserted in U. M. The Editor makes this proposition, because of the asperity of the letters of A. V. *The Respondent of A. V. will also sign his proper name.*" But why was it not *immediately* proposed to me to drop my signature? If the Editor had been willing to continue the controversy, surely it would have been better to remove every impediment,

while the subject was fresh in the minds of his readers, than to renew it after seven months discontinuance. But I must have no more letters inserted, unless I relinquish my signature, and come forward in *propria persona*. Why so? Because of the "asperity" of my letters. Conceding their asperity, what has that to do with a name? If this asperity render their insertion *improper*, will a name make their insertion *proper*? Would a name strengthen a weak argument? Would it convert error into truth, or wrong into right? Is there not rather an advantage in controversy, where the disputants continue unknown to each other; inasmuch as they are thereby precluded from the possibility of personality? Surely the Editor was strangely at a loss when he adduced this Hibernian reason for not inserting my letters! Perhaps a more substantial one might have been found in the substance of those letters. The Editor might possibly *feel*, what he did not wish his readers to do.

But my letters could not be inserted, because of their *asperity*. Dear sir, look at the low buffoonery of A. B. C. (No. xxxvii.) addressed to Trinitarians, Dualians, and Unitarians. This letter outrages all decency; and yet it is inserted without a name! Turn also to the indecent burlesque of *Inquiro* (No. xlvi.) on the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the atonement. Read

many other letters of this sort, and then ask your own breast, what must be the state of that man's heart, who could admit such low contemptible blasphemy into his Miscellany, and exclude an enquiry into the truth of his system from its pretended asperity! A blasphemous deist, and an indecent Socinian,* have free access *incog.* to this publication; but one who calls in question the dogmas of universalists cannot be heard, without giving in his name; because, forsooth, the Editor (a proper judge) chooses to say that his letters are severe! And yet this Editor glories in his unexampled liberality and candour! *His* is the only publication of the kind, which is *open* to men of all persuasions and denominations! “O quantum est in verbis inane!” †

Being thus disappointed in the hopes which the Editor's large professions had inspired, of having my difficulties on universalism candidly discussed, I had no other resource, but to weigh and consider what I might see advanced by others on this subject. Disappointment may discourage, but cannot suppress the desire of knowledge. If foiled in one way, we have recourse to others; and when we are totally excluded from having any share in the investigation

* The author means not to apply these epithets to Deists and Socinians *as a body*; but to the *individuals* to whose letters he refers.

† “What emptiness in professions!”

of truth, we are pleased with an opportunity of seeing it elicited by others. Hence you may readily conceive that I derived no small degree of pleasure from beholding one, whom, though unknown to me, I greatly respected on account of his former publications, * enter the lists against this redoubtable champion of Universalism. I became an immediate and close observer of every thing that passed. I watched the direction of every blow, and the dexterity with which the combatants mutually warded the attack. As I was myself greatly interested by this combat, and retain the recollection of the greater part of what passed, I will, if you please, give you a *Review* of the whole. I will, by a fair statement of the contest, endeavour to decide to whom the palm of victory belongs. But as this will occupy a considerable portion of time, I must, for the present, beg leave to subscribe myself,

Dear sir,

Your's, &c.,

S.

* See Mr. Fuller's works against Socinianism and Deism.

LETTER II.

A general statement of the controversy, and the nature of the question at issue; with some remarks on Mr. V. having relinquished some of the grounds on which other Universalists had maintained their doctrine.

Dear sir,

IN my former letter, I promised you a review of the controversy between Mr. Fuller and Mr. Vidler, inserted in several of the Universalist's Miscellanies. You must not, however, expect an account of every minute part of this debate, and much less of mutual accusations and recriminations. By avoiding every thing that is irrelevant to the main question, and attending to what each considers as his main arguments, we shall have the double advantage of compressing the subject, and avoiding confusion.

It seems that the controversy now under consideration originated in a friendly letter, written by Mr. Fuller to Mr. Vidler, on this latter gentleman's embracing the Universal system. This letter, having nothing of a private nature in it, was inserted in the Evangelical Magazine for September 1795. The substance of it is comprised in the three following questions. (1.) Whether Mr. Vidler's change of sentiment has not arisen from an idea of endless punishment being

in itself unjust. (2.) Whether the genius of the sentiment in question be not opposite to that of every other sentiment in the bible; and, (3.) Whether Mr. V.'s ministrations, on this principle, will not favour of his, who taught our first parents, "Ye shall not surely die."—In this friendly and affectionate letter, you perceive, sir, that Mr. Fuller's intention is to lead his friend to a closer examination of the new principles he had adopted; and not to enter into the evidence of the truth of those he had relinquished. This letter was first addressed to Mr. V. in Feb. 1793; but received no answer till the year 1797, when Mr. V. commenced Editor of the U. M. He introduced this work by a letter addressed to Mr. F.; in which he observes that this gentleman's questions had no more reference to the doctrine of universalists, than to that of election. Supposing that the doctrine of endless punishment rests entirely on the meaning of the words *ever*, *everlasting*, &c., he attempts to prove that these are words of *indefinite* meaning, which can never be ascertained but by the subject with which they stand connected: and then he brings forward the reasons which induced him to adopt his present system.

Mr. F. in the letters which appeared in Nos. xxxii. xxxiii. of the U. M.* attends to the

* Letters ii. iii.

arguments of Mr. V. and still insists upon the relevancy of his former questions. To these Mr. V. rejoins, in Nos. xxxiv. xxxv. xxxvi. He maintains his former arguments, brings forward new ones, and calls upon Mr. F. to produce the authority on which he rests his creed. In the whole of the controversy, to this stage of it, Mr. Fuller confined himself chiefly to a refutation of what Mr. V. had advanced, and a support of the questions proposed in his first letter. But as his opponent had frequently insisted that the *onus probandi** lay upon him, and still maintained, that “whether the universal “restoration might be expected as a matter of “right,” was not the question; but whether the contrary doctrine, of endless punishment, was any where revealed; Mr. F. came forward to state the ground on which he maintained his sentiments. Here the controversy assumed a new form. Having endeavoured to expose the errors of his opponent’s principles, he proposes what he conceives to be the mind of the Spirit on this point.

But before I proceed to this part of the controversy, it may be proper to make a few remarks.—When Mr. Fuller heard that his friend had embraced the universal system, it was natural for him to suppose that he would

* The weight of proving.

maintain it on the ground of his predecessors. Now no one acquainted with the writings of Chauncey, Petit-Pierre, and Winchester, (greater writers than whom, on Mr. V.'s side of the question, will not be pretended) can be ignorant how strenuously they maintain the *injustice* of endless punishment. I know not whether they have not placed more dependance on arguments drawn from this source, than any other whatever. I appeal, sir, to your own views and knowledge of the sentiments of universalists, whether this be not the case. Hence the question of Mr. F. was proper and natural, “ Whether Mr. V.'s change of sentiment had not arisen from an idea of endless punishment being in itself *unjust*?”

This question, however, Mr. V. constantly evades: it has no more to do with the doctrine in dispute, he says, than with that of election. Mr. V. then evidently gives up the argument as it rests on matter of *right*; so that he stands upon ground peculiarly his own. In doing this, I am not sure that he has not discovered a considerable degree of wisdom. He saw, what Mr. Winchester and other universalists either could not, or would not see, that this argument is perfectly untenable. The reasoning of Dr. Edwards against Chauncey on this point, (for he has read this work he says *three times*) he felt, it should

seem, to be unanswerable;* and therefore relinquished his friends who still maintain it. Mr. V. asserts, that “the question is, not whether endless punishment be in itself just; but whether God has any where threatened any description of sinners with it.” (No. i. p. 5.) I am ready to join with Mr. V. that this is the true state of the question. Mr. F. himself thinks so; for though he seems scarcely able to believe that his opponent has given up this source of overwhelming argument (and therefore says a second time, † “You have not yet told us whether you claim an exemption from endless punishment *as a right*; but seem to wish us to think that this is not your ground; in other parts of your Miscellany, however, I perceive the gift of Christ itself is considered as a *reparation of an injury*; ‡ which affords but too plain a proof that, notwithstanding all you say of grace and love, it is not on the footing of grace, but of *debt*, that you hold with univer-

* Considering this fact, I am rather surprised that Mr. V. does not speak with greater respect of this able writer. He intimates (No. i. p. 3.) that he saw no real weight in the Doctor's arguments.

† *Letters*, p. 14.

‡ Mr. V. disowns that this is his sentiment. It appears, however, in his Miscellany, without a signature. It is probably the production of one of those who will not renounce their former friends, Chauncey &c., to join with Mr. V.

“ fal falvation;”) yet as Mr. V. ftill infifted, that this is not his ground, Mr. F. in his following letters, chiefly confined himfelf to an examination of Mr. V.’s proof of his doctrine; and then comes forward with his proof, as his opponent demanded.

Hence it feems, that Mr. V. thinks that no dependance whatever can be placed on abftract reasonings refpe&ting the juftice or injuftice of endless punifhment; and he probably thinks right. The nature and malignancy of fin can never be fully underftood, till we can fathom the infinite perfe&ctions of Deity, comprehend the magnitude and importance of his moral government, and afcertain the full extent of that connection which fubfifts between man and his Creator. To fix, therefore, a *limit* to the defects of fin, is exercifing ourfelves in things too high for us. We muft derive our notions on this point, entirely from the word of God, and abide by its decifion.

Mr. V. then difdains to affail our feelings by pathetic declamations on the infinite goodnefs of God, and on the neceffity (fuppoing the truth of endless punifhment) of divefting him of the heart of a parent. He renounces all metaphyfical reasoning on the finite evil of fin, or the difproportion between fin and eternal punifhment; on the good of the univerfal

system requiring the restoration of all men; on the introduction of sin demanding from divine goodness, a reparation of its evil; or on endless punishment being inconsistent “with the honour, pleasure, or benefit of God or man.” Nothing of this sort will be brought even as *collateral* proof; but the simple question is, “What has God revealed?”*

This point being settled; let us enter upon Mr. Fuller’s fourth letter, (No. xxxix.) in which he adduces his reasons for believing the doctrine of endless punishment; and then consider Mr. V.’s objections and answers to them. The importance of this letter will justify me in laying the whole of it before you, that you may have a connected view of what he considers the principal grounds of the doctrine of endless punishment. In the mean time, I am

Sir, Yours, &c.

S.

* It would have been creditable to Mr. V. as a disputant, and perhaps not injurious to the cause he defends, had he been *consistent* on this point. But no writer has been more diffuse than he in pathetic addresses to the feelings, and in attempts at abstract reasoning. Consult, among many other passages, the following. No. xxxvi. p. 369. No. xxxv. pp. 330, 331. “*God’s love to his creatures vindicated.*” No. xxxiv. p. 9. Do. p. 10. § 2. Do. No. xxxv. p. 14. § 3. &c.

MR. FULLER'S FOURTH LETTER TO MR. VIDLER,
*Containing four sources of scriptural proof of the
 doctrine of endless punishment, with his remarks
 on each.*

“ Sir,

YOU seem to wish to persuade your readers that the grounds on which I rest my belief of the doctrine of endless punishment are very slender. The truth is, I have not at present attempted to state those grounds. Considering myself as not engaged in a formal controversy, I only introduced a few passages; and to several of them you have hitherto made no reply. The principal grounds on which I rest my belief of the doctrine you oppose, are as follow:—

“ I. *All those passages of scripture which describe the future states of men in contrast:—*

“ Men of the world, who have their portion in this life: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness—The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish—The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death—And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt—He will gather his wheat into the garner;” and

“ will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire
“ —Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that
“ leadeth to destruction, and many there be who
“ go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and
“ narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and
“ few there be that find it—Not every one
“ that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the
“ kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the
“ will of my Father who is in heaven—Many
“ shall come from the east and west, and shall
“ sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob
“ in the kingdom of heaven; but the children
“ of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer
“ darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing
“ of teeth—Gather ye first the tares, and bind
“ them in bundles, to burn them: but gather
“ the wheat into my barn—The Son of Man
“ shall send forth his angels, and they shall ga-
“ ther out of his kingdom all things that of-
“ fend, and them that do iniquity, and shall
“ cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall
“ be wailing and gnashing of teeth: then shall
“ the righteous shine forth as the sun in the
“ kingdom of their Father—The kingdom of
“ heaven is like unto a net, that gathered fish of
“ every kind; which, when it was full, they
“ drew to the shore, and sat down, and gathered
“ the good into vessels, and cast the bad away.
“ So shall it be at the end of the world; the
“ angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked

“ from among the just, and shall cast them into
“ the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and
“ gnashing of teeth—Blessed is that servant,
“ whom when his Lord cometh, he shall find
“ so doing: but and if that evil servant should
“ say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his com-
“ ing, and shall begin to smite his fellow-ser-
“ vants, and to eat and drink with the drunken,
“ the lord of that servant shall come in a day
“ when he looketh not for him, and shall cut
“ him asunder, and appoint him his portion
“ with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping
“ and gnashing of teeth—Well done, good and
“ faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of
“ thy Lord. But cast ye out the unprofitable
“ servant, into outer darkness: there shall be
“ weeping and gnashing of teeth—Then shall
“ the king say unto them on his right hand,
“ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the
“ kingdom prepared for you from the founda-
“ tion of the world—Then shall he also say unto
“ them on the left hand, Depart from me
“ ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for
“ the devil and his angels—And these shall go
“ away into everlasting punishment; but the
“ righteous into everlasting life—He that be-
“ lieveth and is baptised shall be saved; but he
“ that believeth not shall be damned—Blessed
“ are ye when men shall hate you for the Son

“ of Man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and
“ leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great
“ in heaven. But woe unto you that are rich!
“ for ye have received your consolation—He
“ that heareth my sayings, and doeth them, is
“ like unto a man who built his house upon a
“ rock; and when the flood arose, the storm
“ beat vehemently against that house, and
“ could not shake it; for it was founded upon a
“ rock. But he that heareth and doeth not, is
“ like unto a man who built his house upon the
“ earth, against which the storm did beat vehe-
“ mently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin
“ of that house was great—God so loved the
“ world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,
“ that whosoever believeth on him, should not
“ perish, but have everlasting life—All that
“ are in their graves shall come forth; they
“ that have done good unto the resurrection of
“ life, and they that have done evil unto the
“ resurrection of damnation—Hath not the pot-
“ ter power over the clay, of the same lump
“ to make one vessel unto honour, and another
“ unto dishonour? What if God willing to shew
“ his wrath, and to make his power known,
“ endured with much long-suffering the vessels
“ of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he
“ might make known the riches of his glory on
“ the vessels of mercy, which he had afore pre-
“ pared unto glory—The Lord knoweth them

“ that are his—But in a great house there are
 “ vessels to honour, and vessels to dishonour—
 “ Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for
 “ whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also
 “ reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall
 “ of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sow-
 “ eth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life
 “ everlasting—That which beareth thorns and
 “ briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing,
 “ whose end is to be burned. But, beloved,
 “ we are persuaded better things of you, and
 “ things which accompany salvation.”*

“ I consider these passages as designed to ex-
 press THE FINAL STATES OF MEN, which if they
 be, it is the same thing in effect as their being
 designed to express the doctrine of endless pu-
 nishment; for if the descriptions here given of
 the portion of the wicked denote their *final*
 state, there is no possibility of another state suc-
 ceeding it.

“ That the above passages do express the *final*
 states of men, may appear from the following
 considerations :—

“ 1. The state of the righteous, which is all
 along opposed to that of the wicked, is allowed

* Psalm. xvii. 14, 15. Prov. x. 28. xiv. 32. Dan. xii. 2.
 Matt. iii. 12. vii. 13, 14, 21. viii. 11, 12. xiii. 30, 40—43,
 47—50. xxiv. 46—51. xxv. 23, 30, 34, 41, 46. Mark xvi. 16.
 Luke vi. 23, 24, 47, 49. John iii. 16. v. 29. Rom. ix. 21—23.
 2 Tim. ii. 19, 20. Gal. vi. 7, 8. Heb. vi. 8, 9.

to be final: and if the other were not the same, it would not have been in such a variety of forms contrasted with it; for it would not be a contrast.

“ 2. All these passages are totally silent, as to any other state following that of destruction, damnation, &c. If the punishment threatened to ungodly men had been only a purgation, or temporary correction, we might have expected that something like this would have been intimated. It is supposed that some who are upon the right foundation may yet build upon it, *wood, and hay, and stubble*; and that the party shall *suffer loss*; but *he himself shall be saved*, though it be *as by fire*. Now if the doctrine of universal salvation were true, we might expect some such account of all lapsed intelligences, when their future state is described: but nothing like it occurs in any of the foregoing passages, nor in any other.

“ 3. The phraseology of the greater part of them is inconsistent with any other state following that which they describe. On the supposition of salvation being appointed as the ultimate portion of those who die in their sins, they have not *their portion in this life*; but will, equally with those who die in the Lord, *behold his righteousness, and be satisfied in his likeness*. Their expectation shall not *perish*; but shall issue, as well as that of the righteous, in *gladness*: and though *driven away in their wickedness*, yet they

have *hope in their death*; and that hope shall be realized. The broad way doth not lead to *destruction*, but merely to a temporary correction, the end of which is everlasting life. The chaff will not be burned, but turned into wheat, and gathered into the garner. The tares will be the same, and gathered into the barn; and the bad fish will be turned into good, and gathered into vessels. The cursed, as well as the blessed, shall inherit the kingdom of God; which also was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. There may be a woe against the wicked, that they shall be kept from their consolation for a long time, but not that they *have received it*. Those who in the present life believe *not* in Christ shall not *perish*, but have everlasting life. This life also is improperly represented as the seed-time, and the life to come as the harvest, inasmuch as the seeds of heavenly bliss may be sown in hell: and though the sinner may reap corruption, as the fruit of all his present doings, yet that corruption will not be the opposite of *everlasting life*, seeing it will issue in it. Finally: Though they bear *briars and thorns*, yet their END is not *to be burned*, but to obtain salvation—To the foregoing scripture testimonies may be added,

“II. *All those passages which speak of the duration of future punishment by the terms “everlasting, eternal, for ever, and for ever and ever.”*—

“ Some shall awake to everlasting life, and
“ some to shame and *everlasting* contempt—
“ It is better for thee to enter into life halt, or
“ maimed, than having two hands, or two feet,
“ to be cast into *everlasting* fire—Depart ye
“ cursed into *everlasting* fire—And these shall
“ go into *everlasting* punishment—They shall
“ be punished with *everlasting* destruction from
“ the presence of the Lord, and from the
“ glory of his power—He that shall blaspheme
“ against the holy Ghost is in danger of (or sub-
“ ject to) *eternal* damnation—The inhabitants
“ of Sodom and Gomorrha are set forth for an
“ example, suffering the vengeance of *eternal*
“ fire—These are wells without water, clouds
“ that are carried with a tempest, to whom the
“ mist of darkness is reserved *for ever*—Wan-
“ dering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness
“ of darkness *for ever*—If any man worship
“ the beast, or his image, and receive his mark
“ in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall
“ drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which
“ is poured out without mixture into the cup of
“ his indignation: and he shall be tormented
“ with fire and brimstone in the presence of the
“ the holy angels, and in the presence of the
“ Lamb: and the smoke of their torment af-
“ cendeth up *for ever and ever*: and they
“ have no rest day nor night—And they said,
“ Alleluia! And her smoke rose up *for ever*

“ *and ever*—And the devil that deceived them
 “ was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,
 “ where the beast and the false prophet are;
 “ and shall be tormented day and night *for*
 “ *ever and ever.*”*

“ I have not mentioned Isai. xxxiii. 14, because I wish to introduce no passage but what shall be allowed to refer to a future life. The hebrew word **עלם**, in Dan. xii. 2. answers to the greek *αιων*; and whatever may be said of the ambiguity of the term, the antithesis in this passage, as in Matt. xxv. 46, determines it to mean the same when applied to “ shame and contempt,” as when applied to life.

“ As to the term *αιωνιος*, rendered *everlasting* or *eternal*, which you consider as proving nothing, on account of its ambiguity, there is a rule of interpretation which I have long understood to be used on other subjects by all good critics, and which I consider is preferable to yours. In my next letter I may examine their comparative merits. This rule is, *That every term be taken in its PROPER sense, except there be something in the subject or connexion which requires it to be taken otherwise.* Now, so far as my acquaintance with this subject extends, it appears

* Dan. xii. 2. Matt. xviii. 8. xxv. 41—46. 2 Thess. i. 9. Mark iii. 29. Jude 7. 2 Pet. ii. 17. Jude 13. Rev. xiv. 10, 11. xix. 2. xx. 10.

to be generally allowed by lexicographers, that $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon$ is a compound of $\alpha\epsilon\iota$ and $\omega\upsilon$, and that its literal meaning is *always being*;* also that the meaning of its derivative $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\iota\sigma$ is *endless, everlasting, or eternal*. This term, $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\iota\sigma$, which is very sparingly applied in the new testament to limited duration, I always take in its proper sense, except there be something in the connexion or subject, which requires it to be taken otherwise: and as I do not find this to be the case in any of those places where it is applied to punishment, I see no reason in these cases to depart from its proper acceptation. Everlasting punishment is

* “ Aristotle the philosopher, who lived upwards of three hundred years before the new testament was written, plainly tells us the meaning which the greek writers of his time, and those who in his time were accounted ancients, affixed to this term. Speaking of the gods, whom he considered as immortal, and as having their residence above the heavens, he says, “ The beings which exist there, neither exist in place, nor does time make them grow old; nor undergo they any change, being placed beyond the motion even of those who are the farthest removed (from the centre;) but possessing an unchangeable life, free from all outward impressions, perfectly happy, and self-sufficient, they continue through all $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\alpha$, eternity. And this the ancients admirably signified by the word itself: for they call the time of each person’s life his $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon$, inasmuch as according to the laws of nature, nothing (respecting him) exists out of the limits of it; and for the same reason that which comprehends the duration of the whole heaven, the whole of infinite time, and infinity itself, is called $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\alpha$, eternity; taking its name from always being, ($\alpha\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\iota\upsilon\upsilon\alpha\iota$) immortal and divine.”

in some of them opposed to everlasting life, which, so far as an antithesis can go to fix the meaning of a term, determines it to be of the same force and extent.

“ To allege that the *subject* requires a different meaning in this case to be given to the term, is to assume what will not be granted. The *proof* that has been offered on this point will be considered hereafter.

“ With respect to the phrases *εις τον αιωνα*, for ever, and *εις τας αιωνας των αιωνων*, for ever and ever, I believe you will not find a single example in all the new testament of their being used to convey any other than the idea of endless duration. You tell us that *εις αιωνας αιωνων*, for ever and ever, in Rev. xiv. 11. should be rendered “ to the age of ages.” Are you certain of this? Admitting the principle of your translation, some would have rendered it *to ages of ages*: but render it how you will, the *meaning* of the phrase is the same. You might render it thus in other instances, wherein it is applied to the happiness of the righteous, or the glory to be ascribed to God; but this would not prove that such happiness and such glory were of limited duration, or that the phrase in question is expressive of it.

“ To the above may be added,

“ III. *All those passages which express the duration of future punishment by implication, or*

by forms of speech which imply the doctrine in question:—

“ I pray for them: I pray not for the world
 “ —The blasphemy against the holy Ghost *shall*
 “ *not be forgiven unto men*, neither in this world
 “ neither in the world to come—He hath *never*
 “ *forgiveness*; but is in danger of eternal damna-
 “ tion—There is a sin unto death: I do not say
 “ that ye shall pray for it—It is impossible to
 “ renew them again unto repentance—If we sin
 “ wilfully after we have received the knowledge
 “ of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice
 “ for sins; but a fearful looking for of judgment,
 “ which shall devour the adversaries—What is a
 “ man profited, if he shall gain the whole world,
 “ and lose himself, or be cast away?—Woe unto
 “ that man by whom the Son Man is betray-
 “ ed; it had been good for that man if he had
 “ not been born—Their worm dieth not, and the
 “ fire is not quenched*—Betwixt us and you
 “ there is a great gulph fixed; so that they who
 “ would pass from hence to you cannot, neither
 “ can they pass to us who would come from
 “ thence—He that believeth not the Son shall
 “ *not see life*; but the wrath of God *abideth*
 “ *on him*—I go my way, and ye shall seek me,
 “ and shall *die in your sins*; whither I go ye
 “ *cannot come*—Whose end is destruction—He

* Several times repeated in a few verses.

“ that sheweth no mercy, shall have *judgment*
 “ *without mercy.*”*

“ If there be some for whom Jesus did not pray, there are some who will have no share in the benefits of his mediation, without which they cannot be saved. If there be some that never will be forgiven, there are some that never will be saved; for forgiveness is an essential branch of salvation. Let there be what uncertainty there may in the word *eternal* in this instance, still the meaning of it is fixed by the other branch of the sentence, *they shall never be forgiven.* It is equal to John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.* If there were any uncertainty as to the meaning of the word *eternal* in this latter passage, yet the other branch of the sentence would settle it; for that must be endless life, which is opposed to their *ever perishing*: and by the same rule, that must be endless damnation which is opposed to their *ever being forgiven.* If there be a sin, for the pardon of which christians are forbidden to pray, it must be on account of its being the revealed will of God that it never should be pardoned. If repentance be absolutely necessary to forgiveness, and there be some whom it is impossible should be renewed again unto re-

* John xvi. 9. Matt. xii. 31, 32. Mark iii. 29. 1 John v. 16. Heb. vi. 6. x. 26, 27. Luke ix. 25. Matt. xxvi. 24. Mark ix. 43—48. Luke xvi. 26. John iii. 36. viii. 21. Phil. iii. 19. James ii. 13.

penitance, there are some whose salvation is impossible. If there be *no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment*, this is the same thing as the sacrifice already offered being of no saving effect: for if it were otherwise, the language would not contain any peculiar threatening against the wilful sinner, as it would be no more than might be said to any sinner; nor would a *fearful looking for of judgment* be his certain doom. If the souls of some men will be *lost, or cast away*, they cannot all be *saved*; seeing these things are opposites. A man may be lost in desert, and yet saved in fact; or he may *suffer loss*, and yet himself be saved: but he cannot be lost, so as to be cast away, and yet finally saved; for these are perfect contraries. Whatever may be the precise idea of the *fire*, and the *worm*, there can be no doubt of their expressing the punishment of the wicked; and its being declared of the one that it *dieth not*, and of the other that *it is not quenched*, it is the same thing as their being declared to be endless. It can be said of no man, on the principle of universal salvation, that *it were good for him not to have been born*; as whatever he may endure for a season, an eternal weight of glory will infinitely outweigh it. An *impassable gulph* between the blessed and the accursed equally militates against the recovery of the one, as the relapse of the other. If some shall *not see life*, but the wrath of God *abideth on*

them; if those who die in their sins shall not come where Jesus is; if their *end* be destruction, and their portion be *judgment without mercy*; there must be some who will not be finally saved.

“ To these may be added,

“ IV. *All those passages which intimate that a change of heart, and a preparedness for heaven, are confined to the present life:—*

“ Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found*;
 “ call ye upon him *while he is near*: let the
 “ wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous
 “ man his thoughts; and let him return unto the
 “ Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and
 “ to our God, for he will abundantly pardon—
 “ Because I have called, and ye refused; I have
 “ stretched out my hand, and no man regarded
 “ I also will laugh at your calamity, and
 “ mock when your fear cometh. When your
 “ fear cometh as desolation, and your destruc-
 “ tion cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and
 “ anguish come upon you; then shall they call
 “ upon me, but I will not answer; they shall
 “ seek me early, but shall not find me—Then
 “ said one unto him, Lord, are there few that
 “ shall be saved? And he said unto them, Strive
 “ to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say
 “ unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not
 “ be able—When *once* the master of the house
 “ hath risen up, and shut to the door, and ye
 “ begin to stand without, and to knock at the

“ door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he
 “ shall answer and say unto you, I know you
 “ not whence you are Depart from me,
 “ ye workers of iniquity there shall be
 “ weeping and gnashing of teeth—While ye
 “ have the light, believe in the light, that ye
 “ may be the children of light—While they
 “ (the foolish virgins) went to buy, the bride-
 “ groom came; and they that were *ready* went
 “ went in with him to the marriage, and *the*
 “ *door was shut*—We beseech you, that ye re-
 “ ceive not the grace of God in vain Be-
 “ hold *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day
 “ of salvation—To-day, if ye will hear his voice,
 “ harden not your hearts—Looking diligently
 “ lest any man fail of the grace of God
 “ lest there be any fornicator or profane person,
 “ as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his
 “ birthright. For ye know how that afterward,
 “ when he would have inherited the blessing, he
 “ was rejected: for he found no place of repent-
 “ ance, though he sought it carefully with tears
 “ —He that is unjust, let him be unjust still;
 “ and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still;
 “ and he that is righteous, let him be righteous
 “ still; and he that is holy, let him be holy
 “ still.”*

* Isai. lv. 6, 7. Prov. i. 24—8. Luke xiii. 24—29.
 John xii. 36. Matt. xxv. 5—13. 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. Heb. iii.
 7, 11. xii. 15—17. Rev. xxii. 11.

“ According to these scriptures there will be no successful calling upon the Lord after a certain period; and consequently, no salvation— Whether there be few that shall ultimately be saved, our Lord does not inform us; but he assures us that there will be many who will *not be saved*; or, which is the same thing, who will not be able to enter in at the strait gate. None, it is plainly intimated, will be able to enter there, who have not agonized here. There will be no believing unto salvation, but *while we have the light*; nor any admission into the kingdom, unless we be *ready at the coming of the Lord*. The present is the *accepted time, the day of salvation*, or the season for sinners to be saved. If we continue to harden our hearts through life, he will swear in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest. If we *turn away from him who speaketh from heaven*, it will be equally impossible for us to obtain the blessing, as it was for Esau, after he had despised his birthright. Finally: Beyond a certain period there shall be no more change of character; but every one will have received that impression which shall remain for ever, whether he be just or unjust, filthy or holy.

“ In this letter I have endeavoured to state the grounds of my own persuasion: in the next I may examine the reasonings and objections which you have advanced against it. The

greater part of this evidence being taken from our Lord's discourses, who knew the truth, and was himself to be the judge of the world, renders it peculiarly interesting. If a preacher in these times delivered half so much on the subject, you would denominate him "a brawler of damnation."

Yours, &c.

A. F."

LETTER III.

Remarks on some of Mr. V.'s answers to the FIRST CLASS of scriptural proofs; with strictures on his quotation of Eph. i. 10, and translation of 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Dear sir,

AFTER Mr. Fuller has stated each of his four sorts of scriptures, which he thinks maintain the doctrine of endless punishment, you will observe that he makes some remarks upon those passages. Having adduced a considerable number of texts, which describe the future states of men in contrast, he adds: "I consider these passages as designed to express THE FINAL STATES OF MEN; which if they be, it is the same thing in effect as their being designed to express the doctrine of endless punishment; for if the descriptions here given of the states of the wicked, denote

“ their *final* state, there is no possibility of
 “ another state succeeding it. That the above
 “ passages *do* express the final states of men,
 “ may appear from the following considera-
 “ tions:—

“ 1. The state of the righteous, which is
 “ all along opposed to that of the wicked, is
 “ allowed to be final: and if the other were
 “ not the same, it would not have been in such
 “ a variety of forms contrasted with it; for it
 “ would not be a contrast.”*

* This argument has always been considered of great weight. The reasoning of Origen and others, respecting a release from future punishment, was opposed by this argument. “ *Sunt enim (inquit S. Gregor. Moral. lib. 3. cap. 11) nunc etiam, qui idcirco peccatis suis ponere finem negligunt, quia habere quandoque finem futura super se judicia suspicantur. Quibus breviter respondemus, si quandoque finienda sunt supplicia reproborum, quandoque finienda sunt et gaudia beatorum: per semetipsam enim veritas dicit; Ibunt hi in supplicium æternum, justi autem in vitam æternam. Si igitur hoc verum non est quod minatus est, neque est illud verum quod promisit.*” “ There are some (says Gregory) also now, who neglect to break off their sins, *on this very account; because they suppose that future punishment will sometime have an end.*” (It is not, it should seem, a new opinion, that Universalism favours immorality.) “ But to these we briefly answer, *If at any time the punishment of the wicked should cease, the joys of the righteous also must cease; for truth itself has declared, “ These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life everlasting.” If therefore that which God has threatened be not true, neither is that true which he has promised.*”

To this Mr. *Vidler* answers, (No. *xlvii.* p. 417) *first*, “ Here you have taken two things for granted, which I think you ought to have proved; viz. that the state of the *righteous*, as expressed in these scriptures, is final: and that if the state of the wicked be not final, it would not be contrasted with that of the *righteous*. If the former of these assumptions be ever so true, yet you ought not to have thus reasoned upon it, till you had proved its truth; because it is one of the disputable things between us. I long ago observed, that there will arrive a period, when the mediatorial reign of Christ will end, according to 1 Cor. xv. 24—28. If the mediation of Christ will end, it is reasonable to suppose, that the rewards and punishments of men, to appportion which will be a part of his mediation, will end also. Again: I contend that the state of the *righteous*, as expressed in contrast with that of the wicked, is not final: and it may appear, upon farther examination, that the state of the wicked is not final neither. Whether the final state of the *righteous* may not be elsewhere expressed, and taught on other grounds, I shall consider hereafter.”

Mr. F. ought not to have taken it for granted, that the state of the *righteous*, which is all along opposed to that of the wicked, is final, and endless; for it is one of the points in dispute

betwixt him and his opponent. Indeed? Had Mr. V. ever suggested such an idea then before? Yes, he had avowed his belief, that the mediation of Christ would end. But had he affirmed that its *effects* would terminate with it? No; but it is *reasonable* to suppose “that the rewards and
 “punishments of men, to apportion which will
 “be a part of his mediation, will end also.” That is, Mr. V. thinks such a sentiment might have been *inferred* from what he had advanced. Ergo: It was actually a point of dispute betwixt him and his opponent, and which of course he ought not to have taken for granted! Mr. F. ought to have known from the *reasonableness* of the thing, that the rewards of the righteous are of the same duration in Mr. V.’s account, as the punishments of the wicked. It is true, such an idea had never *before* been suggested; on the contrary, when in a former instance Mr. F. argued in favour of endless punishment from the allowed endless happiness of the righteous, as stated in Matt. xxv. 46, Mr. V. thus answered him—“No solid argument can be drawn from
 “the application of the same word to different
 “things to prove their endless continuance, unless their nature be the same”—And, “there
 “is a vast difference indeed in the nature of future blessedness and future punishment: so
 “great a difference as fully to justify us in
 “giving *a very different sense* to the word ever-

“lasting, when applied to each of these subjects”—“Life and blessedness (he added) flow naturally from God, in whom are all our springs; and being thus grounded in him, will be, like him, ETERNAL IN DURATION.” (No. xxxv. p. 331, 332.) But what then? The contrary is *reasonable*; and Mr. F. ought to have taken it for granted, that whatever is reasonable is held by Mr. Vidler!

At present we are told that the states of both the righteous and the wicked, as contrasted with each other, are not final: and whether the final state of the righteous be not elsewhere expressed and taught on other grounds, is to be hereafter considered.

This promise, I believe, Mr. V. has either forgotten, or found himself unable to perform; as he has not, as far as I can discover, any where recurred to this subject. We must therefore collect his reasons as well as we can, from what he has before written; and from which he now infers, that the state of the righteous mentioned in the foregoing passages, is not final. It is in the first number that he makes some observations on this point; and his reasons seem to be grounded on Eph. i. 10, and 1 Cor. xv. 24—28. From the former passage he conjectures, that there will be a *universal restoration*; and from the latter, that *Christ will at one time cease to reign as Mediator*. But how either of these passages

proves that the state of the righteous, described in the above-quoted texts, is not final, does not seem very clear. The argument from 1 Cor. xv. 24—28, runs thus: ‘Christ will cease to reign as Mediator; therefore the rewards that he bestowed while Mediator, will cease also.’ His present Majesty will one day cease to reign; therefore all the honours and rewards he has conferred upon his gallant commanders will cease also! Again: Christ will sometime cease to say, “Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;” therefore the righteous will cease to enter into the joy of their Lord: i. e. they will not enter in at all! Mr. V. assures us, that “If the mediation of Christ will end, it is reasonable to suppose that the rewards and punishments of men, to apportion which will be a part of his mediation, will end also.” This is Mr. V.’s *proof* that the state of the righteous is not final! *Erit mihi magnus Apollo!**

With respect to Eph. i. 10. Mr. V. seems to think that the *times* there mentioned, allude to different periods, during which Christ shall finish the work of apportioning both rewards and punishments. “I plainly see, (says he) there are *times*; not merely a time in the singular, but periods, yea ages, to perform it in. For

* Mr. Vidler shall be my great Oracle!

“ the mystery of the will of God, which he
 “ hath purposed in himself, is, that in the dis-
 “ pensation of the *fulness of times*, he might
 “ gather together in one all things in Christ,
 “ both which are in heaven, and which are
 “ in earth, even in him.” Then, after borrow-
 ing a criticism from Hammond on the word
 ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι, (to *re-head*) he adds: “ Though
 “ there are *χρονοι*, *times*, fixed in the Divine
 “ purpose for this great work of the Mediator,
 “ the exact number of these times is not ex-
 “ pressed: but what I would notice is, that
 “ there is a fulness of them, and that this ful-
 “ ness is only bounded by the gathering toge-
 “ ther of *all* things in Christ; consequently the
 “ Lord Jesus shall retain and exercise his media-
 “ torial power, till this great work is done.”
 From this passage let us note—(1.) How sadly
 all commentators have been mistaken, in refer-
 ring the *fulness of times* to the gospel dispensa-
 tion; and amongst these mistaken characters,
 we must reckon even our Lord himself, who used
 the same phraseology in reference to his mission,
 (Mark i. 15.) *πεπληρωται ο καιρος*: and also St.
 Paul, Gal. iv. 4.—Note (2.) The force of the
 word *times*. It is not merely *time*, in the singu-
 lar, but *times*: it signifies moreover *periods*, nay
 even *ages*!—Note (3.) That it is not simply times,
 but the *fulness of times*.—Note (4.) and lastly,
 That it is *χρονοι*, *times*! Now, fir, after this proof

that there will be time sufficient to perform the great work which Mr. V. prescribes to the Mediator, and after the fine *climax* he has pointed out, as comprehended in the word *times*, Do you not plainly see how necessarily it follows, that the wicked shall be delivered from their punishment; and that both rewards and punishments shall one day cease? From this criticism of Mr. V., we may also see the vast advantage of paying close attention to numbers and tenses. Most readers (careless indeed they must have been) confined this word *times* to a *single æra*, the gospel dispensation; supposing that expressions of this sort are often used in a *singular* sense: as when Plutarch says, *πολλας χρονους*, a long time; and Zenobius, *προ των Δευκαλιωνος χρονων*, before the time of Deucalion;—but it was reserved for Mr. Vidler to discover distinct *times*, *periods*, and *ages* in this passage. Beside, the word in the original (of which Mr. V. is so consummate a master) is peculiarly emphatical. It is *χρονοι*, says he: not merely a time or *opportunity*, but *length* or *duration of time*, as contradistinguished from *καιροι*. From this we may see the care of the inspired writers to guard against misconception. They have made choice of a word which exactly suits Mr. V.'s system, and therefore there can be no doubt of that system being true. Had they used *καιροι* (*times or opportunities*) in this pas-

sage, a quibble might have been raised against the propriety of extending a word, which properly signifies a mere season or opportunity, to those periods which are necessary for performing what Mr. V. has laid out for the Mediator.— Hereafter, I am determined to consult my greek testament, and see if I cannot gain fresh light, as Mr. V. does. I will turn to this very passage in Eph. i. 10, which is fraught with such unthought of meaning; and perhaps I may discover something which even this acute observer may have overlooked. I turn and read thus: Εἰς οἰκονομίαν τῆς πληρωμῆς τῶν καιρῶν.—καιρῶν? Surely this must be a mistake! Mr. V. says it is χρόνοι, (*chrōnoi*) for the other would be the very word that would utterly destroy the beautiful fabric which he has taken so much pains to raise. I look again; and yet, surely, if my book be not misprinted, or my eyes do not deceive me, it must be καιρῶν (*hairōn*.) And is this *indeed* the case? Is it that very word in the original which Mr. V. would have us believe is not to be found there? And is there no such word in the original as Mr. V. has quoted? But perhaps Mr. V. would not wish us to say any more on this point. He might not be aware, that the business would be so narrowly pried into; and therefore he may think it ungenerous to press things too far: we will therefore go on, and *suppose* Mr. V. to have quoted fairly, and to be an honest disputant.

If, however, you should still remain in doubt, after the luminous proof we have been considering, whether Mr. V. has established his point, that the passages quoted by his opponent are not descriptive of the final state of the righteous, we must, until this gentleman resumes the subject, admit the propriety of Mr. Fuller's assumption, That "the state of the righteous, in these passages, is allowed to be final;" and we might have now proceeded with the argument, if Mr. V. had not put in another plea, in arrest of judgment.

He objects, *secondly*, That if it be granted that the state of the righteous, as described in these passages, be final, it will not follow that the state of the wicked, with which it is contrasted, will be so also. He says to his opponent, "I understand you as meaning, that "there can be no contrast formed betwixt "things which are not of equal duration,—for "this reason, because there cannot!" How he could thus understand Mr. F. is hard to be imagined. The fact must be resolved into those literary phenomena, which we shall often have occasion to admire in the course of this Review. Mr. F. thinks that the respect we owe to the inspired penmen forbids us to suppose that they would so often form contrasts between the future states of the righteous and the wicked, the for-

mer of which are allowed to be *final*, unless the latter were so also; *especially as the point of contrast lies in their opposite states*: and Mr. V. understands him as meaning, “that there can be no contrast formed betwixt things which are not of equal duration!”

But he lays down a maxim, and illustrates it by an example to confront this absurd position of his opponent. “I think it worthy, (says he) of wisdom itself to make antitheses betwixt a very short period, and a very long duration, though neither should be endless.” Here, let it be observed, that our author shifts the ground of Mr. F. This gentleman supposes a contrast in the *states* of men: and Mr. V. opposes his reasoning, by forming a contrast between a *very short and a very long duration!** Mr. V.’s extraordinary acuteness forbids me to impute this fact to want of penetration, and candour will not permit me to impute it to design. Do you, sir, try to account for it.

* The famous *Punster*, who, under the signature of “a Reader,” has more than once entertained us with his ingenious play upon words, has availed himself of the same dextrous manœuvre to evade Mr. F.’s argument, in No. xlvi. But as witty terms, and artful evasions, fall peculiarly within his province, we are not surprised to find him act in character. But that the *rational* Mr. V. should have recourse to such miserable shifts in a formal controversy, is truly surprising!

After dexterously shifting the ground of Mr. F.'s argument, he supports his position by a passage of scripture, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal, i. e. *aïōnion*, weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal, i. e. *aïōnion*." Here, my dear sir, is a contrast which, in Mr. V.'s opinion, may be properly placed under the same order as, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life!" In the *former*, a very short duration is contrasted with a very long one: in the *latter*, the *states* of the righteous and the wicked are opposed to each other; both of which are expressly said to be of the *same* duration!

It being clear, that Mr. V. has mistaken the nature of his opponent's argument, the example he has adduced is totally irrelevant. This is the more to be lamented, as, with the example, must fall also his ingenious criticism upon it. As Mr. V., however, seems peculiarly in his element when engaged in classical disquisitions, and is highly indignant when his great abilities, in this department, are called in question, I will gratify him, by a close attention to

whatever he has collected in the walks of science. I hope you will excuse me then, my dear sir, while I examine what he has brought forward on 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, though the state of the argument does not seem to require it. After quoting this passage at length, he thus comments upon it. “ Here is a contrast betwixt
 “ *temporal* and *aïōnion* things ; and yet that the
 “ apostle did not consider either of them eternal,
 “ (as our common translation *falsely* renders it)
 “ is evident ; because in v. 17, he says, the
 “ glory which our light affliction worketh for us,
 “ is a glory *exceeding aïōnion to an excess*. Every
 “ *proper judge* who reads this, *must know*, that
 “ I have only given the *genuine* meaning of
 “ καὶ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν in this rendering.”
 This is the language either of the most unquestionable ability, and well-supported claims to philological literature ; or of the most consummate arrogance.* Who is this prodigy of

* Mr. V.'s treatment of our venerable translation of the Bible, is often extremely indecorous ; and proves him to be as much wanting in respect to superior talents, as he superabounds in dogmatical positivity. How different is the language of the true scholar ! “ The reader (says the learned and modest Blackwall) will, I hope, observe that whenever I disapprove the translation of any author, or propose one of my own, I make no bold, arbitrary conjectures ; nor presume to strain or torture the sacred text, in order to force it to favour a peculiar, and otherwise, unsupported fancy : which every man, conversant in these studies finds to be too common

classical knowledge, who dares thus, without ceremony, to charge ignorance or knavery on the venerable and *quondam* accounted *learned* translators of the scriptures? Who is this Phœnix, who defies the united efforts of “every proper judge” to find a fault in his translation? Let us exhibit the rare phenomenon; or rather, let him exhibit himself. We will suppose his translation accurate,—for who dare suppose the contrary? and let us see to what conclusions it will lead us.

He adduces the passage before us as *a contrast between a very short and a very long duration*. The word *aïōnion*, he informs us, is an epithet which implies the duration of an *age*. All know that an *age* is a *short period*. Mr. V. in assigning the meaning of *aïōn*, says, “Seven “ years brought about a period, called the year “ of release, or sabbath of years: seven of these “ periods *was* included in that grand revolution “ which brought about the Jubilee. This was “ the *comprehensive age*, or period, which, as “ the greater, included all the rest.” (No. xxxvi. p. 364.) So that it seems the utmost limit of an age does not exceed 49 years; and

“ with *shallow critics, and conceited philologers, that are vainly*
 “ *fond of being esteemed more sagacious than the rest of mankind,*
 “ *and happy discoverers of new notions. This is such licentious-*
 “ *ness and insolence, that no true and sound scholar and critic,*
 “ *no sober sincere christian dare or can be guilty of.”*

as, according to this gentleman, “the adjective
 “can never be of more extensive signification
 “than the substantive from which it is derived,”
 the word *aionion* never means more than 49
 years.* But if an age be so short a period as
 Mr. V. represents it, how shall we find, in this
 passage, a contrast between a *very long* and a
very short duration? However “worthy it may
 “be of wisdom itself to make antitheses betwixt
 “a very short period, and a very long dura-
 “tion,” yet surely Mr. V. has been very un-
 fortunate in the example he adduces as an
 illustration of this position.

Again: This *translation makes the apostle
 reason inconclusively*. After asserting that pre-
 sent afflictions work out a glory exceeding
aionion to excess, the apostle assigns the reason
 of this declaration; “for the things which are
 “seen are *temporal*, but the things which are
 “not seen are *aionion*.” But if every thing
 which is not seen, is comprehended under the
 word *aionion*, how can there be a glory which
exceeds aionion to an excess?

This translation also *converts a universally
 acknowledged sublime passage, into feeble and tur-
 gid bombast*. Instead of elevating the mind, as

* That Mr. V. supposes both of these words to be of a
 much more extensive signification in some passages, I am aware:
 but I am not obliged to reconcile his contradictions.

the original, and the common translation do, to ideas which no language can express, Mr. V. debases it to an idea which would disgrace the reasoning of a school-boy. Instead of "the pretty word *aiōnion*," substitute *agelasting*, (as Mr. V. will have it to mean) and it will run thus: Our light affliction worketh out for us a glory exceeding *agelasting to an excess!* Had St. Paul written in this way, he would have exposed himself to the sarcasm of the poet.

"Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatus?
Parturiunt montes; nascetur ridiculus mus."*

Again: Mr. V.'s translation is a violation of one of the fundamental rules of grammar. An English reader would suppose the original word, which our author translates *exceeding aiōnion*, is a participle, as it ought to be, to justify his translation; because he speaks of a glory which *surpasses aiōnion* glory. The passage therefore ought to have run thus: το γὰρ παραύλικα ελαφρον της θλιψ—εως ημων δοξαν την ΥΠΕΡΒΑΛΛΟΥΣΑΝ εις υπερβολην αιωνια βαρεος δοξης κλιεργαζεται ημιν. But surely our profound critic need not be told, that the word which he translates as a *verb*, is a *noun* in the original. Terence tells us of some who

* "How will this babbler hold his yawning rate?
The mountains labour'd with prodigious throes,
And lo! a mouse ridiculous arose!"

“faciunt nœ intelligendo ut nihil intelligant.”*
 Who could ever have thought that we should have to remind the scholar, who takes upon him to charge ignorance on the translators of our bible, that a substantive is not a verb!

But what is of more importance than all the rest put together, the learned critic's translation *directly militates against his own principles*. He informs us, that the distribution of rewards and punishments is a mediatorial work, and that this work shall cease during the ages. On his system therefore, the light afflictions of this life can work out for us only an *agelasting* glory: but in rendering this passage as he does, he makes the apostle declare that afflicted saints shall have a reward *exceeding the ages of rewards to an excess!* And is it then indeed true, that rewards shall continue after Christ has resigned his mediatorial kingdom? I believe it is; and I am glad to have an opportunity of according with Mr. V, though in order to meet us, he relinquishes one of his favourite principles.

Upon the whole, it appears that Mr. V.'s translation cannot be admitted, without destroying the contrast, to elucidate which it was given; without making the apostle reason inconclusively; without enervating and debasing the vigour and sublimity of the original into feeble and turgid

* Some by endeavouring to be *over-wise*, understand nothing.

bombast; without violating the plain rules of grammar; and what is still worse, without destroying a fundamental principle in universalism. Shall we receive then a translation, clogged with such difficulties? Mr. V. says we must, or else renounce our claim to be proper judges of a greek criticism. This is a hard condition. We all, (not even excepting Mr. V.) wish to be thought competent for such a task; but he declares that “every *proper* judge *must* know” that he has given only the *genuine* meaning of this passage. In making therefore the above remarks, I have evidently excluded myself from *Mr. Vidler's* list of “proper judges;” but as I *must* be disgraced, it may be some consolation to be hid in a crowd, who have also incurred the same censure. Let us enquire then, whether any body else has dared to give a rendering of this passage different to that with which this critic has favoured the world.

That our common translators do not concur with Mr. V. is not to be wondered at: they knew but little of greek. But there are *others* who have rendered it differently. *Whitby* (see on him) agrees with “the common translation.” *Poole* also is on the same side. *Doddridge* and *Blackwall* (in times when men were less learned, these were thought to know something of greek) after giving it the sense of “the common tran-

flation," add, that "this passage is infinitely
 "emphatical, and *cannot be expressed by any*
 "translation; (they had not an opportunity of
 "seeing Mr. V.'s "genuine meaning.") It sig-
 "nifies that all *hyperboles* fall short of describ-
 "ing the weighty, eternal glory; so solid and
 "lasting, that you may pass from one *hyperbole*
 "to another, and yet when you have gained
 "the last, you are infinitely below it." *Guyse*,
 still concurring with the common idea, says,
 that "every translation (he had not seen Mr.
 "V.'s) and paraphrase sink below the astonish-
 "ing original." *Parkhurst*, agreeing with the
 rest, says, "the phrase is itself καὶ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς
 ὑπερβολὴν;" and quotes the commentary of *Chry-*
sostom on this passage. "The apostle (says he)
 "opposes things present to things future, a
 "moment to eternity, lightness to weight, af-
 "fliction to glory; nor is he satisfied with this,
 "but he adds another word and doubles it,
 "saying, καὶ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν; i. e. a
 "greatness *excessively exceeding*." *Leigh* says,
 "Because other languages cannot express to the
 "full, this emphatical grecism," (he did not
 know so well as Mr. V. the copiousness of the
 english language) "they are forced to use
 "words and phrases which exceed all compari-
 "son; as *Erasmus*, "mire supra modum."*

* "ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν" measure."

“ *Vulgate*, “ *supra modum in sublimitate.*” *
 “ *Beza*, “ *excellenter excellens;*” † and our last
 “ and BEST translation, (but *Leigh* was not a
 “ proper judge!) “ a far more exceeding.” But,
 sir, I shall weary your patience, if I proceed to
 mention more of these illiterate men, who have
 unanimously agreed to express themselves in a
 manner totally different from Mr. V.’s *genuine*
 translation, and who support the rendering in
 the common translation, which this gentleman
 unceremoniously pronounces *false*. Amongst
 such a crowd of *improper judges*, I trust I may
 escape without particular animadversion, for en-
 deavouring to *prove* that of Mr. V.’s *genuine*
 translation, which he has *asserted* of the common
 one.

But, sir, to be serious: What are we to think
 of the man, who with such consummate effron-
 tery, not only charges the commonly received
 translation with being false,—but appeals to
 “ every proper judge” for the genuineness of a
 translation, the most glaringly contradictory, un-
 grammatical, and absurd, that perhaps ignorance
 ever ventured to publish: and that too, when
he must have known that the authority of the
 greatest names that ever adorned real science,
 was directly against him; and without the suf-
 frage of a single scholar to keep him in counte-

* “ Beyond measure in sublimity.”

† “ Excellently excellent.”

nance? Let him hide his face in confusion. His trash did not deserve so much attention: but I measured its importance by the mischief it might do among unlettered readers. Sir, I cannot help expressing an honest indignation against the man, who undermines the common christian's faith, by insinuating that his english bible is a *false* transcript of the original. When I contrast their venerable names and *real* learning with the half-taught scholars of modern times, who, having just learned to distinguish *alpha* from *beta*, take upon them to criticise, and unceremoniously to cashier them, I blush at the mention of learning, and lothe the name of science!

I am, sir,

Yours, &c.

S.

LETTER IV.

Remarks on Mr. V.'s disavowal of the doctrine of Universal Salvation, and his inconsistency in so doing.

Dear sir,

IN Mr. Fuller's second comment on texts of scripture, put in contrast, he observes, "All these passages are totally silent, as to any other state following that of destruction, damnation, &c. If the punishment threatened

“to ungodly men had been only a purgation, or
 “temporary correction, we might have expected
 “that something like this would have been inti-
 “mated. It is supposed that some who are
 “upon the right foundation may yet build upon
 “it, *wood, and hay, and stubble*; and that the
 “party shall *suffer loss*; but *he himself shall be*
 “*saved*, though it be *as by fire*. Now if the
 “doctrine of universal salvation were true, we
 “might expect some such account of all lapsed
 “intelligences, when their future state is de-
 “scribed: but nothing like it occurs in any of
 “the foregoing passages, nor in any other.”

The first part of Mr. V.'s answer to this re-
 mark is as extraordinary as it was unexpected. It
 should seem that, after all the letters which have
 passed on this subject, Mr. F. has mistaken the
 very question in debate! He is writing against a
 system which Mr. V. declares he “does not, nor
 “ever did believe! You (says he in his sixth
 “letter) are talking against universal *salvation*;
 “while I am defending universal *restoration*.
 “These are certainly very distinguishable things;
 “and I do not, nor ever did, believe the former;
 “but for the latter, I contend as a scriptural
 “truth.” Again: “If they (the scriptures)
 “have not spoken a word on the subject of univer-
 “sal *salvation*, I am not disappointed at it.
 “I am satisfied they have spoken clearly on the
 “subject of the restitution of all things:” and

he adds, “ I will not say that it is with design,
 “ and contrary to known facts that you repre-
 “ sent me as an advocate of universal salvation;
 “ but it is certain that you have more than
 “ once or twice made this representation in
 “ your letters. The cause of your so doing is
 “ best known to yourself.” (No. xlvii. pp. 418,
 420.)

This is a fact not to be equalled perhaps in the annals of polemics. Fie, fie! Mr. F. how could you thus more than twice misrepresent your opponent? You have already acknowledged your error in representing him as an advocate for *annihilation*;—have you learned so little caution from this mistake, as to fall immediately into another, much more palpable and important? You are also the more inexcusable, as it is not *once* nor *twice* only, but *repeatedly*, that you have thus misrepresented Mr. V. “ The
 “ cause of your doing so (as he justly observes)
 “ is best known to yourself.” Believe me, sir, fair, downright dealing is by far the best policy. You may, by such artful manœuvres, for a time deceive your readers; but you are sure to be detected sooner or later; and especially when in the hands of so observant and subtle a disputant as Mr. V. It is true, you had the address to conceal the question in dispute, till *fifteen* letters had passed between you, and even escaped suspicion; but you at length stand fully detected

and self-condemned. What have you, sir, to offer as an apology for this extraordinary conduct? As an impartial reviewer, it behoves me to place this fact in its proper light; and I must therefore beg a more than ordinary share of patience, while I perform a task so essential to propriety, and this controversy.

Perhaps you will say in your defence, that you *supposed* Mr. V. maintained the same sentiments on this subject, as Dr. Chauncey, whose book is entitled, “The *salvation* of all men, the grand thing aimed at, in the scheme of God, &c.” You *supposed* that he believed the same as Mr. Winchester, whose works he edited, and who, in the compass of a very short preface to his dialogues, has the following observations. “It (the gospel) bringeth *salvation* to all men; but few in comparison have seen this, so as cordially to fall in with, and confess it, when by *all men*, is to be understood every individual of the human race.” Again: “Universal *salvation*, seen through these difficulties, is an antidote to all these evils.” Again: “While I saw the provision and *salvation* of the gospel to be only *partial*, I so declared and delivered it; but now it appears *universal*, shall I be silent?” Again: “I must think, upon the whole, that full and

“ sufficient evidence is given, that *universal salvation* is the mind of God, and the doctrine of his holy word.”* Perhaps you may say also, that, beside Petit-Pierre, and others who are mentioned in Mr. V.’s catalogue, of universalists expressly holding the doctrine of universal *salvation*, you had no reason whatever to think that Mr. V. denied that the scriptures have ever mentioned a word of this doctrine, as his friends uniformly believed it; and you never heard before, that this gentleman had disclaimed it. You may say these and many other things equally foreign, as an apology; but give me leave, sir, to ask “ what argument there is in a string of suppositions?” If you could not dive into Mr. V.’s mind by a sort of omniscience, yet one would think the least you could have done would have been to have stated the question in dispute in your first letter, and have told your friend what you understood he believed; because he would then have had an opportunity of undeceiving you at once, and putting the question on its proper ground. Thus

* It is curious to observe how widely *some* christians steer of each other. What Mr. *Winchester* believes to be “ the mind of God, and the doctrine of his holy word,” Mr. *Vidler* does not think is supported by a single passage of scripture! How ignorant the world must be, to call Mr. V. a *Winchesterian*!

you would have been in no danger of shooting beside the mark, and giving your readers unnecessary trouble. If, however, you had made this extraordinary omission in your *first* letter, you ought to have supplied the defect in your second; but instead of that, you write to Mr. V., he writes again to you, and so on, till at least fifteen or sixteen letters have passed between you:—and now, forsooth, we are to be told that you have been debating entirely beside the question! The least, sir, you can do, is to make an ample apology both to Mr. V. and your readers, and submit to the disgrace which the mean arts of evasion never fail to procure.

But methinks I hear Mr. Fuller thus plead in arrest of judgment. ‘ Before you condemn me
‘ to so humiliating a task, an impartial judge
‘ would suffer my letters to speak for themselves,
‘ and hear what I have farther to allege in my
‘ defence.’ True, on supposition that the crime with which you are charged were not fully substantiated; but where it is so clear, what need of a further hearing? Nevertheless, that we seem not unjust, we allow you to speak for yourself.

Mr. Fuller's defence of his conduct, in charging his opponent with holding the doctrine of UNIVERSAL SALVATION; a doctrine which Mr. Vidler declares he "does not, nor ever did believe," and which he thinks has not the suffrage of a single passage of scripture!

"IT seems I have committed a greivous fault in charging Mr. V. with holding the doctrine of those with whom he ranks himself, and of whose writings he has become the Editor. It is difficult, I allow, to determine what he does hold: yet surely I am not mistaken in this instance; or if I be, it is he himself that has led me into the mistake.

"I allow that from the first he generally used the terms *restoration*, and *restitution* in preference to that of *salvation*: but it were easy to perceive that his reason for this was, not that he disbelieved the latter, but because *he wished to have it taken for granted, that the scripture phrase "Restitution of all things," was expressive of his sentiment.* This was what I did not chuse to concede; and therefore all along made use of a term less liable to abuse, and which his writings, taken together, abundantly justify me in having used.

"I cannot say indeed, that the idea for which he has *uniformly* contended, is universal

salvation: for on some occasions he has admitted the full latitude of God's threatenings against sinners, and the execution of them too; and that God will punish them by weight and measure, with few stripes, and many stripes, according to their guilt; (No. xxxiv. p. 11) which must be inconsistent with salvation: for he who endures the full demerit of his sins, cannot possibly be said to be saved from it. But I am not accountable for Mr. V.'s inconsistencies. If I prove that universal salvation is an idea that runs through the general tenor of his writings—that he has virtually admitted the term in all his answers—that he has, in a great variety of instances, expressly used it—finally, that he has reproved an opponent for distinguishing it from restoration; I shall acquit myself from the charge of misrepresentation, and enable you to judge, sir, of the truth of his assertion, that “he does not, nor ever did believe it.”

“First: Mr. V. *has supported his sentiments by arguments, and passages of scripture, which are applicable (if applicable at all to his purpose) to universal salvation alone.*—Whatever he has said of sinners being punished according to their deserts, he has sufficiently unsaid it in other places. If that deliverance from misery which has the divine mercy as its source, Jesus Christ as the medium of conveyance, and the agency of the divine Spirit, subduing the enmity of the

human heart, as its efficient cause, imply salvation, then is universal salvation maintained by Mr. V.* That he ascribes “the restoration of all

* Were the *consistency* of Mr. V. the only subject of investigation, more than sufficient has already been advanced to shew, that, on this score, his claims are low indeed! But if it be asked, *Why* Mr. V. has thought proper to disavow a sentiment which he and other universalists had hitherto maintained; the enquiry will justify me in paying a more particular attention to the subject, as it will be found to involve the very essence of the controversy. It has always been contended by the opponents of universalism, that *salvation*, and the *full execution of the divine threatenings*, which they profess to defend, are perfectly incompatible, and that therefore their system contains within itself its best refutation: for it is asked, when a man has suffered all the punishment he deserves, From what is he *saved*? Where is there room for the exercise of *mercy*? Call the future happiness of such, a proof of *divine condescension, goodness, loving-kindness*, if you please: but surely the terms *mercy* and *salvation* are perfectly inapplicable. This point has been so fully and elaborately argued, by several able hands, and especially by Dr. Edwards in his answer to Dr. Chauncey, that Mr. V. himself seems to have felt its weight, though he has not ingenuousness enough to acknowledge it. In order, as it should seem, therefore, to weaken the force of this argument, he has disowned the doctrine of universal salvation; and says, that he “does not, nor ever did believe it.” But while he rejects the *word*, it is abundantly evident that he maintains the *thing*. If it can be shewn that Mr. V. has all along pleaded for a restoration, which implies a *proper* salvation, (though not perhaps a *scriptural* salvation) he will not only be chargeable with gross prevarication, but also all the arguments which have been so unanswerably urged against other universalists, will lie with all their weight upon his system, and must crush it to pieces.

lapsed intelligences" to divine *mercy*, appears in almost every page of his writings. I shall select but one passage or two from his third letter.

"It is on the ground, sir, that I suppose punishment of all degrees and duration, to be a mediatorial work, and *founded upon mercy*."

"This is a principle which neither you nor any man, who believes the scriptures, will dare to deny. *As you make use of it in relation to*

believers, the only question is, whether I have applied the principle in too great a latitude or not, &c." (No. xxxv. p. 337.) "The idea

that the present life is the only period when men can experience *mercy*, seems to be a great ground of the doctrine of endless misery."

(p. 338.) How these expressions are reconcilable with what Mr. V. elsewhere admits of the full latitude of God's threatenings, and the execution of them too," is one of those mysteries which nothing less than a genius like his can unravel. *Common* readers will, probably think that they imply something like *salvation*.

"*This mercy, Mr. V. also contends, is conveyed through the medium of Jesus Christ.** In the letter just referred to, he is very copious on this subject. "These (the elect) says he, you suppose

* I say through the *medium* of Jesus Christ. To this mode of expression, I presume, Mr. Vidler, though he has lately renounced the doctrine of the *atonement*, will not object. It is a

“ are the special objects of God’s love ; *are given*
 “ *into the hands of Christ in order to be saved ; are*
 “ *interested in every thing which Christ has done*
 “ *in his priestly character, &c.* These ideas are
 “ good, so far as they extend : *I only would apply*
 “ *them to the whole human race.* I suppose that
 “ God loves the world—that he is good to all,
 “ and that his tender mercy is over all his
 “ works—that the Father hath loved the Son, and
 “ hath given all things into his hands, in order
 “ to be *saved*: for this is the Father’s will, that
 “ of all which he hath given to Christ, he
 “ should lose nothing ; but raise it up again at
 “ the last day—that all are interested *equally* in
 “ what Christ has done in his *priestly* character,
 “ &c.” (No. xxxv. pp. 336, 337.) In the
 same letter he asserts, that “ all things will be
 “ reconciled to the Father by the blood of the
 “ cross.” His letters abound with sentiments
 of this sort, and therefore I shall not add to
 these quotations. Let it be remarked, however
 that in these passages he rests his arguments for
 a future restoration, exactly on the *same principles*
 as he supposes his opponents would build the
doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ.

query, however, if Mr. V. could recal all he has written, whether he would not express his sentiments on this subject, in more guarded terms than he has done ; lest some should think that he once held the doctrine of the atonement, as he did that of universal salvation.

“He also ascribes his restoration to the agency of the divine Spirit, in subduing the obduracy and enmity of the human heart, as its efficient cause. It is admitted on all hands, that a principal part of the salvation of the gospel consists in subduing the stubborn and rebellious will. Now, no writer is more explicit than Mr. V. on the necessity of a divine power to subdue the heart of the sinner, preparatory to his receiving the full benefit of the gospel; It is true, that he frequently reprobates the calvinistic notion of irresistible and unfrustrable grace, as taking away the liberty of human agency, destroying the distinction between virtue and vice, and reducing man to a mere machine. But still it is against the *terms*, not against the *thing itself*, that he objects; as the following specimens, illustrative of his holding a proper salvation, fully testify. “Christ is to rule till all enemies are *subdued*, till there be no authority, power or dominion, but what shall be *subjected* to him.” (No. xxxvi. p. 365.) “If any continue *incorrigible*, it must be imputed either to cruelty, or injustice in the Deity, or to weakness.” (p. 367.) “We suppose that his *power* will accomplish what his wisdom planned, and his goodness willed.” These are only a very few of the numerous passages in which the same sentiment occurs. He

every where insists, that the power of God is necessary to subdue and conquer the inveterate enmity of the wicked in hell, and to renew them in holiness, so as to qualify them for the enjoyment of heaven.* The inference from these sentiments to the doctrine of salvation, is unavoidable.

Secondly: Mr. V. has not only maintained the *idea* through the whole tenor of his writings, but has admitted the term in all his answers.— I am told that I ought to have stated the doctrine I supposed him to maintain, in my first letter, as he then would have set me right, had I misrepresented his sentiments. I *did* state it; and that not only in the first, but in the second and third letters. The *first* letter thus begins: †
 My dear friend, It has afforded me some painful concern to hear of your having embraced the scheme of UNIVERSAL SALVATION! Again, towards the close of it: ‡ Do seriously consider, whether the doctrine of UNIVERSAL SALVATION will not render your preaching another gospel? In my *second*

* One meets every now and then with sentiments in Mr. V.'s writings, which seem to clash with each other. He is a mortal enemy to *irresistible* grace, and yet it appears that the whole of his system is built upon it. For if it be not *certain* that the power of God will *subdue* the rebellious in hell, then they may *possibly* continue rebellious for ever; and then what becomes of Mr. V.'s doctrine of universal restoration?

† Letters, p. 5. ‡ p. 8.

letter also you will find the following expressions —“ It seems not to be on the footing of “ grace, but of debt, that you hold with UNI- “ VERSAL SALVATION.”* See also passages to the same effect in my *third* letter, pp. 260, 261, 265, 266.† Now if these passages contained a misrepresentation of his sentiments, why did he not correct it at the outset? He ought to have told me in his answer, that I had been misinformed; for that he believed no such doctrine. Instead of this, he has all along till now treated universal *salvation*, *restoration*, and *restitution*, as synonymous and convertible terms. In answer to my first letter, in which I stated his having embraced the doctrine of *universal salvation*, he says, “ You bring forward a letter written to me “ on account of my having avowed *the restitu- “ tion of all things.*” What is this but acknowledging what I called *universal salvation* to be equivalent to *the restitution of all things*? Upon any other principle his assertion had been utterly false.

“ Again: After quoting the following phrase from one of my letters—‘ What doctrine besides ‘ that of universal *salvation* will you find in the ‘ bible, &c. ;’ instead of rectifying the misnomer, as he certainly ought to have done, if he had considered it as one, he proceeds to answer the

* *Letters*, p. 14. † *Ibid*, pp. 20, 23, 30, 32.

objection, as directed against his own tenets. (No. xxxiv. p. 309.) In another place he observes—"The greater part of your letter goes " to prove the inconsistency of this sentiment, " (annihilation) with that of universal *restoration*." (No. xxxv. p. 335.) Here also the sentiment I opposed is allowed by this gentleman to be the same as that which he maintained. Many other passages from his letters, of a similar kind, might be adduced; but these are sufficient to shew that whatever he may now pretend to the contrary, he *once* considered these terms as properly convertible.

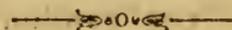
" Nor is this conclusion supported by the mere authority of his letters to me. In his treatise, entitled *God's love to his creatures vindicated*, published in the *Universalist's Miscellany*, he puts the matter beyond all dispute. Commenting on 1 Tim. ii. 5., he says, " We still " think that this text affords proof of the uni- " versal *restoration* of men: for the apostle " founds both the precept to pray and give " thanks *for all*, and the determination of God " to have *all saved*, upon a reason which ap- " plies to all; viz. that there is one God, &c." (No. xxxv. p. 24.)

" Thirdly: Mr. V. has himself in a great variety of instances expressly made use of the term *salvation*, and pleaded for its universality; yea,

for UNIVERSAL SALVATION.—In No. xxxv. of his Miscellany, are the following passages: “ God has declared that it is his will, that *all shall be saved.*” (p. 335.) “ It will no longer have occasion to puzzle you to find out *how all men are to be finally saved.*” (p. 336.) “ These (the elect) you suppose—are given into the hands of Christ in order to *be saved, &c.* These ideas are good as far as they extend. *I only would apply them to the whole human race.*” “ He doth not, in the *present* dispensation of mercy, lay hold of angels for *their salvation*; but he layeth hold of those who, like Abraham, believe the promise of God; and these are the *first fruits* of his creatures.” (p. 337.) On 1 Tim. ii. 5., in opposition to what his opponents had said—“ That the will of God for the salvation of all men, is not his absolute, unfrustrable will,” he takes great pains to prove that it is the *purpose* of God that all shall be *saved*. He concludes thus: “ When the apostle says, “ God our Saviour will have all men to be saved,” does he mean that God has given a command that *all men should be saved*? *We have no objection to this*, provided that command be given to Christ, because “ the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands;” and we are told, that it is the Father’s will, (purpose) that of all which he

" hath given him, he should lose nothing; but
 " should raise it again at the last day. But if
 " this command be given to men, doth it not
 " imply that they have power to *save* them-
 " selves? But the connection determines that
 " it is a purpose, and not a command of God,
 " which the apostle mentions." (*God's love,*
 &c. No. xxxv. p. 24.) " Let it be observed,
 " that the whole of this reasoning relates to *sal-*
 " *vation*: " God will have all men to be saved."
 " Again: on the same passage, he says, " The
 " apostle founds the precept to pray, and to
 " give thanks for all, on *the determination of*
 " *God to have all saved.*" Again: " Upon this
 " common parentage, &c., he (the apostle)
 " founds his proof of God's determined good
 " will to all men, in that he will have *all men*
 " *to be saved.*" In commenting on 1 Tim. iv.
 10, " God is the *Saviour* of all men," he says;
 " You apply the UNIVERSAL SALVATION, men-
 " tioned in 1 Tim. iv. 10., to temporal *deliver-*
 " *ance*:" and after much attempt at proof that
 this is not the sense of this passage, he comes to
 this conclusion: " That the apostle is not saying
 " any thing of a peculiar *temporal salvation* of
 " believers, is evident, because Christ has never
 " promised any such thing to his followers;"
 from which his inference is; that the universal
 salvation here spoken of must be future. (*God's*
love, &c. No. xxxv. p. 27.)

“ Finally: Mr. V., who so severely reproveth me for charging him with holding the doctrine of universal *salvation*, instead of *restoration*, equally *severely reproveth another opponent for making a distinction between salvation and restoration, and labours to prove that they are exactly synonymous terms!* (*God's love, &c.* No. xxxv. pp. 25, 26, 27.) What will you now think of the assertion, that “ he does not, nor *ever did* believe the doctrine of universal salvation?” Am I really chargeable with the dark design which he lays at my door, of misrepresenting his sentiments? I appeal, sir, to the candour of every reader, against the decency of his charge! I appeal to every man of principle, whether my opponent be not chargeable with a mean and despicable subterfuge to extricate himself from difficulties, into which his incoherent and undigested fancies have brought him!”



And now, my dear sir, what shall we say to this business? What effect this investigation of Mr. V.'s consistency may have upon you, I cannot tell: but, with respect to myself, I do acknowledge that every part of it has astonished me beyond measure; nor do I know in what terms to express my feelings on the occasion. Gladly, for the honour of truth, and the credit of christianity, would I persuade myself that the expressions which have given rise to this inquiry,

dropped from Mr. V. in an unguarded moment. There are times, when, in the heat of controversy, the memory fails; and on these occasions, if we have not well digested our sentiments, we are liable to confound and contradict ourselves. Surely this has been the case with Mr. V. The indisposition of which he complains, at the beginning of that letter in which he disavows his belief of universal salvation, may have rendered him incapable of close reflection, and of carefully reviewing what he had before written on the subject: and finding himself closely pressed by the arguments of his opponent, he might probably think it the readiest way of extricating himself from his difficulties, by asserting that his opponent had mistaken the very sentiment concerning which the whole controversy had been begun and carried on, through *fifteen* letters.* This, perhaps, may be thought not very creditable to the candour and ingenuoufness of Mr. V. I grant it is not; but I see not how otherwise to account for the fact, without implicating him in a charge of a much more serious nature.

* I do intreat the reader to re-consider this *extraordinary* fact. *Fifteen* letters I say had passed between them, without an *intimation* that Mr. Fuller had mistaken the question, though he repeatedly stated it, and though his opponent had been eagle-eyed in pointing out what he conceived to be erroneous in other particulars!

In whatever way Mr. V. may endeavour to clear himself, one thing is evident. He *now* thinks the doctrine for which Dr. Chauncey contended, “as the grand thing aimed at in the scheme of God,” and which Mr. Winchester maintained to be “the mind of God, and the doctrine of his holy word,” is perfectly indefensible. He disclaims any belief in it; and thinks that the scriptures have not said one word in support of it!* Perhaps it may sound a little oddly to those who have been accustomed to look upon the Editor of Mr. Winchester’s writings, as an advocate for the same peculiarities; but the fact is incontrovertible, and it is not perhaps undeserving of *some attention* from Uni-

* The author is aware that universalists have *lately* made a distinction between *salvation* and *restoration*; applying the former to such a deliverance as *exempts* from future punishment, and the latter to a *recovery* from it. But Mr. Fuller *never* charged Mr. Vidler with holding a universal exemption from future punishment, but *merely the recovery of all those that were exposed to it*, and which he certainly does hold. Allowing for a moment, therefore, that Mr. F. has used an improper term, that is the whole; which surely is not a sufficient ground for Mr. V.’s dark insinuation of an intentional perversion of his meaning!—But with respect to the term itself, (*salvation*) whatever this gentleman may think *at present*, it is abundantly manifest from his own writings, that he once thought it synonymous with *restoration*. His having made the distinction while disputing with Mr. F. has every appearance of a shuffle, for the purpose of getting rid of an argument.

verfalists! Alas! how soon has Mr. V. loft his veneration for his friend Mr. W.!

Φευ, τὴ θανάτου ὡς ταχὺα τὴ βροτοῖς
Χαρις διαρρέει. *

SOPH.

I would remark alfo, that fince Mr. V. has difclaimed his belief of univerfal falvation, to be confiftent, he muft give up all thofe arguments which are founded on the mercy of God, the mediation of Jefus Chrift, and the irrefiftible agency of the divine Spirit; alfo fuch texts of fcripture as fpeak of God being the *Saviour* of all men; as all arguments drawn from thefe fources are inapplicable to any change in the ftate of the wicked which does not imply falvation. Of courfe, he muft have the ingenuoufnefs to renounce the greater part of thofe letters, the reafoning of which he fo triumphantly exhibits as unanfwerable.

As Mr. V. has now declared, “ he does not
“ nor ever did believe the doctrine of univerfal
“ falvation,” I beg leave to offer him a feafon-
able piece of advice. When he next enters on
a public controverfy, it might not be amifs to
confider, *in ipfo limine*,† the nature of the quef-
tion in difpute: or, in other words, let him firft
confider about what he is going to difpute. This
might fave both him and his readers a good

* “ Alas! how soon do men forget their obligations to the dead.”

† “ At the beginning.”

deal of trouble. In the present instance, he would not have undertaken to vindicate himself for maintaining a doctrine which was charged upon him at the onset, and after more than twelve months of controversy, told his readers, that " he does not, nor ever did believe it."

It might also not be amiss, if he would have the goodness to discriminate between terms, which in his opinion have not the least affinity to each other, but which he every where uses as convertible. This might prevent his sentiments from being misconceived, and would also counteract any risings of petulance in animadverting on his opponents, for making distinctions which he afterwards declares to be of the last importance.

He should be careful also not to use such arguments as are applicable only to the sentiment he means to deny, as neglect herein is calculated to lead his readers into important errors.

But above all, he should not make use of *words*, and quote passages of scripture, in a sense directly opposite to that in which they are generally received. It is true, that words are nothing more than the representation of ideas; and therefore any man may choose what representative he pleases, provided he advertise us that he has thought proper to differ from gene-

ral consent. For instance; I do not deny that Mr. V. has a right to use the word *salvation*, when he means *restoration*; but then, methinks, he should give us a hint of this capricious alteration in the meaning of words; at least he should not quarrel with his opponent for taking his meaning according to his words.

But, sir, I have to apologize for the length of this letter, which has far exceeded the limits I intended. I shall continue, in some future letters, to follow our disputants, and to give as clear an account of the state of the controversy as I can.

I am sir,

Yours, &c.

S.

LETTER V.

Examinations of Mr. V.'s criticisms on Matt. xxv. 46, wherein he endeavours to confine the meaning of κολασις to a salutary chastisement.

Sir,

I HAVE to lament that we are so long kept from the question in debate, by the foreign matter which Mr. V. has introduced into this controversy. It seems necessary to call to mind that we were considering that part of his answer to Mr. Fuller, which relates to the passages of scripture put in contrast, which are deemed a

strong argument in proof of the eternity of future punishments: because, if the happiness of the saints be admitted to be final and endless, it seems but reasonable to conclude that the punishment of the wicked, which is opposed to it, must also be final, and of equal duration.

To this Mr. V. answers, That it is not conceded that the happiness of the *saints* in any of the texts adduced, is declared to be final and endless; and therefore we can conclude nothing from this argument in support of endless punishment. Mr. V. therefore promised to prove the limited duration of the saints' happiness, as it is contrasted with the punishments of the wicked, in a future part of this controversy;—but having either *forgotten* his promise, or felt his *inability to make it good*, he has never resumed the subject; and should he attempt it at any future time with success, he must prove that the endless blessedness of the righteous is not an effect of the mediation of Christ; and relinquish all he has written on the term *αιωνιος*, used to express the duration of future happiness and misery, being to be understood *in a different sense* in the one case to what it is in the other. At present, being in the dark how he can make good his promise, we must admit the full force of Mr. F.'s argument.

But, not contented with making this promise, (for probably he anticipated that it might

be no very easy task to perform it) he has attempted to shew, that, admitting the passages produced by Mr. F. to imply endless felicity, nothing can be concluded hence, that the state with which it is contrasted will be final also. It was in this arduous task that we left Mr. V. engaged, when our attention was drawn aside by his extraordinary assertion, that “ he does not, nor ever did believe the doctrine of universal salvation.” And now, if you please, we will resume the subject.

In commenting on the passages just referred to, Mr. Fuller had observed: “ If the punishment threatened to ungodly men, had been “ only a purgation or temporal correction, we “ might have expected that something like this “ would have been intimated.” To this Mr. V. answers, by selecting a *single expression of a single* passage from the great variety his opponent had adduced, expressed in *various forms, and under different similitudes*; and after attempting to prove that *this* speaks of “ a temporal correction,” he logically infers that *all* the rest must do the same. His conclusion runs thus. “ Certainly our Lord knew both the nature and “ end of future punishment, and as he has called “ it a *correction*,” (have a little patience, sir, and you shall see Mr. V.’s *proof* that our Lord has called it a *correction*) “ we may rest assured that “ he is not mistaken. In the nature of the

“ thing no correction can be endless.” As Mr. V. has made choice of but *one* passage to prove that these scriptures speak of future punishment as being a chastisement, we may conclude that he thought it the most in point of any among them; and therefore if his *proof* should be found deficient in this, we may infer that he would not be more successful in the rest.

The passage he has chosen for an exhibition of his reasoning powers and critical sagacity, is that noted one in Matt. xxv. 46. “ These shall go away, &c.” His argument is this: “ Petit-
 ‘ Pierre, (says he) in his treatise on divine
 ‘ love, says, ‘ There are two respectable autho-
 ‘ rities to prove that *κολασιν* * signifies *chastise-*
 ‘ *ment*: one is the illustrious Grotius, in his
 ‘ rights of war and peace; the other, the cele-
 ‘ brated Wytttenbach, in his essay on doctrinal
 ‘ theology. Grotius says expressly, that the
 ‘ kind of punishment which tends to the im-
 ‘ provement of the criminal, is that which phi-
 ‘ losophers called, among other things, *κολασις*,
 ‘ or *chastisement*. And Wytttenbach, who writes
 ‘ this passage from Grotius, says, that God, in
 ‘ the infliction of sufferings, has three ends in
 ‘ view; the first of which is the correction of
 ‘ the offender, in order to his future amend-
 ‘ ment, and that the greeks frequently gave
 ‘ to such sufferings the name of *κολασιν*.”

* Rendered in the common version “ punishment.”

To this I would observe, that it is a great pity, that out of the vast stores of classical erudition which Mr. Petit-Pierre, and Mr. V. possess, they have not brought a single authority in confirmation of the criticism of “the celebrated Grotius and Wytttenbach.” Had he done this, we might have given our opinion of the justice of their remark. But it is rather surprising, that a gentleman who pays so little deference to great names, should so suddenly become obsequious, and pin his belief of the propriety of a criticism that involves a fundamental question in this dispute, on the credit of a quotation, made from a quotation, which also is itself a quotation from an author, who, it should seem, has not afforded a single example of the truth of his remark. Will Mr. V. excuse me then, if I should not be quite so complaisant as to admit the force of this criticism, on the mere *ipse dixit* of Mr. Vidler, who says he had it from Petit-Pierre, who tells us that he had it from “the celebrated Wytttenbach,” and who informs us it is somewhere to be found in “the illustrious Grotius, in his rights of war and peace?”

The reason assigned by both Grotius and Wytttenbach for confining this word to *chastisement*, is, that “antient philosophers, among other things, call chastisement by the name of *κολασις*.” Unsupported as this assertion is by any authority, I will admit its truth; but I deny the

consequence. It may be true that *chastisement* is often expressed by *κολασις*, and not be true that this term never expresses *more* than simple chastisement. If a person were to contend, that a child was *punished* for committing a fault, with the intention of correcting him, and therefore a criminal who was *punished* with death, was only *chastised*, perhaps his reasoning would not be very convincing. The fact is, that *κολασις* has no *necessary* connection whatever with the *motives* of punishment, but simply means (as any lexicographer will inform us) *pæna*, *cruciatuſ*, *tormentum*; and exactly answers to our word *punishment*, which may or may not be accompanied with a view to a person's good: and therefore the rules of just criticism require that we always interpret it in its simple sense, and collect the *motive* from the nature of the case. Hence the whole of this learned criticism must fall to the ground. It will not serve the end for which Mr. V. introduced it, to say that it *may* signify chastisement; he must collect, from other circumstances independent of the word, that it *must* be so taken: But as Mr. V. does not attempt this, we are compelled to deny him the honour of his triumph.

One cannot help remarking here, the verfatility of Mr. V.'s genius. Should it be convenient to his own ſide of the queſtion, to ſhew

that because *aïōn*, *aïōnios*, &c. sometimes express a limited *period*, therefore *nothing certain* can be collected from these words, with respect to duration; he can turn over his septuagint and greek testament with surprizing dexterity, and direct you to a hundred passages in confirmation of his point. Should it again suit his argument to shew that *κολασις*, sometimes signifies *chastisement*, and therefore that in the passage in dispute, it *must* be so taken; he has at hand no less than three great critics to corroborate his assertion! Had Mr. V. been contented, like men of ordinary genius, to follow common sense, which dictates the *rule of giving every word its proper meaning, unless the subject require a different interpretation*, he would have wanted both these opportunities of exhibiting his knowledge of greek. ‘*Aïōnios*, (he would have said) properly signifies ‘*endless*; therefore I give it that meaning every ‘where, unless compelled to deviate from it by ‘the subject. *Kolasis*, signifies neither more nor ‘less than simply *punishment, pain, or torment*; ‘and therefore I can collect nothing of the ob- ‘ject of the punisher, unless the subject direct me ‘to it.’

So much for the proof, which this gentleman brings from Petit-Pierre, of the meaning of *κολασις*. Let us now attend him in his *own* criticisms; for be it observed, that he is not perfectly satisfied

either with “the illustrious Grotius, the celebrated Wyttenbach,” or the pathetic Petit-Pierre; but he proceeds to corroborate the whole out of his own stores of philology. “To this quotation I add, (says Mr. V.) that twice in the new testament we have *κολαζομενους*, which together with *κολασις*, is from the verb, *κολαζω*, applied, as Parkhurst observes, by greek writers in the sense of *restraining* and *repressing*. The only place beside, in which *κολασις* occurs in the new testament is 1 John iv. 18. “Fear hath torment (i. e. restraint) in it.” From the whole of these passages I think it clear, that *κολασις* signifies such a punishment as *corrects* the criminal, *restraining* and *repressing* him; and thereby bringing him into his proper place.”

On this *conclusive* piece of criticism, I would remark, in the first place, That Mr. V. sets out with a gross mistake. He tells us that we have *twice* in the new testament *κολαζομενους*; and refers us to Acts iv. 21, and 2 Pet. ii. 9. But this is not true; for in the first passage he cites, it is *κολασωσαι*. The reason of my pointing out this mistake is, not because it makes any difference in the state of the argument, as it certainly does not, but to add another proof,* that Mr. V. quotes passages of scripture in the original, which

* Vid. p. 42.

he never consulted. In this case he has mistaken the sense of Parkhurst on this word, and would have us to believe that the concluding part of the criticism, which begins, "To this quotation I add," &c. is his own, when in fact he has borrowed it from his lexicon, but mistaken its meaning.* Mr. V. every where affects to be a minute observer of the original, and a careful comparer of every passage of scripture, where any fresh light may be obtained; and he thus gains from his readers, no inconsiderable credit. They naturally feel disposed to rely on the decision of a man, who tells them he has carefully considered and analyzed words, which they cannot understand; and if he imposes on them, in this respect, he is one of the worst sort of deceivers. It therefore becomes a duty in every one who can investigate Mr. V.'s fidelity, to put it to the test. In the present case, he comes forward with great confidence, as a man who has examined every word which might throw light on the subject, and

* Under the word *κολαζω* Parkhurst says, "*To punish*, occurs "in Acts iv. 21, 2 Pet. ii. 9, where observe, that *κολαζομενης* is "used, &c." Mr. V. evidently misunderstood Parkhurst as intimating that this word occurs in *both* the cited passages, though he meant the latter only. It is a pity that this lexicographer did not express his meaning more clearly, because he has led his reader into a mistake, that has led to a detection of what, perhaps, Mr. V. would wish to have concealed; viz. that he sometimes quotes from a lexicon, when he would have it understood, that he has been at the trouble of examining and criticising the original.

concludes that, in the *original*, every passage is in favour of his own argument; when in fact he *has never consulted* the passages he quotes, but merely sets down, in a blundering way, the comments of a lexicographer. That this is the case, is also evident from the meaning of both the passages, when taken in connection with the context; because one makes directly against his conclusion, and the other is not at all in point. Let it be remembered, that Mr. V. asserts that the proper meaning of *κολασις* is, “such a punishment as *corrects* the criminal, *restraining* and *repressing* him, and thereby bringing him into his due and proper place:” by which he evidently means, such a punishment as is intended for the criminal’s *good*. The first passage referred to runs thus: “And having threatened them, they dismissed them, finding nothing how they might punish them, (*κολασωμένοι*) because of the people.” Judge, my dear sir, whether these wicked jewish rulers, who had put Jesus Christ to death, who sought to take away the life of Lazarus, who had already imprisoned the disciples, and were restrained from putting them to death, merely through fear of the people,—Judge sir, I say, whether these men sought an opportunity of *doing good* to the disciples? What, think you, would they have done, if they had not been afraid of the people? I know you will answer, What they had already done to Jesus

Christ, and what afterwards they attempted to do to these very men. (Acts v. 33) And yet Mr. V. adduces this passage as a proof that *κολασις* signifies nothing more than a corrective punishment, a salutary restraint! Would he have adduced such a passage, if he had ever looked at it, in support of his argument? Surely not: and because he has adduced it, we must necessarily conclude that he never saw it, nor knew to what it referred.

As to the second passage, in which we do indeed find *κολαζομενους*, I leave you, sir, again to decide, whether it make any thing for Mr. V.'s argument. It is the 2 Pet. ii. 9. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the righteous from temptation, and to preserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be *punished*." Whether the punishment here spoken of, be *corrective* or *vindictive*, is the very question in dispute; and therefore can never be adduced as a proof of the meaning of *κολασις*.

There remains therefore, but one passage where any derivative from the word *κολαζω* occurs, and that is 1 John iv. 18. "Fear hath torment," (according to Mr V., *restraint*.) He says, that this word is used "by greek writers, in the sense of *restraining* and *repressing*." What then? Is this the *only* sense in which they use it; or what is more to the point, is this its *ideal* sense? Mr. V. is too well read in classical litera-

ture to make such an assertion. What then does this comment amount to? Nothing at all. Nay, allowing that it is *never* used in any sense but that of restraining or repressing, I ask again, What has Mr. V. proved? Just nothing at all, unless he can shew that it would be improper to say, that a highwayman was *restrained* or *repressed* by being kept in *perpetual* imprisonment, though proper to say that a vagrant was *restrained* or *repressed* by being flogged at a cart's tail. Some persons might think perhaps, that the former was more effectually restrained than the latter. But if a man may be repressed who never reaps, nor was intended to reap, the least benefit by his punishment, then, admitting the validity of Mr. V.'s criticism, it will be of no advantage to his argument. *Restraining* and *repressing* therefore, do not *necessarily* imply the bringing of "a criminal into his proper place," unless it be allowed that perpetual imprisonment or a gibbet be his proper place: but to admit this, destroys the whole of Mr. V.'s argument. This gentleman must therefore excuse us, if we do not "acknowledge," from the proof he has adduced, "that there is something like an intimation that the punishment threatened by our Lord to ungodly men, is intended as a limited correction, and consequently as a mean of purification."

What then becomes of Mr. V.'s idle vaunt, that, "as our Lord knows both the nature and end of future punishment, and as he has called it a *correction*, we may rest assured that he is not mistaken. In the nature of the thing, no *correction* can be of endless duration?" He has completely failed in every step of his intended proof, that *κολασις* in the passage referred to, signifies mere correction. The most he seems to *attempt* to prove is, that the word may *possibly* signify correction; and as it *possibly* may not, he has completely laboured in vain.

But lest Mr. V.'s pretended authority, *Grotius*, (for be it observed that Wytttenbach and Petit-Pierre both rest upon his *single* assertion, without a *single* example) that *κολασις* was generally used by greek writers, to express such a chastisement as was intended for the culprit's good, should have an undue weight with any of his readers, I will confront it by *several examples from greek writers, in which this word has no relation whatever to the criminal's good, and which cannot possibly be applied to a limited duration*; from which it will follow that this word *κολασις* is a very proper one to express a *vindictive* punishment, and that its connection with *everlasting*, in Matt. xxv. 46, determines it in an *endless* sense.

The first example shall be from *Lucian*. Tantalus, deploring his dreadful state, in the infernal regions, in being ready to perish with

thirst, in the midst of abundance of water, says to Menippus, “ Τῷ αὐτῷ ἡ ΚΟΛΑΣΙΣ εἶσι, το διψημεν τὴν ψυχὴν ὡς σῶμα ὕδαν.”* It is presumed that Mr. V. will not contend that *κολασις* here signifies a salutary chastisement, intended for the criminal's good. He will, on the contrary, observe that it is one of the words which the greeks made use of to express an *unlimited* future punishment, entirely irrespective of the sufferer's good. This punishment is also called, in a line or two below, *καταδικη*,† which puts the matter beyond dispute.

Let us next refer to *Andreas Cæsar*, in his commentary on Rev. xiv. 11, and see in what sense he used this disputed word: Εἰς αἰῶνα δὲ αἰῶνων αὐτὸν ἀναίθαινειν λεγέται, ἵνα μαθῶμεν ΑΤΕΛΕΥΤΗΤΟΝ εἶναι τὴν ΚΟΛΑΣΙΝ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν, ὡσπερ καὶ τὴν τῶν δικαίων τροφὴν αἰωνίου.‡ Here we have the word in dispute, connected with an adjective which *expressly* fixes its meaning to *endless*; and consequently here it must mean more than a *corrective limited* punishment.

* This is the very nature of my *punishment*, that my soul should thirst, as though it were a body.

† Vindictive.

‡ “ It is said that their smoke ascendeth up for ever and ever, that we may learn that the *punishment of the wicked is endless*, as also the rest of the righteous is *everlasting*.” (By the bye, this is no contemptible proof that *aionios* properly means *endless*.)

The *third* example I shall adduce is from *Germanus*, Patriarch of Constantinople, in his defence of *Gregory Nyssene*, who wrote against the doctrine of annihilation. He shewed from scripture, ὡς περ αἰωνιον την των δικαιων ανεκλαλητον απο λαυσιν, ἔλω την των ἀμαρτωλων ΑΤΕΛΕΤΗΤΟΝ τε και ανυποισαλον ΚΟΛΑΣΙΝ. (Photius Cod. 233.)* Here the *eternity* of future punishment is expressed in the same language as in the preceding example; and will admit of no evasion.

The *last* example shall be taken from *Poly-carp*, bishop of Smyrna, who was contemporary with, and the disciple of John. He answered the Proconsul, who threatened to burn him, Πυρ απειλεις το προς ὦραν καιομενον και μεῖ ὀλιγον σθενυμενον. Αγνοεις γαρ το της μελλεσης κρισεως και αιωνια ΚΟΛΑΣΕΩΣ τοις ασεβεσι τηρεμενον πυρ.† (Epist. Smyrn. Eccl.) The *antithesēs*, in this passage, evidently point out a punishment *endless* in its duration; and as this venerable martyr has used this word in a sense entirely unlimited, we have not only a proof that it is a proper word for expressing a future, vindictive punishment, but

* “ That as the rest of the righteous is unspeakable, “ so also the *punishment* of the wicked is *endless* and *most* “ *intolerable*.”

† “ You threaten me with a fire that burns for an hour, “ and shall shortly be extinguished, but are ignorant that “ there is a fire of future judgment, and *everlasting punishment*, “ reserved for the ungodly.”

also a proof, almost apostolic, that the passage in Matthew under debate, must necessarily be taken in this sense, as the expression is exactly the same in both.

Upon the whole then, it appears that the authorities quoted by Mr. V. prove nothing in the present case; that Mr. V. did not consult the passages of scripture in the *original*, which original he pretends to criticize; that when these texts are considered, they make against him; that his reasoning, even allowing him what is not to be granted, is altogether inconclusive and false; that the greek word he quotes does not convey, even in his way of criticizing it, the least difference of idea from the english word, which he labours to set aside;* and lastly, that it appears from irrefragable authorities, both in sacred and profane classics, that the word he endeavours to restrict to a peculiar sense, will admit of no such restrictions. Such

* The sum of all Mr. V.'s criticism on the word *κολασις* is, that it will admit of the sense of *restraining and repressing*; (though his conclusion from this criticism is, that it *must* mean such a punishment in Matt. xxv. 46; a conclusion odd enough to be sure!) and does not our english word *punishment* sometimes mean the same? *Κολασις*, he says, is often used for *correction*; and is not the word *punishment* used for correction? In what then do these words differ? Not in a single *iota*, as far as this gentleman's criticism goes to shew,

a reasoner, and such a criticiser is Mr. V., who takes upon him to dispel the clouds of ignorance which envelope nearly the whole christian world, and to exhibit the translators of our bible, as mere *ignoramuses* in greek!

We may, and probably do, stand in need of much instruction in divine subjects; but we must be ignorant indeed not to see that this gentleman's claims to superior ability and discernment, are unsupported and arrogant in the extreme. In my next, I shall take further notice of some other objections which he urges against the reasoning of Mr. F. on his first class of texts; and in the mean time,

I am, fir,

Your's, &c.

S.

Why then does he puzzle his readers with *greek* words, when the english has just the same meaning? Why did he not rather undertake to shew that, because the word *punishment sometimes* signifies no more than a *merciful correction*, therefore it *must* mean a merciful correction in Matt. 25. 46? Alas! if he had done so, he would have exacted less of ignorant gaze at his profound knowledge in greek, and would have passed for a common, a contemptible disputant.

LETTER VI.

Remarks on Mr. V.'s replies to the argument of Mr. F., that " the phraseology of the greater part of the scriptures he had adduced on the future punishment of the wicked, is inconsistent with any other state following that which they describe."

Dear sir,

LET us now proceed to Mr. Vidler's remarks on his opponent's *third* consideration, whereby he endeavours to prove, that the states contrasted in his first class of scriptures are final. " The phraseology (says Mr. F.) of the greater part of these is inconsistent with any other following that which they describe. On the supposition of salvation being appointed as the ultimate portion of those who die in their sins, they have *not their portion in this life*; but will, equally with those who die in the Lord, behold his righteousness, and be satisfied in his likeness," &c.

This reasoning is so plain that one would think it were needless to attempt to make it plainer. It may be stated in other words thus: ' If at any future time, after any degree or duration of punishment, or any purgation, the wicked should be admitted into heaven, the

‘ description here given of their state would be
 ‘ untrue: for then the wicked as well as the
 ‘ righteous would behold the divine righteouf-
 ‘ ness, and be satisfied with his likeness.’ This
 is so evidently the drift of the whole passage,
 that one would have supposed obstinacy itself
 must have seen and acknowledged it.—And
 now let us attend to Mr. V.’s animadversions
 upon it.

“ I have insisted (says he) upon the reality
 “ and equity of future punishment; contend-
 “ ing, at the same time, that it is limited in
 “ its duration, and corrective in its nature.
 “ You, without having any regard to the loss
 “ which sinners will sustain by having no part
 “ in the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth;
 “ without considering in the least, the tribula-
 “ tion, indignation and wrath which is revealed
 “ from heaven against all unrighteousness; with-
 “ out allowing any thing for the few stripes
 “ and many stripes, which according to their
 “ character, they shall receive, insist upon it,
 “ that the difference I make betwixt the state
 “ of the righteous and wicked, will not accord
 “ with these scriptures; or, in other words, if
 “ ever there be an amelioration in the future
 “ state of the wicked, then these scriptures
 “ cannot be true.” (p. 421.) But how does
 this latter sentence (“ or in other words, &c.”)
 agree with the former, of which it is intended

as a compendium? In the former, Mr. F. is represented as so very thoughtless as to forget that Mr. V. believes in *some* degree of punishment; and in the latter, he is exhibited as contending that, on supposition of *ever so great* a degree of punishment, if there should *ever* be “an amelioration of the future state of the wicked, then these scriptures cannot be true.” That is, Mr. F. entirely overlooks his opponent’s sentiments, as to limited punishment, in that very passage where the whole argument proceeds on the supposition of his maintaining such a punishment! Whether we choose to attribute this fact to some interruption in the composition of these two parts, which made this gentleman forget what he had said in the former; or whether it originated in a sudden qualm of conscience, at having given a false statement of the argument; or whether it was owing to the obtrusive perspicuity of his opponent’s reasoning, which, in spite of every attempt to evade it, would force itself upon him, I take not upon me to determine. One thing however is certain,—that the latter sentence, at open hostility with the former, contains the essence of Mr. F.’s argument. He does indeed mean that, if there be any amelioration of the future state of the wicked, whether after the millennium, or after any degree of loss, the scriptures he adduces cannot be true; “because then those who die

“ in their sins, would, equally with those who die in the Lord, behold his righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness.” What then has Mr. V. adduced in opposition to this sentiment? A long paragraph containing a falsehood and a truth: a *falsehood*, with which Mr. V. directly and glaringly charges himself; and a *truth*, which is nothing else than the statement of his opponent’s argument! And then he adds, (and *mutatis mutandis**) there is not a man on the face of the earth who can controvert the truth of the observation) “ The fallacy of such reasoning, must be evident to every reader.” Here then is another brilliant exhibition of Mr. V.’s acuteness! He begins with a falsehood, sums up with a contradiction, and, not knowing how to get rid of his opponent’s argument, puts his reader into a good humour by paying him a compliment; and begs him to do, what he felt himself unable to do, detect the fallacy of such sort of reasoning!

But Mr. V. has “ two strings to his bow.” Having failed in his attempt at reasoning, he has recourse to the favourite weapon, with which he has done so much execution,—*verbal criticism*. But as he has so often treated those who can read *greek* letters, he now condescends to treat his *english* readers. He has chosen the word

* “ Persons being reversed.”

equally, as best suited to his purpose. Not contented to understand this word, as the connection requires it to be understood, and as every reader, except Mr. V. would understand it; viz. as equivalent with “as well as;” he insists that, if traced to its literal and grammatical sense, it means *perfect equality*; and therefore, in spite of the connection, it *must* be so understood in this place. Well—what is the passage to be criticised? “Those who die in their sins, will, *equally with those who die in the Lord, behold his righteousness.*” Every one, I say, who is not blinded by the excessive radiance of learning, would understand Mr. F. as meaning, “those who die in their sins, *as well as* those who die in the Lord,” &c. This is the position he undertook to prove; and he never dropt a hint (except in this unfortunate word, which Mr. V. is too great a scholar to understand) respecting the equality or inequality of the states of the righteous. If we proceed only to the next sentence, we shall find this very word (*equally*) explained in the sense just given: “Their expectation shall not perish, but shall issue, *as well as* that of the righteous, in gladness.” Now, had Mr. V. condescended to notice this sentence, he might have spared himself the trouble of exposing his own perverseness: but he must say something; and therefore,

after putting a false construction on the word *equally*, he makes the following very appropriate enquiry. “ And here let me ask, sir, What “ Universalist, who holds with future punish- “ ment, ever supposed that when sinners were “ restored from guilt and punishment, they “ would be made *equal* in holiness, happiness, “ and glory, with God’s first-born children?”

It is a common observation, that “ one mean action makes way for another:” this, perhaps, will be found to be true in the present instance. After perversely confining the word *equally* to its grammatical sense, he tacks this word to a sentence of *his own*, charges it upon his *opponent*, exposes its falsehood, and then goes off in triumph! Let us oppose Mr. Fuller to Mr. Vidler:—

Mr. Fuller.

“ Those who die in their sins, will, *equally with those who die in the Lord, behold* his righteousness, and be satisfied in his likeness.” Observe, “ they will *equally behold:*” it is not said they will be *equally righteous*, and happy, &c., as Mr. V. in the opposite paragraph falsely charges Mr. F. with imputing to his sentiments.

Mr. Vidler.

“ What universalist ever supposed, that when sinners were restored, they would then be made *equal in holiness, happiness, and glory?* For my part, I do not know that all the angels of God, &c., are now, or ever will be *equal in holiness, &c.*; much less that those who die in their sins will ever be *equally* so with those who die in the Lord.” (p. 420.)

Here then we have a perverse construction of a common expression in a common sense, in order to make way for a false charge against his opponent, which is so grossly unfounded, as not to admit of a colouring, even conceding the propriety of his absurd criticism! This, dear sir, is the ingenuous, the candid Mr. V., who has no object so much at heart as the investigation of truth!

But let us proceed to what remains of this learned and elaborate letter. Mr. Fuller had said, on supposition of the truth of his opponent's principles, "The broad way doth not lead to *destruction*, but merely to a temporary correction, the end of which is everlasting life. The chaff will not be burned, but be turned into wheat, and gathered into the garner: the tares will be the same, and gathered into the barn; and the bad fish into good, and gathered into vessels, &c." The obvious import of which is, That these expressions are totally incompatible with any future amelioration in the state of the wicked. *Destruction*, Mr. F. conceives to imply utter and irremediable ruin. The *chaff*, he thinks, is not wheat, and cannot be made such; and if it could be so converted, *burning* does not seem to be a likely method of effecting it. He also seems to think that *tares* cannot be turned into

wheat; and that *putrid fish* that has been *thrown away*, is not likely to be converted *into wholesome food*.* To all this Mr. V. answers—What does he answer? Perhaps you would not easily guess. However, I will put you out of suspense. He answers—“ You are not to be told, “ fir, that *destruction, burning, perishing*, are “ not considered by the advocates of endless “ conscious misery, as implying an end of being; yet that you have reasoned upon these “ places in that sense, seems clear.” Fie, fie! Mr. V. how could you be so vindictive? Mr. F. had formerly charged you with holding the doctrine of annihilation, and now you are de-

* The celebrated Punster, who calls himself *A Reader*, whom I have already introduced in this review, has been peculiarly happy in his witty observations on this part of Mr. F.'s letter. On that passage of scripture which represents the folly of those, who, to gain the whole world, should lose their own souls, he shrewdly observes, that “ it must be left with Mr. F. to determine how a man can *lose* his own soul, and yet *find* himself for ever in hell torments.” This is indeed a difficulty; and no doubt he had in his mind, when he started it, the story of the Ferryman's answer to a gentleman, who, apprehending some danger when crossing a river, enquired whether any body was ever lost in the passage. O no, says the facetious waterman; nobody was ever *lost* in it; for though both my father and grandfather were drowned here, yet they were both *found* again! The whole of this gentleman's letter proceeds in the same witty strain: and no doubt it has afforded much entertainment to those who delight in glee, and substitute puns for argument.

terminated to revenge yourself by retorting the charge. Ah sir, this *lex talionis** is not the law of the gospel.—Without taking any further notice of this little pique,—as every body will see that no allusion whatever is made to annihilation, but to the incongruity of the terms in the above passages, with Mr. V.'s sentiments,—let us proceed to what he offers under the semblance of argument.

“ The apostle to the Hebrews, in one of your contrasted passages, takes a figure from the production and treatment of bad ground, and applies it to illustrate the case of such as had misimproved the blessings of the gospel. *The earth which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.* What if an universalist, following, as you have done, the figure, should say, Though such ground be burned, because of its unfruitfulness; yet the burning of unfruitful ground is oftentimes the only method the farmer can take, to alter its quality and make it fruitful; and that the sacred writer had a reference to this process and its consequences, in God's dealings with sinners; would you admit this argument? Yet surely it is upon a par with any thing you have said upon the above mentioned figures of speech.”

* The law of retaliation.

One cannot sufficiently admire the dexterity of Mr. V.! Would you have thought, sir, that this passage, on which Mr. V. has so admirably commented, is one, which *some* think makes directly against the sentiments he has embraced? But he has so artfully introduced it, and given it such a dexterous turn, that one should scarcely conceive it has any thing to do with the question. While he seems to be only confronting his opponent's remark with something like a parallel, in favour of his own sentiments, he means to bring over a formidable enemy to harmless neutrality, if not into a powerful ally. Thus he endeavours to obtain an important advantage, without seeming to intend it; and after stating his *real* sentiments in the form of a dubious question, he asks, "Would you admit this as an argument?" We will not however be so easily duped. Without shewing that this gentleman's gloss on the passage militates against its plain and grammatical construction (as we might easily do,) we need only refer to the context, and his interpretation will proclaim its own absurdity. The passage occurs in Heb. vi. 8. "It is *impossible*" (*αδυνατον*) says the apostle (v. 4) for certain characters, "if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance." This *impossibility* he proceeds to illustrate by the nature of some sorts of ground, which bring forth nothing but thorns and weeds,

after the best and most repeated cultivation; in consequence of which it is left to become a barren heath, burnt up by the sun, and becomes perfectly useless, either to man or beast. But Mr. V. says it alludes to the custom of farmers, who burn their land, in order to make it fruitful. Be it so. How then does Mr. V. make the apostle reason? ‘Some land can be improved only by burning; *therefore* it is *impossible* that some characters can be restored to their former state!’ In other words, ‘One thing is capable of improvement; *therefore* another thing cannot possibly admit of improvement!’ Admirably concluded! But should not Mr. V. have published a new system of logic, before he put such arguments into the mouth of an inspired apostle? For surely the commonly received dialectics afford no examples of syllogisms like this. So much for Mr. V.’s questions.

But he does not stop here: He applies his question. “Surely it (this argument) is on a par with any thing you have said, in the above mentioned figures of speech;” i. e. ‘Surely there is as good reason to say, that, because some land may be improved by *burning*; therefore *chaff* may be converted into *wheat*, by the *same process*.’ An excellent parallel! The merit of it, as far as I know, belongs exclusively to Mr. V.

Hitherto Mr. V. has left the argument of his opponent, that “ the phraseology of some “ of these passages is inconsistent with any other “ state following that which they describe,” untouched. All he has attempted are futile cavils at one or two of the examples, and dexterous manoeuvres to make us forget the nature of the argument. He does not, however, dismiss the subject without a word or two more: but not in the way of refutation. Not vastly liking the task of meeting the argument, he tells us that he has already answered it in the *Univ. Mis.* for June, pp. 225—229; where he says he has shewn “ the proper scriptural method of considering such texts as you have now brought forward, and took a view of them as perfectly consistent with the restitution of all the intelligent offspring of God.” I have looked at those four pages—but, believe me sir, I could not find a paragraph on the subject. I saw indeed something about the Jews, as a nation, being severely threatened, and still promised deliverance on their *repentance*; but I did not see how this proved that those who are threatened in the terms above mentioned, without the least hint of recovery, or rather in such language as precludes the most distant hope of recovery, shall be restored to the favour and enjoyment of God; nor did I see what canon Mr. V. has established for understanding the import of these

and similar passages. He does indeed say that sinners may have "judgment without mercy," and yet have mercy; and also that "the wicked have no hope in their death," and yet that they have hope: but then such like readers as myself do not clearly comprehend the truth of these assertions, and find ourselves in as great difficulties as ever on the subject. Perhaps the fact was this—Mr. V. might think that nobody would be at the trouble to refer to these passages, and that he should have the credit of refuting his opponent without the labour of attempting it. Be this as it may, till something better has been said, it must be allowed that "the phraseology of some of these passages is inconsistent with any other state following that which they describe." I would only further observe, on this part of the argument, that, supposing Mr. V. had attempted to fulfil his promise, of shewing that the state of the righteous, which these texts describe, is not final, he would have found an insuperable difficulty in his way, till he could prove that the reasoning of his opponent, respecting the phraseology of several of these passages being incompatible with any other state, is inconclusive. A task which he has not yet performed, and I believe never can. This part of Mr. Fuller's argument, I conceive to be very important; and of itself, capable of

overwhelming the whole of the universalist's system.

I am, dear sir,

Yours, &c.

S.

LETTER VII.

A summary view of what both Mr. V. and Mr. F. have advanced on the words EVER, EVER-LASTING, &c., with an enquiry into Mr. V.'s rule for interpreting words taken in various senses.

Dear sir,

WE are now entering upon the *second* of the four principal grounds on which Mr. Fuller rests his belief of the doctrine of everlasting punishment, which is this: “ *All those passages which speak of the duration of future punishment, by the terms everlasting, eternal, for ever, and for ever and ever.*” And here one cannot help animadverting on the conduct of universalists, in wishing to have it understood, that nearly the whole of the controversy rests on the meaning of these words. Hence, in order to overpower this formidable enemy, they have concentrated all their force, and have given command to “ *fight neither with small nor great, save only with*” *aiōn*. And so com-

plete, in *their* opinion, has been their success that now, even the most timid among them, look upon themselves as more than sufficient to crush him. Go where you please, you scarcely hear any thing but exultations over *aiōn*. This prostrate enemy affords as much entertainment to universalists, as Sampson, shorn of his strength, did to the Philistines. The winding up, however, of this piece of scripture history, affords an important lesson on the folly of trifling with an unconquered enemy.

But, supposing their conquest over this adversary as complete as they could wish, Is the whole warfare at an end? I trow not. Little, very little indeed has been done. They may have cut off a detachment; but the main body is still untouched, and is more than equal to the strongest force they can bring against it. Why then did Mr. V., in his first letter, presume that, after he had attempted to shew that “the words “ (*aiōn*, &c.) which the scriptures use, by “ which to express the duration of future misery, do not *necessarily* mean endless,” he had completely vanquished his opponent, and had nothing to do but to state his own claims? For my own part, I consider this as but a small portion of the proof of endless punishment. Could it even be shewn that this argument has not the least weight in it, still we are in posses-

sion of such additional proof, as must necessarily overturn the system of universalism. Mr. F. considers it but as *one* of the *four* principal arguments drawn from scripture; and in Dr. Edward's masterly enquiry into the truth of Dr. Chauncy's system, it is scarcely touched upon, till nearly the conclusion of his book. But we by no means allow that the least advantage has been gained over this division. On the contrary, we think its strength is unimpaired, and that it will continue to maintain its ground, till universalism shall be annihilated. Let us bring it to a trial.

It would be equally tedious and unprofitable to canvass the whole that has been said on this topic. I will therefore direct your attention to the main arguments on both sides, and conclude with some general remarks. The following contains the substance of Mr. *Fuller's* observations on *aiōn*, &c.

1. He lays down this rule of interpreting words that are taken in more senses than one, as this confessedly is; "That every term be taken in its *proper* sense, except there be something in the subject or connexion, which requires it to be taken otherwise."

2. He then proceeds to ascertain the *proper* meaning of *aiōn*; and observes, "As far as my acquaintance with this subject extends, it appears to be generally allowed by lexico-

“ graphers that *αιων* is a compound of *αιει* and *ων*,
 “ and that its literal meaning is *always being*:
 “ also that the meaning of its derivative, *αιωνιος*,
 “ is *endless, everlasting, or eternal.*”

3. He then *applies* this rule of interpretation; and says, “ This term *αιωνιος*, (*aiōnios*) I
 “ always take in its proper sense, except there
 “ be something in the subject or connexion
 “ which requires it to be taken otherwise: and
 “ as I do not find this to be the case in any of
 “ those places where it is applied to punishment,
 “ I see no reason, in those cases, to depart
 “ from its proper acceptance.”

4. He next makes some observations on the
 phrases, *εις τον αιωνα*, and *εις τας αιωνας των αιωνων*,
 (*for ever*, and *for ever and ever*) as never being
 applied to any thing but endless duration:
 and,

5. Lastly, he concludes with remarks on
 what Mr. V. has said on this subject.* (*U. M.*
No. xxxix.)

On the other hand, Mr. *Vidler*

1. States *his* rule of interpretation; “ That
 “ where a word is used in relation to different
 “ things, the subject itself must determine the
 “ meaning of the word.” (*No. xxxv. p. 333.*)

2. He admits that “ the lexicographers
 “ have given this (Mr. F.’s) derivation of *αιων*,
 “ and this meaning to its derivatives: Kircher,

* *Letters*, pp. 53, 54.

“ Schrevelius, Leigh, Parkhurst, &c. do so: yet
 “ (says he) great as their authority may be, I
 “ appeal from them to the common sense of the
 “ reader, and affirm that *αιων* does not necessa-
 “ rily (he ought to have said not *properly*)
 “ mean *eternity*; nor *αιωνιος*, *eternal*, or *ever-*
 “ *lasting*; for which I assign the following rea-
 “ sons:—(1.) The above writers allow that *αιων*
 “ is taken for a hundred years—for the term of
 “ human life, &c.—Now I conceive, that these
 “ concessions, which they are constrained to
 “ make from the common use of the word in
 “ the scriptures, and in greek writers, greatly
 “ weaken, if not entirely overthrow, the force of
 “ the assertion, that *αιων* means *eternity*; seeing
 “ it is so often taken for a limited period, and
 “ sometimes even for a very short one too.—(2.)
 “ The writers of the new testament do not use
 “ the word *αιων* to convey the idea of eternity,
 “ because there are different *aions* spoken of,
 “ and one *aion* is spoken of as succeeding ano-
 “ ther.—(3.) We also read of the end of the
 “ *aion*, (Matt. xxviii. 20.) and even of *the end*
 “ *of the aions*, plural. (Heb. ix. 26.) There
 “ are also the *aions to come*: (Eph. ii. 7.) and
 “ we have the idea given us of time *before the*
 “ *aions began*. (1 Cor. ii. 7.) I ask, Can the
 “ word *aion* mean *always being*? Can it express
 “ *eternity of duration*? Did the sacred penmen
 “ mean to give this *idea*, in any of the above

“ passages? *—(4.) It is a rule, which no gram-
 “ marian will dispute, *that no adjective can have*
 “ *greater force than the substantive from which*
 “ *it is derived; thus black, cannot mean more*
 “ *than blackness; white, cannot mean more than*
 “ *whiteness; so neither can aīōnios, aīōnion,*
 “ *&c., mean more than aīōn.*”—After candidly
 animadverting on the conduct of our translators,
 as being under the influence of system, or of
 authority, or of both, in their rendering of this
 word; he observes that, “as to *aionios, aionion,*
 “ *&c.†* as they are derived from *aion*, and have
 “ relation to it, as adjectives to their substan-
 “ tive, they can only describe the duration of
 “ something relative to that particular *aīōn*, or
 “ *age* spoken of, and with which they are con-
 “ nected.” He also apprehends, “that the
 “ singular means *age*, and the plural *ages* every
 “ where; because it *must* be so rendered in
 “ some places, and *may be* so in ALL.” (p. 424,
 &c.)—(5.) He remarks also, that *αιωνιος* cannot
 mean *eternal*, &c., because “the english words

* Lexicographers give the *proper* meaning of the term: Mr. V., to overturn their authority, asserts what they never thought of denying, That this is not its *only* meaning!

† If Mr. V. had gone through all the cases and genders of this word, he might have beautified his page with several others; viz. *aioniou, aionio, &c.*, but after all, they are but one word. This, I presume, will be a piece of information for our *greek scholar*.

“ *eternal, everlasting, and eternity, will not admit any plural, which the greek *aion* and *aionion* will do: for instance; who ever read of *eternals, everlastings, and eternities; or of this eternity, and that eternity?* But in the new testament, we read of the *ἐπι συνίελευα των αιωνων*. Heb. ix. 26.” (No. xxxv. p. 333.)*

I believe the *substance* of all that has been written on both sides, on these words, is contained in the above; and it remains for us to examine the arguments of each.

And first, it may be remarked, that much of what Mr. V. says respecting *aion*, is fully conceded by his opponent. Mr. F. does not deny that this word is frequently used in a limited sense,—that there are different *aions* spoken of,—that mention is sometimes made of the end of an *aion*, as well as of its beginning,—that these words admit of a plural, and also of *this* and *that* before eternity: and as all this has been granted from the very beginning of the controversy, it is a pity that Mr. V. should have taken up so much time in repeating these conceded points over and over again. Let us, however, now omit these disquisitions, which serve only to distract the attention of the reader, and fix on those points where both are at issue.

Leaving the whole of what has just been mentioned, as conceded by Mr. F., he denies the conclusion drawn from them; That nothing

can be decided from the application of the terms *aion* and *aionios*. He also controverts Mr. V.'s rule of interpreting words taken in different senses. His observations on it are to this effect: "You are so confident that this rule is
" unobjectionable, as to intimate your belief
" that I " shall not a second time have the
" temerity to reprove you for the use of it."
" If you examine, you will find that I have not
" objected to it a first time yet, but rather to
" your manner of *applying* it. I shall take the
" liberty however to object to it now, whatever
" temerity" it may imply. I know not who those
" best critics" are, from whom you profess to have
" taken it; but to me it appears disrespectful
" to the scriptures, and inadmissible. It sup-
" poses that all those words which are used in
" relation to different things, (which by the
" way, almost all words are) have no proper
" meaning of their own, and that they are to
" stand for nothing in the decision of any sub-
" ject; but are to mean any thing that the
" subject to which they relate can be proved
" to mean without them. Had you said that
" the subject, including the scope of the writer,
" must commonly determine whether a word
" should be taken in a literal or in a figurative
" sense, that had been allowing it to have a
" proper sense of *its own*; and to this I should

“ have had no objection; but to allow no mean-
 “ ing to a term but what shall be imparted to
 “ it by the subject, is to reduce it to a cypher.

“ But exceptionable as your rule of inter-
 “ pretation is, in itself, it is rendered much
 “ more so by your manner of applying it. If,
 “ under the term “ subject,” you had included
 “ the scope and design of the writer, it had been
 “ so far good; but by this term you appear all
 “ along to mean, *the doctrine of future punish-*
 “ *ment, abstractedly considered from what the*
 “ *scriptures teach concerning it; at least what*
 “ they teach by the terms which professedly de-
 “ note its duration. You require that there be
 “ something in the nature of future punishment,
 “ which necessarily leads us to receive the word
 “ *αιωνιος* in an endless sense; in which case, as
 “ you very properly add; it is not the word,
 “ but the *subject*, which gives the idea of end-
 “ less duration. What is this but saying, We
 “ are to make up our minds on the duration of
 “ future punishment, from the nature and fit-
 “ ness of things; and having done this, we are
 “ to understand the scripture terms, which are
 “ designed to express that duration, accordingly?
 “ But if we can settle this business without the
 “ aid of scripture terms; why do we trouble
 “ them; and what is the meaning of all your
 “ criticisms upon them? If they are so “ weak,
 “ from their vague and indeterminate applica-

“ tion in scripture,” that nothing can be gathered from them, why not let them alone? “ It should seem as if all your critical labour upon these terms was for the sake of imposing silence upon them.

“ By your rule of interpretation, I have the “ temerity” to say again, you might *disprove almost any thing you please*. I observed before, that if one should attempt to prove the divinity of the Son of God, or even of the Father, from his being called *Jehovah*, your mode of reasoning would render all such evidence of no account, because the same appellation is sometimes given to an altar, &c. You reply by insisting, that you interpret this term by the *subject*. But if you interpret it as you do the term *αιωνιος*, it is not the name *Jehovah* that forms any part of your conclusion. You do not, on this principle, believe God to be self-existent from his being called *Jehovah*; but that the name *Jehovah* means self-existent, because it is applied to God; whom, from other considerations, you know to be a self-existent Being. If Christ were called *Jehovah* a thousand times, you could not, *on this account*, believe him to be the true God, according to your principle; because the same word, being applied to other things, its meaning can only be deter-

“mined by the *subject*; and in this case, as
 “you say, it is not the word, but the subject
 “which gives the idea.” (No. xl. p. 144, &c.)*

If it were necessary to add any thing farther to shew the fallacy and absurdity of Mr. V.'s rule of interpretation, we might observe, that *it renders knowledge of every species utterly unattainable; and reduces all language to a mere cypher.*

This rule, which Mr. V. says, is laid down by “the best critics,” renders knowledge utterly unattainable. “When a word is used in relation to different things, the subject itself (says Mr. V.) must determine the meaning of “it.” The first thing then to be considered, in the application of this rule, is, whether any word, on the subject to be investigated, has a meaning of its own; or whether the meaning is to be sought for from the *subject*. If it be ever used in more acceptations than one, the subject with which it is connected must determine its import: but if it be uniformly used in exactly the same sense, wherever it occurs, then it has a meaning of its own. In reading therefore an author, we must stop at every word, and enquire whether it is ever used in more senses than one; and in order to ascertain this, we must make a catalogue of all the words, with

* *Letters*, pp. 71—74.

the connexion in which they stand, and make a diligent comparifon of their feveral acceptations; and then determine whether any word has a fenfe of its own, or whether it borrows a meaning from the fubject. If our progrefs, in the application of this method of ftudying, be not very rapid, we fhall, at leaft, have the advantage of *well digefting* what we read; and perhaps there could not be a better method devifed to counteract the prefent inundation from the prefs; for as a man's life would not be fufficient for reading more than two or three volumes of moderate fize, the *cacoëthēs fcribendi** would be completely cured by the paucity of readers. An admirable rule indeed! which is attended with the double advantage of making us men *unius libri*;† and bringing down the prefent exorbitant price of paper! Thanks to Mr. V. and “the beft critics.”

But if we take another view of this rule, which Mr. V. fo highly extols, I fear it may appear in a lefs favourable light, inafmuch as *it feems to reduce all language to a mere cypher*. Where words are ufed in different acceptations by an author, according to Mr. V. and “the beft critics,” we cannot underftand their meaning but from the *fubject*. Very well. But the queftion recurs, How are we to underftand the

* “The itch of writing.” † “Of one book.”

subject? By the *words* in which it is written? No, says Mr. V., if it should happen that any one of those words should be ever used in more senses than one. But where shall we find a single paragraph in which several of the words are not so used? Not in any language dead or living. When therefore we would apply Mr. V.'s rule for ascertaining the meaning of a word of doubtful import, by referring to the *subject*, we find even the *subject* wrapped up in mysterious terms. Every effort to unravel them, adds to the perplexity, and we at length sit down in absolute despair, not only of coming at the meaning of the word we were investigating, but of comprehending the *subject* itself.

Such then is the sad dilemma to which we are reduced, that we must either have the "temerity" to call in question the ingenuity and grammatical precision of the learned Mr. V. and his "best critics," or make an unconditional surrender of all the learned labours of present and former times; and among these, (which is peculiarly hard) even the productions of Mr. V., nay, even of the use of speech itself! "Utrum horum mavis accipe."* There is no middle choice. Mr. V. assures us, that "where a word " is used in relation to different things, the " subject itself must determine the meaning of

* Take which you please.

“the word.” We wish to bow with all submission to this rule,—for who dare controvert what this profound scholar and acute reasoner lays down as absolutely infallible? We begin to apply it. Every sentence demands its application, because in every sentence words are used, which in other places “have relation to different things.” We investigate the subject. We find—wonderful to be spoken!—the *subject itself cloathed in words!* These words also we find to be “used in relation to different things;” nothing therefore can be determined from them. Still, determined not to give up a rule which *must be right*, because it was framed and published by Mr. V. and the “best critics,” we go a step backward, and apply the magic spell to that also: but alas! we find the context also written in words, and these words again are “used in relation to different things.” We then move still another step backward; determined, if possible, to find out the subject: but still—still it mocks our efforts! When we fancy we have just caught it, *ignis fatuus* like, it eludes our grasp; till at length, wearied with the pursuit, and difficulties multiplying at every step, we sit down in absolute despair, convinced that language was invented only to tease and perplex and mortify the sons of men—that the tongue itself is a most useless member; and that those only are wise, who continue all their days in the

school of Pythagoras—never speak nor write a single word! Yet Mr. Fuller, (fie on him!) dares to controvert this rule! He has the presumption to think that his bible,—the language of God himself—and, what he calls, the precious doctrines of the gospel,* have some determinate meaning, in spite of what Mr. V. and “the best critics” have said to the contrary! Dear sir, have you the “temerity” to think so too? Before you decide on this point, think again what Mr. V. has said in another place respecting this rule. He is so convinced of its propriety, that he rests the truth of his incontrovertible doctrines upon it! He declares, “IF YOU, (Mr. F.) OR ANY OTHER MAN CAN INVALIDATE” his reasons, founded upon this rule, for translating *aion* by age, “I WILL FREELY GIVE UP MY POINT.” (No. liv. p. 218.) And in order that this declaration may be the more notable and conspicuous, he prints it in Roman Capitals. After you have read this, you will probably hesitate before you renounce such an infallible guide. When *the whole of the controversy is made to rest*

* For be it observed that Mr. V.'s rule, while it sets aside the use of all language, necessarily reduces the doctrines of the bible to a cypher; for the word *Jehovah* itself is used in different acceptations; as are also the words, *Creator, Creature, Jesus, Christ, Saviour, Heaven, Hell, Happiness, Misery, Repentance, Faith, Holiness, Redemption, Atonement, Restoration, Restitution, Resurrection, Judgment, &c. &c.*

upon it, you may be sure that it has been well weighed and digested, and that it must be true.

After Mr. V. has established it as an infallible rule, that “where a word is used in relation to different things,” it has no meaning but what the subject condescends to bestow, he proceeds to shew that as *aion*, &c. are used in relation to different things, therefore they cannot necessarily, (he ought to have said *properly*) mean *endless duration*. And it must be acknowledged that, granting his premises, his conclusion is perfectly logical. To be sure, if *aion*, &c. have *no meaning*, it is clear enough, that they cannot mean *eternity*, *endless*, &c. But when Mr. V. goes on to tell us, with respect to words that have no meaning of their own, that he apprehends “the singular (of *aion*) MEANS age, and the plural ages, EVERY WHERE,” (p. 425.) he is not quite so clear. Two objections seem to lie against it. First, It is not self-evident, and should therefore have been proved that what has *no meaning* of its own, still *has a meaning* of its own: and secondly, If the meaning is to be collected from the *subject*, and the subject may be infinitely varied, it does not fully appear how these words can have a fixed, determinate meaning “*every where*.” “The subject itself must determine the meaning,” says Mr. V.; and yet Mr. V. fixes the meaning of

the word, *without the subject!* One should naturally have thought that, as the subject may be varied *ad infinitum*, he would have told us, that nothing can be determined as to the meaning of *aiōn*, &c.; because that must vary with the subject itself. Mr. V. delights in paradoxes, and no doubt he enjoys the pleasure of seeing his readers perplexed with these and such like difficulties.

We must, however, tamely acquiesce in what it would be "temerity" to call in question. He and "the best critics" are very confident the rule is a good one, and altogether unexceptionable. Allowing, therefore, that what has no meaning of its own, still has a meaning, we take another step, and come to the reason why Mr. V. apprehends "that the singular means *age*, and the plural *ages*, every where; because "it *must* be so rendered in some places, and "may be so in ALL." Would it be presumption to call in question the validity of this reason? I know it is a favourite one. *Mr. Winchester* has overwhelmed multitudes with it; and, being of tried excellence, Mr. V. urges it with undaunted confidence. I will, however, speak with modesty on the subject; and therefore, if I express my difficulties, I may hope to have them explained, and the presumption overlooked. I think then, that this reason is composed of two parts: (1.) "It *MUST* in *some*; and (2.) It

MAY in ALL." Now with regard to the former part, I see no objection. If there be some places where this "word in the singular *must* be rendered age, and in the plural ages," that doubtless *must* be the meaning of the word, in those places. It is in the second part that I demur. "It *may* be so in ALL:" this seems to suppose that it may *not* be so in *all*. Now if I am not mistaken in this conjecture, I do not see how this word must be "*every where*" rendered by age. Can a *certainty* in one case, make an *uncertainty* in another, *certain*? If my opinion had been asked on this point, before I knew that Mr. V. and Mr. W. had decided it in the affirmative, I should have answered, "I think not." As it is, it might be temerity to call in question their judgment; and therefore I submit.

Having been so bold as to demur on some part of the *logic* of Mr. V.'s reason for rendering these words "every where" by *age*, &c., I fear it may be thought quite unpardonable to express any difficulty in the *application* of this interpretation to a few passages of scripture. Mr. V. says, "I apprehend that the singular " means *age*, and the plural *ages*, *every where*; " because it *must* be so rendered in *some* places, " and *may* be so in ALL." And again: "Upon " the whole, the proper meaning of *aion* appears to be *age*, and the proper meaning of " *aionion*, *age-lasting*. (p. 426.)

Now it *seems* to me as if these words could *not always* be so rendered, for the following reasons: because to render them so in some places, appears, (1) To militate against Mr. V.'s infallible rule, on the truth of which he rests his whole system: (2.) To contradict Mr. V.'s opinion of the duration of an age: (3.) To bear hard upon a very favourite, and a fundamental tenet of Mr. V.: (4.) To be point blank against that duration of punishment for which Mr. V. contends: (5.) To make an inspired apostle write ridiculously: (6.) To limit the existence of the supreme Being.—I will just say a word on each of these appearances.

1. I said *it appears to militate against Mr. V.'s infallible rule, on which he rests the whole structure of Universalism.* “When words (says Mr. V.) are used in relation to different things, (as these confessedly are) the subject must determine their meaning:” and yet here, as just observed, Mr. V. seems to assume the province of the subject, and fixes the meaning himself of these words *every where.* But

2. *It appears to contradict Mr. V.'s opinion of the duration of an age.* He has told us that the utmost extent of an age is 49 years. “In the old testament (says he) we read of the sabbath of days, or weekly sabbath; seven years brought about a period, called the year of release, or sabbath of years; seven of

“ these periods *was* included in that grand revo-
 “ lution which brought about the jubilee. *This*
 “ *was the comprehensive age or period, which, as*
 “ *the greater, included all the less.* Thus the
 “ *hebrews obtained the idea of their עַר and עלם;*
 “ *literally age and ages.*—From a similar source,
 “ the greeks derived their *aion* and *aionas*,*
 “ which are used in the septuagint version in
 “ the very same sense; and the writers also of
 “ the new testament use the same words with
 “ their derivatives also in the same manner.”
 (U. M. No. xxxvi. p. 364.)

Here then we have *one* limit, at least, of an
 age. It does not exceed forty-nine years; for
 “ this (says he) was the *comprehensive age*, or
 “ *period, which, as the greater, included all the*
 “ *less.*” How then can the word *aion* be *always*
 rendered by *age*, which in another place, he
 assures us, “ is used for an hundred years—for
 “ the duration of a man’s life, which is about
 “ seventy years—for *any measurement* of time,
 “ if its termination be hidden; yea, even for a
 “ year?” (God’s Love, No. xxxvi. p. 31.)
 Nay, he frequently informs us that the whole
 period of rewards and punishments is compre-
 hended under this term, *age*:—but perhaps he

* One dare not call in question Mr. V.’s greek literature,
 else one might have doubted the propriety of his inserting the
accusative case *aionas* for the *nominative aiones*: we cannot sup-
 pose that he knew no better.

will maintain that this will not exceed forty-nine years.

With respect to the *other limit* of the word age, Mr. V. has not exactly defined it. He says forty-nine years “was the comprehensive age, which, as the greater, included all the less:”—but he does not say, in this place, how *short* a period it may be used for. It may, however, be collected from other parts of his writings, that it descends to a very short period; to that of *three days*. He says “Jonah was in the whale’s belly for ever:” (No i. p. 6.) that is, since *for ever* may be *every where* rendered for an age—“Jonah was in the whale’s belly *for an age!*” Perhaps this may sound a little oddly to those who are acquainted only with the general acceptation of an *age* in old-fashioned times; but they will perceive from hence the vast advantage of being acquainted with modern *improvements* in language.

3. It appears also to bear hard upon a favourite and fundamental tenet of Mr. V. One of his grand doctrines is, that the duration of rewards and punishments will be limited within certain *ages*; or, in other words, will only be *age-lasting*. Now he assures us that “every proper judge” knows that he has given a proper translation, in thus rendering 2 Cor. iv. 17. “The present light affliction—worketh for us “a glory exceeding *aionion* (or *age-lasting*) to

“excess.” But how, in the name of wonder, can the reward of glory exceed *age-lasting* to an excess, if the utmost duration of rewards does not exceed *age-lasting*? There *seems* to be some fault either in the translation, which “every proper judge knows” to be right; or else in rendering *aïōnion* by *age-lasting*, which Mr. V. assures us is perfectly right; or else some error in the doctrine of rewards, which Mr. V. is equally certain is incontrovertible. *Where* the error is, it were presumption in me to enquire.

4. It *seems, moreover, to be point blank against that duration of punishment for which Mr. V. contends.* I have already observed, that Mr. V. maintains that the duration of punishment will be *age-lasting*. This is the fundamental principle in his system. In support of it, he and his friends often adduce Isai. lvii. 16: but with what propriety I could never judge. According to his mode of translating *aïōn*, it will run thus: “I will not contend for *an age*.”* This passage, then, does not only make against *endless* punishment, but it is also equally strong against that which will continue for an *age*; i. e. if *aïōn* must here be rendered *age*, as Mr. V. says it must, it is a direct refutation of his notion concerning a limited punishment. The same observations may be made also on Jer. iii. 12,

* עולם The septuagint εις τον αιωνα.

and Mic. vii. 18: from which it appears that this champion for universalism wields a two-edged sword, which may be turned with equal advantage against himself as his opponents. Mr. V.'s translation also,

5. *Seems to make an inspired apostle write ridiculously.* I refer to 2 Cor. iv. 17. Our ignorant translators made the apostle speak thus: "The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." Mr. V. pours a flood of light on this obscure passage, and thus elegantly renders it: "The things that are seen are *temporal*, but the things that are not seen are *aiōnion*, or *age-lasting*." An age, you recollect, is any period of time, "even a year;" nay, even "three days!" You will suppress every tendency to smile, when you recollect, what a scholar it is that tells you how these greek words *must* be translated. But lastly,

6. *It seems to limit the very existence of Deity.* According to Mr. V., this translation gives us "a rational conception of age-lasting gospel," AGE-LASTING SPIRIT, AGE-LASTING GOD. Did I say age-lasting *Spirit*, and age-lasting *God*? I beg leave to retract these sentences. In looking at *ευαγγελιον αιωνιον*,* and several other *aiōnions*, mentioned in p. 426; and finding all these rendered *age-lasting*, I naturally read when

* Everlasting gospel.

I came to πνευμαλος αιωνις,* (Heb. ix. 14.) and αιωνις Θεος † in the same connexion, “*age-lasting* Spirit, and *age-lasting* God;” knowing that these passages were brought to shew how rationally *aionion* might be thus rendered: but on looking more particularly, I find that Mr. V. has not been guilty of the blasphemy of limiting the existence of the everlasting Jehovah. When he comes to these expressions, he leaves out the word *age-lasting*, as if he had suddenly felt a qualm of conscience in the application of his rule, for rendering this word *every where* by *age-lasting*; and he gives a curious sort of circumlocution upon these passages, to which I refer you. Mr. V. was not willing to become a direct blasphemer, and therefore when his rule required him to limit the existence of “Him who liveth for ever,” he throws it up without the least ceremony.

Perhaps there may be other *trifling* difficulties in the way of rendering these greek words “every where”. by age and age-lasting. ‡

* Everlasting Spirit. † Everlasting God.

‡ I request the reader to apply the words *age* and *age-lasting* in the place of *ever* and *everlasting*, in the following passages; and let him determine for himself, whether, in so doing, he does not make the inspired writers speak in a style, bordering upon blasphemy. Gen. xxi. 33. Deut. xxxii. 40. Ps. xxxiii. 11. xc. 2. Jer. x. 10. Lam. v. 19. Dan. vi. 26.

What I have mentioned, struck me in the course of reading Mr. V.'s letters; and I have stated them in order that, if he should condescend to read this review, he may perceive how dull some of his readers are; and may hereafter say a few words by way of obviating difficulties, which, though trifling to men of great parts; sometimes prove a stumbling-block to less learned readers.

I am, dear sir,

Yours, &c.

S.

LETTER VIII.

The same subject continued.

Dear sir,

IN perusing Mr. Vidler's letters, one cannot but be struck with his great facility in laying down rules, and supporting them by the authority of "the best critics." To call these rules in question, Mr. V. conceives, argues no small portion of "temerity:" and I fear that I have already incurred this charge, in common

Hab. iii. 6, &c. &c.: and let it be remarked, that in every one of these passages, the original hebrew and the septuagint translation, are those very words which Mr. V. contends are to be rendered by *agè*, &c., except Jer. x. 10, which I do not find translated in the septuagint.

with Mr. F.; and shall be in farther danger of exposing my ignorance in the sequel of these letters. I had intended to state some objections to another rule, which Mr. V. declares “no grammarian will dispute:” but on second thoughts, it may be better to suspend them, particularly as the question in debate does not seem to be affected by it. The rule is this: “No adjective can have greater force than the substantive from which it is derived.” I cannot, however, avoid making a few observations on this gentleman’s illustration and application of his rule, as they may be of some use to future grammarians and philologers. These have taught us, that there are certain words, which are denominated *abstract* terms; and that they represent certain ideas suggested by the properties or qualities of bodies, but which have no necessary connexion with any particular bodies. We see a substance, for instance, that is *black*. We abstract this idea from the body, and call it *blackness*. Hence, from *white* also we obtain the abstract term, *whiteness*, &c. This, however, Mr. V. gives us to understand, is not correct; and informs us, on the contrary, that the adjective *black* is derived from *blackness*, and *white* from *whiteness*. (p. 425.) Had Mr. Locke lived in the days of Mr. V., he might have greatly availed himself of this gentleman’s ingenious discoveries.

Now we are suggesting a hint for improvement among metaphysicians, where would be the harm of dropping *grammarians* a hint also? We have been hitherto taught to believe that the *english*, unlike the *greek*, admits of no variation in the termination of its adjectives, on account of number, case, or gender. This seems to be a mistake. Mr. V. conceives that they admit the termination *s*, as well as substantives, in their plural. Hence, in order to shew that the *english* adjectives *eternal* and *everlasting*, in *english*, do not admit of a plural, as the *greek* for these words does, he asks, Who ever read of “ETERNALS, EVERLASTINGS?” (p. 333.) Who indeed! He therefore shrewdly concludes, that they mean very differently from the *greek* words, and that our translators, to say no worse of them, were *ignoramuses* for so rendering them. It is to be hoped, that future grammarians will give us examples of *wise, wises; just, justs; righteous, righteouses, &c.* Methinks it would make a noble addition to our *hissing* language! If we were to tell Mr. V. that we sometimes read of *eternal ages*, though not of *eternals ages*, he would say, yes—but though the substantive be in the plural, the adjective is not; for the adjective in *english*, does not, like the adjective in *greek*, agree with the substantive in number.
*Fiet Aristarchus!**

* Admirable grammarian!

I would fain follow Mr. V. through every paragraph of his elaborate epistles; but, as in cutting out his work, he has had no mercy on his reviewer, I must have a little on myself; and I am willing also to spare you. I shall therefore pass over several parts, fraught with learned lore, and food for criticism; (for he can scarcely write a page, without shewing his skill in greek and hebrew) and just direct your attention to two (I had almost said) *phænomena*; but where one meets with prodigies at every step, they cease to excite wonder. They are to be found at the conclusion of his seventh letter. (p. 426.)

“ I have *no hesitation* (says he) in admitting that the $\delta\lambda\gamma$ of Dan. xii. 2, answers to the greek $\alpha\lambda\omega$; nor that the *antithesis* in this passage, and in *Matthew* xxv. 46, DETERMINES it to mean the SAME, when applied to shame and contempt, as when applied to life.” Now sir, let us compare *Mr. Vidler* with *Mr. Vidler*. Open No. xxxv. p. 331, and you will find it thus written: “ You seem (he says to Mr. F.) to lay great stress upon the word being used by our Lord, in relation both to future happiness and misery, in *Matt.* xxv. 46. But I conceive *no solid argument can be drawn from the application of the same word to different things*, to prove their endless continuance, unless their nature be the same.”

He then adduces a passage from Hab. iii. 16, to destroy the force of the antithesis in Matt. xxv. 46; and adds, "I think there is a vast difference indeed, in the nature of future blessedness, and future punishment; so great a difference as fully to justify us in giving a VERY DIFFERENT SENSE to the word everlasting when applied to each of these subjects." He has, however, now altered his opinion, and thinks that, notwithstanding "the different nature of future blessedness and future punishment," "the antithesis determines it to mean the SAME" when applied to these widely different states. I congratulate him on this change of sentiment. *Nil desperandum*.* At the beginning of this controversy, Mr. V., like Dr. Chauncy, Mr. Winchester, and others, was a warm advocate for *universal salvation*. He has, however, totally relinquished that hold, as utterly indefensible; and what Mr. Winchester contended for, "as the mind of God, and the doctrine of his holy word," Mr. V. thinks is unsupported by a single passage of scripture; and declares "he does not, nor ever did believe it." He has now felt the force of arguments which he once affected to despise; and he has "no hesitation in admitting, that the antithesis in Matt. xxv. 46, determines it (*aiionios*) to

* We need despair of nothing.

“ mean the same when applied ” to happiness and misery.

We learn hence also what, for a long time, we sought in vain,—*how long* it will be, before the punishment of the wicked will come to an end. Mr. V. gives us to understand that it will happen when the rewards of the saints shall cease. If we could divest ourselves of predilection for favourite terms, it seems we should soon agree on these subjects. Mr. V. is not made up of such impenetrable materials as some might imagine. He can and will desert a post that he finds no longer tenable; though soldier-like, he will call it any thing but a retreat. Allow him to claim the victory, and you may drive him from post to post, till he does not retain a single place that need excite the least alarm. He has renounced *Universal Salvation*; and he professes his belief, that *rewards and punishments are of equal duration*. These sir, you will acknowledge are no trifling concessions. All that now seems to remain is, that he would relinquish his fondness for odd terms and modes of reasoning, and be contented to think and speak like other folks. As it is, he deceives his readers by *appearing* to maintain what he seems not to believe.

The other point to which I promised above to direct your attention, is to be found in the concluding paragraph of his seventh letter. Nor have I much to observe upon it, after confront-

ing a passage from Mr. F.'s letters, with Mr. V.'s quotation, and comment upon it. "Aristotle the philosopher, (says Mr. F. in a note) who lived upwards of three hundred years before the new testament was written, plainly tells us the meaning which the greek writers of his time, and those who, in his time, were accounted antients, affixed to this term, (*aion.*) Speaking of the gods, whom he considered as immortal, and as having their residence above the heavens, he says, "The beings which exist there neither exist in place, nor does time make them grow old, nor undergo they any change, being placed beyond the motion even of those who are the furthest removed (from the center;) but possessing an unchangeable life, free from all outward impressions, perfectly happy and self-sufficient, they continue through all *αιωνα*, *eternity*. And this the antients admirably signified by the word itself: for they call the time of each person's life his *αιων* (*aion*,) inasmuch as according to the laws of nature, nothing (respecting him) exists out of the limits of it; and for the same reason, that which comprehends the duration of the whole heaven, the whole of infinite time, and infinity itself, is called *αιων*, *eternity*; taking its name from *always being*, (*αει ειυαι*) immortal and divine." (No. xxxix. pp. 102—3.) (*Letters*, pp. 53, 54.)

On this passage Mr. V. thus remarks:
 “ Your quotation, in which the authority of
 “ Aristotle is brought forward, proves little to
 “ your purpose. The critic who furnished you
 “ with it, says, That the antients *admirably* ex-
 “ pressed eternity by the word *aion*, for they
 “ call the term of each man’s life, *HIS aion!!!*
 “ Most *admirable* indeed! Are you in the ha-
 “ bit of speaking to your hearers in this ad-
 “ mirable manner about eternity? If I had
 “ brought a quotation of such a nature, I
 “ should probably have been told, *that it was a*
 “ *proof of the scarcity of evidence, in the paths*
 “ *which I am in the habit of treading.*”

Who can help feeling unwilling to throw a gloom over this brilliant piece of repartee? It is evidently an effort to put the reader into a good humour at the conclusion of a heavy and tedious letter: and if a smile can now and then be extorted, though it should be at Mr. V.’s clumsy attempts to be witty, why should one endeavour to suppress it? Otherwise one should be disposed to feel indignant at the bare-faced falsehood, glaring perversion, and disingenuous suppression which appear on the face of this short quotation. “ The *critic* who furnished you with” this quotation “ says”—No, sir; the critic says nothing about it. It was *Aristotle*, sir;—a name with which you are perfectly unac-

quainted, and a reasoner whom you have not compass of intellect to follow—it was *Aristotle* who said what you falsely ascribe (and that *knowingly*, for the introduction to this passage, as well as the marks of quotation make it too plain to be mistaken) to “the critic.” And have you, sir, the effrontery to speak with such consummate contempt of *this* master of Reason—this profound metaphysician? One might have doubted whether even Mr. V. could have betrayed so much self-importance, if he had not, at the very same time, suppressed the concluding part of the sentence, as well as that which preceded it, on which the whole force of the reasoning turned. If a review of this part of Mr. V.’s conduct will not call forth a blush, he must be far gone indeed! I forbear to add. Read, my dear sir, the quotation as it is given in *Aristotle*; and if it do not fix the meaning of *αιων* (*aion*) to *eternity*, in the estimation of those, who ought to be judges in their own language, nothing can. I had made several references to the writings of the best classics, where this word and its derivatives are used in an endless sense, which I meant to quote; but after reviewing this, it seems unnecessary. Mr. V. may “appeal” as loudly as he pleases to the good sense of the reader; but till he can give us a translation of these disputed words, less at variance with common sense, with the usage of the best greek clas-

sics, and especially with the word of God, than that which he has attempted, we must abide by the decision of the lexicographers, whom he treats with so little ceremony. "The common sense of the Reader" will perhaps lean rather to the side of such authorities as "Kircher, Schrevelius, Leigh, Parkhurst," Aristotle, and others, than to that of Winchester and Vidler, though we allow them almost as much learning as in the plenitude of his modesty, this latter gentleman claims.

I cannot but persuade myself, sir, that you have felt ashamed of this champion of Universalism, whilst we have been reviewing thus much of the controversy between him and Mr. Fuller. To recapitulate the substance of these remarks on his criticisms on *aïon*, &c. is unnecessary. I shall therefore relieve both you and myself for the present, and should be glad if, in my next letter, I should have any thing better with which to present you.

I am, dear sir,

Yours, &c.

S.

LETTER IX.

Observations on Mr. V.'s objections to the common rendering of AION, &c. with strictures on his attempts to find stronger greek words to express endless duration.

Dear sir,

THE difficulties which the words *aion*, &c. have presented to the system of Universalists, have induced them to unite their efforts, in conjunction with "the best critics," to make this word stand for a mere cypher. For this purpose they have prescribed both a *nostrum* and a *regimen*. In my former letters we paid due attention to both. With respect to their *rule*, we objected against it, as striking at the root of common sense and the use of language. In analyzing the *nostrum*, we found an odd farrago of absurdity, and contradiction. In its application, it produced extraordinary effects. It was at equal variance with Mr. V.'s infallible rule, and his fundamental tenet: it set at defiance his definition of an age, and run directly counter to his notion of the duration of future punishment: it converted the reasoning of an inspired apostle into nonsense, and even verged upon blasphemy. On these and some other accounts, we had "the temerity" to reject both the one and the other.

Whether our translators have given us the right meaning of these words or not, one thing is certain; that *Mr. Vidler* has not mended the matter. He has utterly failed in his attempts to fix an uniform rendering; and therefore, if he be still determined to reject what more ignorant persons have hitherto been contented to admit, let him again call in the aid of “the best critics,” and fabricate something entirely new. But why give himself so much trouble? Why discard the general rendering of *aion*, &c.? “Because it is attended, he will say, with unmountable difficulties.” What are they? Let us give them a fair hearing, and see whether they be of a nature peculiar to these words, or belong to words in general.

He says they are used in such various acceptations, and comprehend such different periods of duration, that it would be absurd always to render them in an *endless* sense. Acknowledged: What then? Does not the same objection lie against a great variety of other words, the meaning of which is nevertheless clearly ascertained and perfectly understood. Let us hear *Mr. Fuller*, in answer to this objection. “You appeal (says he) to the scriptures, and contend that they no where teach the doctrine of endless punishment; yet you are aware that they *appear* to do so, and are obliged to have recourse to a method of weakening

“ the force of terms, in order to get rid of them.
 “ It has been long the practice of writers on
 “ your side the question to ring changes on the
 “ words *aion* and *aiōnios*. Pretty words, no
 “ doubt; and could they be proved to be less
 “ expressive of endless duration than the english
 “ words *everlasting* and *eternal*, they might be
 “ something to the purpose: but if not, the con-
 “ tinual recourse to them is a mere affectation
 “ of learning, serving to mislead the ignorant.
 “ Be this as it may, this is an exercise which
 “ hardly becomes you or me:* I shall only
 “ observe upon it, that by this method of pro-
 “ ceeding, you may disprove almost any thing
 “ you please. There are scarcely any terms in
 “ any language, but what, through the poverty
 “ of language itself, or the inequality of the
 “ number of words to the number of ideas, are
 “ *sometimes* used in an improper or figurative
 “ sense. Thus, if one attempt to prove the di-
 “ vinity of the Son of God, or even of the
 “ Father from his being called *Jehovah, God,*

* Mr. V. is very indignant at this remark, and thinks modesty would have required Mr. F. to mention his *own* ignorance only in such *lowring* terms. It is very true, Mr. F. does seem a little presumptuous in calling in question the classical skill of his opponent. How widely he erred in this respect has already appeared; and if any thing can make this mistake still plainer, it will receive fresh demonstration as we proceed.

“ &c., you may reply, That the name Jehovah
 “ is sometimes given to things; as to an altar,
 “ a city, and once to the church; therefore
 “ nothing can be concluded from hence in fa-
 “ vour of the argument. Thus also, if one go
 “ about to prove the Omniscience of God, from
 “ its being declared that *his understanding is*
 “ *infinite*, you might answer, The term *infinite*
 “ is sometimes used to express only a very great
 “ degree; as when the strength of Ethiopia and
 “ Egypt is said to have been *infinite*. (Nahum
 “ iii. 9.) Again, if one endeavour to prove the
 “ endless existence of God, from his being cal-
 “ led the *eternal* God, the *everlasting* God, &c.;
 “ or the endless duration of the heavenly inhe-
 “ ritance, from its being called *eternal* life, an
 “ inheritance *incorruptible*, and that *fadeth not*
 “ *away*; you might answer, These terms are
 “ sometimes used to signify only a limited dura-
 “ tion; and that a thing, in common language,
 “ is said to be incorruptible, when it will conti-
 “ nue a long time without any signs of decay.

“ The question is, *Could stronger terms*
 “ *have been used concerning the duration of future*
 “ *punishment than are used?* To object against
 “ the words everlasting, eternal, &c., as being
 “ too weak, or indeterminate in their applica-
 “ tion for the purpose, is idle; unless others
 “ could be named which are stronger, or more
 “ determinate. What expressions could have

“ been used that would have placed the subject
 “ beyond dispute? You ordinarily make use of
 “ the term *endless*, to express our doctrine. It
 “ should seem then that if we read of *endless*
 “ punishment, or punishment *without end*, you
 “ would believe it. Yet the same objections
 “ might be made to this, as to the words ever-
 “ lasting, eternal, &c. It is common to say of
 “ a loquacious person, “ he is an endless talk-
 “ er:” it might therefore be pretended that the
 “ term *endless* is very indeterminate; that it
 “ often means no more than a long time; and
 “ in some instances, not more than three or four
 “ hours, at the longest. Thus you see, or may
 “ see, that it is not in the power of language to
 “ stand before such methods of criticising and
 “ reasoning as those on which you build your
 “ system.” (No. xxxii. pp. 231, 232.)*

To the enquiry of Mr. F., “ *Could stronger
 terms have been used concerning the duration of
 future punishment than are used?*” Mr. V. re-
 plies: “ This seems an important question in
 “ your view, yet I do not see its vast weight;
 “ for the question ought not to be, what lan-
 “ guage God could have used, but what is the
 “ meaning of that which he has used? How-
 “ ever, if the question relate to the english lan-
 “ guage, then the answer is ready; for every

* *Letters*, pp. 15—18.

“ brawler of endless damnation* will tell his
 “ audience of misery which will endure *as long*
 “ *as God exists.*” This reference to the *english*
 language is evidently for the purpose of displaying his attic wit, and elegant satire against his opponent; as no one can suppose that Mr. F. had any regard to the *english* in his enquiry.

But Mr. V. meets the enquiry in every shape. Are you not satisfied, as if he had said, with plain *english*? Very well: we will try what we can do in *greek*. Here I am at home. Do you want a word to express *endless* in such a manner, as to admit of no evasion? Here it is, *ἔυρηκα, ἔυρηκα!*† “ But if the question refer to
 “ the greek language, then without any “ af-
 “ fectionation of learning,” I refer you to Heb. vii.
 “ 16. ἀκάλυτος, *endless*, say our translators.
 “ The word is never connected in scripture with
 “ punishment, and but this once only with life;
 “ which however shews that the sacred writers
 “ speak of future life in a different way than
 “ they do of punishment. Beside which we are
 “ told that “ Israel shall never be ashamed,
 “ *world without end.*” Isai. xlv. 17. There is
 “ no language of like import used any where in

* Methinks Mr. V. is not a little indebted for some of the most elegant words in his vocabulary, to the polite and smooth-tongued ladies of Billingsgate.

† “ I have found it; I have found it!”

“ the scripture concerning the punishment of
 “ finners. Surely therefore, I may be allowed
 “ here to reverse your language, and say, “ It
 “ is idle” to bring forward the words everlasting
 “ and eternal, in order to prove endless punish-
 “ ment; seeing they are rendered weak from
 “ their vague, indeterminate application in
 “ scripture; and also seeing there are phrases in
 “ the greek and english languages which are
 “ more strongly expressive of eternal duration.”
 (No. xxxv. p. 334.)

If this profusion of *proof*, and that too in *greek*, do not overwhelm his antagonist, the case may be looked upon as desperate! And yet, dear sir, if you will turn to the Univ. Mis. No. xl. pp. 146, 147,* you will find that Mr. F. treats the whole of this quotation in the most unceremonious manner. He attempts to prove that this word *ακατάλυτος* signifies *indissoluble*, and that though it is with propriety used as an epithet of *life*, yet if the sacred writers had wanted a stronger word than *aionios* to express endless punishment, they could not have made use of the word which Mr. V. recommends, without a glaring solecism; as he thinks it sounds rather like nonsense to talk of an *indissoluble* punishment, or of “ a destruction that cannot be destroyed.”

* *Letters*, pp. 77, 78, 79.

With respect to the other phrase, in Isai. xlv. 17, Mr. F. intimates that the ENGLISH phrase, "world without end," is rather improperly adduced as an instance of a strong GREEK or HEBREW expression, which the sacred writers might have used to denominate endless punishment. Nay, moreover, if we are to trace this phrase to the hebrew or the septuagint, we shall find that it is that very mode of expression which is again and again used in connection with punishment, and which Mr. V. has strained every nerve to prove signifies no more than *age* and *ages*! He also has the presumption to intimate that Mr. V. *knew* there is a similar expression ("world without end") used in the new testament; but that if he had quoted this passage, (Eph. iii. 21.) it would have shewn that in the *original* the very words are used, which it is contended signify only a limited period.

But, sir, let us allow that, for the sake of satisfying the doubtful mind of Mr. V., the sacred writers had been contented to use a solecism, and therefore called future punishment *ακαταλυστος* (indissoluble;) Would Mr. V. have been convinced? He seems to think he should; because this word is used but once, and that in connection with *life*. Yet perhaps he might have thought *again* before he gave up the point. Let us examine, he would say, the passage where this word occurs. The apostle is evidently con-

trasting the Levitical priesthood with that of Christ; and shews from the very nature of the former that the latter was necessary. With respect to that of Aaron, it was "made after the law of a carnal commandment," depending upon animal sacrifices, and only extending to the bringing in of a better covenant. But in opposition to this, Jesus was made a high priest, with infinitely better qualifications for his office, having immortal life in himself, and being thus able to dispense to all who should trust in the virtue of his sacrifice, all the blessings of his mediatorial kingdom; "for he abideth a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."* Hence it is evi-

* When the author wrote this part of the review, he did not know that Mr. Vidler had *formally renounced the doctrine of the atonement*, though he was well aware that the principles on which he supported his peculiarities must terminate in this rejection of the only foundation. He therefore supposed that this gentleman might reason in something like the above language respecting the priesthood of Christ. But a friend informs him that this humble christian now treats this old-fashioned doctrine with as much levity as he does that of endless punishment. The author has indeed observed in this gentleman's magazine many indecent attacks upon this and other fundamental articles of the christian religion; but he did not, till lately, understand that he is himself a thorough-paced Socinian, though he affects to be mightily offended at the name. Satan perhaps never is more successful, than when he "transforms himself into an angel of light," and Mr. V. probably thinks *Fas est ab hoste doceri*; (it is allowable to learn wisdom from an enemy.) It may not however be improper here to remind

dent, he would add, that the “endless life” here spoken of, is of the same duration as the priesthood; because it is immediately assigned as a reason for calling life *endless*, that Christ “abideth a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:” but it is evident, he would say, that the priesthood of Christ is of a temporary duration. Christ only abideth a priest for “the age;” (εις τον αιωνα) what then can be plainer than that *ακαταλυτος*, or what “our translators have falsely rendered” *endless*, means nothing more than a limited duration? Is this then, he would triumphantly ask, your strongest proof for endless punishment? Would you rest that doctrine upon a word which is used in a *limited* sense? “Surely this is a proof of the scantiness of evidence which is to be found in those paths which you are in the habit of tracing.”

But I observe in Mr. V.’s tenth letter, that he acknowledges the word *ακαταλυτος* (*indissoluble*) is inapplicable to punishment; and as his acknowledgment is rather a singular one, for so great a scholar and close a criticiser upon the original *greek*, I will give it in his own words. “I very freely own that *I was misled by the*

the reader of a remark made long ago by Mr. F., That “Socinians rejoice in the spread of universalism.” Let those who are disposed to give into these latter sentiments, reflect how nearly it is allied to those of *Socinus*; and then perhaps they will make a pause.

“ translation, without considering the full extent
 “ of the word in the original, which you have
 “ very properly given as signifying *indissoluble*,
 “ which cannot be applied to future punish-
 “ ment!!” The only word, therefore, with
 which Mr. V.’s abundant knowledge of *greek*
 could then furnish him, as signifying *endless*,
 after all proves to be totally inapplicable to
 punishment! And if this gentleman were not
 as inventive as he is learned, we should have
 been left to conclude that the *greek* language,
 copious as Mr. V. says it is, does not contain a
 word which conveys the idea of proper eternity.
 But we shall never be in such a strait while we
 follow this great leader. He has found the
 word—and here it is! “ I refer you, (says he)
 “ in compassion to your prejudices to 2 Pet. ii.
 “ 14. “ Having eyes that (*ἀναλαπαυτος*) cannot
 “ cease from sin.” This, sir, is not mere EN-
 “ GLISH phraseology—it is the proper meaning
 “ of the *greek* word.* I grant that it is no
 “ where in scripture applied to future punish-

* Mr. V., like other people, is glad to avail himself, where
 he can, of a translation, which he treats so contemptuously
 when it makes against him. But had this word been used in
 connection with *punishment*, I have little doubt but Mr. V.
 would have called that a *false* translation, which he here says
 is “ the proper meaning of the *greek* word.” He would have
 looked into Parkhurst’s *Lexicon*, and there would have found,
ἀναλαπαυτος; “ does not cease, unceasing.” Hence he would

“ment. But why not?” Why not indeed! Because if it had, Mr. V. would have been deprived of this noble triumph. He thinks this fact arises from the doctrine of endless punishment being unscriptural: but some people may think differently. They would perhaps say, that the word does not apply to the *extent* of duration, but to *uninterrupted* duration, be it either long or short. But if Mr. V. will insist upon it, that it must *necessarily* signify that which has no end—then we will thank him for the concession in favour of our argument. He every where contends, that sinners will be reformed before they are delivered from punishment: but if there are “eyes which *cannot cease* from sin,” but must continue such *through all eternity*, then, according to his own principles, the punishment of such must be eternal; and the expression is as much in favour of Mr. Fuller’s argument, as if it had been directly said, The punishment of the wicked *cannot cease*, or is *endless*. If this reasoning be just, what becomes of the exultation with which Mr. V. concludes his observations on this word? “If future punishment cannot cease, in its own nature, or if God meant to point out its eternal duration, he might have used this

have said that the word *cannot* does not belong to the word, and ought not to have been added, as no *impossibility* is included in this expression.

“ phrase, as it is clear the greek tongue affords it;
 “ we are never told that future punishment
 “ *cannot* cease,* or *shall* never cease; yet the
 “ possibility of such a form of speech is plain.
 “ Thus you see, sir, that according to the
 “ new testament phraseology, a stronger phrase
 “ might have been used to express the dura-
 “ tion of future punishment, than any which
 “ we find in that sacred volume!” Thus rea-
 sons this greek scholar—this profound linguist—
 this acute logician! He has twice attempted,
 with equal success, to draw from his vast stores
 of classic knowledge, a word stronger than *aiōn*,
 to express a proper eternity: but alas! he has
 utterly failed; and he has left the business just
 where he found it!

Had not one been discouraged by these
 unsuccessful efforts of Mr. V. to fix on a word
 expressive of endless punishment, one might
 have suggested a phrase which St. Luke has
 used, which does not seem a very weak one.
 Speaking of the kingdom of Christ, he says,
 οὐκ ἔσται τέλος; *there shall be no end.* One should

* No, sir: but it is the same thing, according to your
 hypothesis, if it be any where taught that *sin cannot* cease; and
 that sin is here declared to be *eternal*, you plainly affirm. Nay,
 your whole argument is built on this supposition: inasmuch,
 therefore, as you believe the endless duration of *sin*, we will
 not dispute with you about endless *punishment*; but leave that
 to inference.

think that that duration which has *no end*, must be endless, or continue “as long as God exists.” If therefore it had been said of punishment, as it is of Christ’s kingdom, *there shall be no end*, surely it might have been sufficient to convince any gainfayer. No—not Mr. V.; inasmuch as he believes that even the kingdom of Christ shall have an end; and therefore that the passage before us means nothing more than a limited duration. If then it had been said of punishment, *it shall have no end*, inasmuch as this phrase, in Mr. V.’s views, is *once* used in a limited sense, it could prove nothing with respect to the continuance of future punishment! One thing however appears pretty plainly from this passage, (Luke i. 33.) and I would call your attention to it; that *aion* properly signifies *endless*: for after the evangelist has informed us that Christ shall reign $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\varsigma\ \alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\alpha\varsigma$, (*for ever*) he adds, “and of his kingdom *there shall be no end*.” I intreat you therefore, dear sir, to observe, that if the sacred writers had said respecting future punishment, that it should continue *for ever*, and that of this misery there should *be no end*, Mr. V. would not have believed that it is endless. Language like this has no chance whatever when opposed to the keen edge of his critical pruning-knife! Upon the whole then it appears, that there is not a single word or phrase

in the greek language which is strong enough to express a punishment that shall never end; and as for the objections which are urged against *aïōn* and *aïōnios*, they are such as are common to every other word, and which we see would reduce all language to a dead letter! How much shorter work it would be to come forward at once and tell us, that if future punishment were said to be endless in all the forms of language which can be devised, it is not to be believed? You know before hand that such a doctrine cannot be true, and therefore no words of scripture can persuade you of its truth.

I am, dear sir,

Yours, &c.

S,

LETTER X.

The same subject continued.

Dear sir,

IT has been already remarked, that another of Mr. V.'s principal objections against the rendering of *aïōnios* by *eternal*, is that the greek will admit of a plural, which the english (*in Mr. V.'s grammar*) will not; for he asks, "Who ever read of *eternals*, *everlastings*, &c." Yet allowing that the word *eternal* can never have a

plural, because we never read of *eternals*, Is it quite certain that *aïōnios* in *greek* ought not to be rendered by *eternal* in *english*? Is there such power in *numbers* as to set aside the whole analogy of language? Let us put this question to the test. Mr. V.'s position is this: A foreign word which *admits* of a plural cannot be properly translated by an english word, which admits *not* of a plural: On this account he contends that *eternal* is not the meaning of *aïōnios*. Now the english word *eternal*, I suppose, Mr. V. will allow is derived from the word *æternus* in latin; they are the *same* word in both, with the termination peculiar to each language; and therefore one would think their meaning must be the same. Yet should we meet with this latin word in the *plural*, inasmuch as Mr. V. thinks the english word cannot have a plural, we shall be under the necessity of concluding that they have a different signification, notwithstanding the evident derivation of one word from the other; and to this conclusion we are necessarily brought by that expression in *Tacitus*, where he is speaking of the offices retained under Nero: “*Placita pro æternis servavisse.*”^{*} But what weight is there in *derivations*, when set in opposition to this great man's authority?

* He made their offices permanent.

Another objection against the common rendering of *aion* is that we read of “one eternity beginning, and another ending.” This also has been satisfactorily answered by Mr. Fuller. “Words, in all languages, are frequently used “in an improper or figurative sense; and what “would be familiar in the idioms of one language, would be harsh and unnatural in those “of another.” How strongly is this remark confirmed by the use which *Plato* makes of *αθανάτος*, *immortal*. He not only applies it in a *limited* sense, but even in the comparative degree; *Ατλανία ισχυρότερον και αθανάσιωτερον*, *more immortal*. (*Phæd.* 151. l. 26.) But how absurd would it be to argue from this use of the greek word that it ought not to be rendered *immortal*? And yet to such an absurdity we should be reduced, if we admit the principle of Mr. V.’s objection.

Before I conclude these observations on Mr. V.’s objections against rendering the words in debate by *eternal*, &c., I beg leave to make a remark or two on a *hebrew* criticism which we find towards the conclusion of the controversy, and which I did not observe when reviewing that part where it should have been properly introduced. He says, “I am not sure but that the hebrew “language contains more forcible expressions “concerning future duration, than any which “are used in connection with future punish-

“ment; for instance, Exod. xv. 18, יהוה ימלך
 “ יהוה ימלך לעולם ועד *Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever,*
 “ *and further,*” &c. (No. lix. p. 429.) Had
 Mr. V. been consistent, he would have rendered
 this passage thus; “Jehovah shall reign for
 ages, and further:” But it seems that his ear is
 not yet completely reconciled to words which
 would *limit* the existence of JEHOVAH; and
 therefore when the word which he contends
 should *every where* be rendered by *age*, &c.,
 stands connected with the existence of God, he
 chooses to adhere to the old-fashioned transla-
 tion, false as it is, and renders it for *ever and*
ever. But waving the subject of Mr. V.’s con-
 sistency, for which perhaps he himself is no very
 strenuous advocate, I beg leave to rectify an er-
 ror in his assertion, that the above is a stronger
 expression than is any where to be found in con-
 nection with *punishment*. If I mistake not, we
 have the same form of expression in more places
 than one, annexed to the punishment of the
 wicked. David says, (Psalm xcii. 7.) “When
 “ the wicked spring as the grass—it is that they
 “ shall be destroyed *for ever,*” ער-יער. Again,
 in Mal. i. 4, we have, “They shall call them
 “ The border of wickedness, and the people
 “ against whom the Lord hath indignation *for*
 “ *ever,*” ער-עולם. See also 1 Sam. iii. 13, 14.
 Here again it seems Mr. V. fails in his know-
 ledge of *hebrew*, as he had done before in that of

greek. The strongest terms in the hebrew language, by his own confession, are applied to the punishment of the wicked,—even those which express the eternity of God!

But supposing these expressions were never applied to punishment, would it necessarily follow that they are stronger than those which are used? In english we say for *ever*, and for *evermore*; but does any one understand the latter term as expressive of a longer duration than the former? Or are they not rather terms which are indifferently used, according to the taste of the writer or speaker?

On a review therefore of the whole, it appears that, according to Mr. V., there is not a word either in the *hebrew* or *greek*, which conveys the idea of proper eternity; inasmuch as none can be found stronger than *gnolam*, and *aïon* with its derivatives: and these he assures us by no means convey that idea. A question therefore occurs; Have any of the sacred writers suggested the notion of a proper eternity? If they have, where, and how is it conveyed? Have they done it *without words*? This, according to Mr. V., they must have done, if they have done it at all; since they knew of no word that expressed such an idea. But here a difficulty arises; How are we to obtain the idea of a writer, who furnishes us with no clue to find it out; who knew of no words to express

it? Words have been usually thought the symbols of ideas; but this is a mistake, for it seems now that the meaning of a writer is to be collected without words: or, as *Dean Milner* expresses it, “The ordinary rules of interpretation “are inverted; and, instead of collecting the “MEANING from the WORDS, we must infer “the WORDS from the MEANING.” Or will Mr. V. chuse to say, that the idea of a proper eternity is no where conveyed in the old or new testament? If not—how came this gentleman by his accurate knowledge of what shall take place through endless duration? Has he received a fresh revelation; and does he take up the subject where the inspired writers leave off? Upon the whole, Mr. V. seems to me to be in this dilemma: either to admit that *aiōn* is expressive of a proper eternity, inasmuch as no stronger word can be adduced; or else to allow that the idea of proper eternity is no where conveyed in the bible; and therefore that he has derived his knowledge on this subject from some other source.

But too much, I fear, has been already said on this point. The greater part should have been omitted, but for two reasons. First, because some sort of readers are never convinced, but by seeing a subject placed in a great variety of views: and secondly, because Mr. V. brings forth his vast stores of erudition

in greek literature in discussing this point. That his pretensions in this respect are very high, every one must be convinced who has read two pages of his productions. This would indeed have been but of small importance to the question in dispute, if the tendency of this parade of classical knowledge was not to persuade his readers, that the common translation of the new testament is a bad one; that Mr. V. is such a complete master of the learned languages, as to justify his readers in abiding by his decision on a disputed passage, in opposition to every one else; and that nearly the whole of the arguments in support of the doctrine he opposes, depend upon the improper translation of a few texts of scripture. On these accounts, I have thought it expedient to pay, what some will think a tedious, attention to his attempts at *greek* criticism, and have been sometimes compelled to hold forth his observations to ridicule, the only point of view in which they appeared to me capable of being exhibited. I am indeed aware that this is a dangerous weapon, and ought seldom to be resorted to; but there are some cases in which it seems to be absolutely unavoidable. Conceit and vanity do not admit of serious argumentation. They cannot be corrected, but by seeing their picture drawn at full length. Mr. V. does indeed deprecate this treatment, alledging that "a good cause needs

“ no such attempt, and that a bad one cannot long be supported by it.” But he should remember, that different complaints require a different treatment; and that persons under certain disorders, are not always the best judges of the medicines proper to be administered to them. Though it would be highly indecorous to treat a serious subject in any other than a serious manner, or to contend with a modest and sensible disputant in any other way than with respect and deference; yet when a person attempts to plead his cause in *greek*, before a jury of plain *englishmen*, endeavours to dazzle, when he should try to convince, and rests upon evidence which he knows will be unintelligible, surely he ought not to be surprized if some one should attempt to put his *greek* into *english*, expose his ridiculous vanity, and exhibit a plain and unadorned state of the case.

I intreat you, sir, to remember that the truth or falsehood of Mr. V.'s doctrine does not depend upon his knowledge of *greek*. The precise point of view in which all I have said is to be considered, is this: Mr. V. has endeavoured to shift the ground of this controversy from plain argument and scripture testimony to *greek* criticisms. He then affects to be a complete master of this language, and decides with high-toned authority, on whatever comes before him in this

way. Now just so much of undue influence as this, his pretended knowledge of greek, is calculated to give him, in the estimation of merely english readers, just so much the observations I have made are intended to do away. Allowing as much importance as he pleases to the knowledge of the original scriptures, in this controversy, I think it has been abundantly shewn that it is not his province to enter into a dispute on that ground: and I hope he will not take it amiss if I recommend to his serious attention the advice of Cicero: “ Sermone eo debemus uti, “ qui notus est nobis; ne, ut *quidam*, GRÆCA “ VERBA inculcantes, *jure optimo irrideamur.*”*

I am, dear sir,

Yours, &c.

S.

LETTER XI.

Mr. F.'s rule for interpreting words of different acceptations; with remarks on Mr. V.'s observations on this rule.

Dear sir,

IN my three former letters I examined Mr. V.'s reasons for rendering *aïon*, &c. by *age*

* We should make use of such language as we understand; lest, like some persons, affecting a knowledge of GREEK WORDS, we get most deservedly laughed at.

and *age-lasting*, and also his objections against the common translation. I propose in this to give Mr. F.'s reasons for adhering to the generally received sense. He allows that these words cannot uniformly be rendered by *ever* and *ever-lasting*; but he contends that this is no proof against their having a proper and definite meaning, which he says is *endless*. He observes that there are scarcely any words in any language which are not used in an improper or figurative sense; and that, on account of the different idioms of language, it would be impossible to fix upon an *uniform* rendering of any one word. He then lays down the following rule, in opposition to Mr. V.'s, for interpreting the meaning of words: "That every term be taken in its PROPER sense, except there be something in the subject or connection which requires it to be taken otherwise."

With respect to this rule Mr. V. elegantly observes, "It would puzzle a conjurer to find a difference between what you have said and what I have said about *this rule*.* But it seems that you are determined to contradict me, even in those things in which I perfectly agree with you." (No. lv. pp. 263, 4.) But

* Mr. V. means between *his own* rule and that of Mr. Fuller. It is not yet conceded that they are one and the same rule.

perhaps, by a little attention to the nature of Mr. F.'s rule, we may be able to discover some *little* difference from Mr. V.'s, without having recourse to the *black art*. In addition to what Mr. F. has said on Mr. V.'s rule, (No. xl. pp. 144, 5.) I have already shewn in my seventh letter into what sad difficulties it would reduce us; from every one of which Mr. F.'s rule will free us: and if this be the case, methinks even Mr. V. must allow that there is *some* difference. As Mr. F. has pointed this out in a few words, I will lay them before you. "The rule adopted
 " in my last letter, allows a proper meaning to
 " every scripture term, and does not attempt to
 " set it aside in favour of one that is improper
 " and figurative, *unless the scope of the passage*
 " *or the nature of the subject require it. This is*
 " *a very different thing from not admitting it,*
 " *unless the subject, from its own nature, render*
 " *it absolutely necessary.* The one is treating the
 " proper meaning of a scripture word with re-
 " spect, not dispensing with it, but upon urgent
 " necessity; the other is treating it with indig-
 " nity, refusing it admission, except where it
 " cannot be denied." (No. xl. p. 145.)* Now
 fir, must a man necessarily be a *conjurer* to see a
 difference so clearly stated? Surely not. Mr.
 V.'s rule imposes upon us the Herculean labour
 of comparing the senses in which an author uses

* *Letters*, pp. 74, 75.

any word, and if any difference be found in them, then nothing can be determined respecting their meaning, but from the *subject*. This subject we again find couched in words of different acceptations; we are then compelled to go a step backwarder, and make the same investigation. Here again we find the same difficulties as before, and so on *ad infinitum*, without the possibility of obtaining the sense of an author. On the contrary, Mr. F.'s rule imposes no more than the easy task of ascertaining the *proper ideal* meaning of any word, with which a common dictionary will furnish us; and this done, we have only to affix this meaning to it, wherever it occurs, unless the scope of the passage, or the subject point out to a figurative or improper sense, and then its meaning is determined by the passage. Mr. V. allows the propriety of this rule, only he contends that it is the same as his. I shall not therefore spend any time in examining its merits, but proceed to Mr. F.'s application of it. “ So
 “ far (says he) as my acquaintance with this
 “ subject extends, it appears to be generally
 “ allowed by lexicographers that $\alpha\iota\omega\nu$ (*aion*) is a
 “ compound of $\alpha\epsilon\iota$ and $\omega\nu$, (*aei* and *on*) and that
 “ its literal meaning is *always being*; also that
 “ the meaning of its derivative $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$ (*aionios*)
 “ is *endless, everlasting, or eternal*. This term
 “ $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$ (*aionios*) which is very sparingly ap-
 “ plied in the new testament to limited duration,

“ I always take in its proper sense, except there
 “ be something in the connection or subject
 “ which requires it to be taken otherwise: and
 “ as I do not find this to be the case in any of
 “ those places where it is applied to punishment,
 “ I see no reason, in those cases, to depart from
 “ its proper acceptation.” (No. xxxix. pp.
 102, 3.) (*Letters*, pp. 53, 54.)

Now Mr. V. acknowledges it is allowed by lexicographers to have the meaning which Mr. F. affixes to it; but he adds, “ Great as their
 “ authority may be, I appeal from them to the
 “ common sense of the reader; and affirm that
 “ *αιων* (*aion*) does not necessarily (he ought to
 “ have said *properly*) mean *eternity*; nor *αιωνιος*
 “ (*aionios*) *eternal* or *everlasting*.” (No. xlvii.
 p. 424.) Common sense has heard the appeal, and declared it to be “ ridiculous, absurd, and vexatious.” We therefore adhere to the *quondam* learned men, and reject the conceits of Mr. Vidler.

It being then ascertained, beyond controversy, that *aion* properly signifies *eternity*, we are required by the rule which Mr. V. himself admits, and which has the suffrage of common sense, to give it this meaning wherever it occurs, unless the subject require a different sense; just as we do to the english words *ever* and *everlasting*; which, like the greek for those words, are

often taken in an improper sense. Hence it appears, that when we read of *everlasting punishment*, (Matt. xxv. 46) it conveys precisely the same idea, neither more nor less, as the greek *αιωνιος κολασις*. Instead, therefore, of Mr. V. and others objecting against the unlimited meaning of the words in question, when applied to punishment, because they are sometimes used in a limited sense, he should set himself to prove that future punishment, in its own nature, cannot be eternal; or because it is somewhere in scripture declared not to be eternal: and till he does this, all he says about the limited meaning of this word in some places, is nothing better than trifling. It is not an idle parade of greek learning that will do away the meaning of words which are unfavourable to his system; but such a demonstration of the impossibility of future punishment being eternal, as would make it absurd to apply *aiōnios* to it, in its unlimited sense. For the sake of illustration, if it need any, let me ask Mr. V. how he discovered that this word is *ever* used in a limited sense? He will say, ‘Because it is absurd, in some cases, to understand it otherwise. Who, for instance, could believe that an earthly institution, such as the *jewish priesthood*, could literally continue *for ever*? The subject plainly shews, that *for ever* cannot signify an *endless duration*.’ Very true. Shew, in the same manner, that when it

is applied to future punishment, the *subject* necessarily restricts the meaning of the word, and then you will have done something.

I cannot dismiss this point without saying one word more upon it; and, as it is considered an important one on both sides, I hope I shall be excused. Nothing can be more evident, than that the *onus probandi** lies in this case, upon Mr. V., and not on his opponents, as he and his ridiculous rule of interpretation, would have us believe. If *aion*, &c. do *not* mean infinite duration, when applied to punishment, it must lie upon Mr. V. to prove that there is something in punishment which renders its infinitude impossible; and then the proof will *not* rest upon the meaning of *aion*, &c., but on the subject. The proof will then amount to this: Punishment is indeed declared to be endless; but as it has been shewn that this cannot be the case, from the nature of the thing, and the plain declarations of the word of God; therefore the word *aionios*, when applied to punishment, must be understood, as it sometimes is, in an improper or figurative sense. This, I conceive, would be a sort of proof to which no one could reasonably object, and would do away, in a moment, the idle controversy about the meaning of a word, which must be allowed on all

* The weight of proving.

hands to signify endless. To me it appears ridiculous in the extreme to set a man, as Mr. V. does, to prove that the *subject* requires a word to be understood in its *proper* meaning. Surely common sense dictates that it is his province to shew from the subject, that it is used in an *improper* sense: and till he has done this, every passage, where this word stands in connection with punishment, is a strong and positive evidence of its endless duration.

I have now gone through the most important part of this controversy about the meaning of *aionios*, &c. Whether you are convinced that universalists have hitherto gone the wrong road to work to set aside the meaning of these terms, I cannot tell. Of one thing I think you must be convinced—that *greek criticisms* are not the province of Mr. V., and that he would hereafter be better employed in studying plain english, and clearing his system of those contradictory principles of which it is composed. In my next, I shall make a few remarks on what remains of this controversy. In the mean time,

I am, dear sir,

Yours, &c.

S.

LETTER XII.

*A summary review of what remains of the
Controversy.*

Dear sir,

WHEN I entered upon this Review, I intended to go through the whole of what should be advanced in the course of this controversy. But when I consider what has been already written, and what still remains before me, instead of presenting to the public a small pamphlet, as I first thought, a bulky volume would scarcely contain the whole. My work seems to multiply as I proceed, and it is now become exceedingly irksome. I see nothing before me but the same cause for animadversion; and were I to continue to point out all the sophistry, misrepresentation, and affectation of learning with which the remaining pages abound, I am not without fear that the suspicion of personal animosity would attach to myself. I shall therefore make but a few cursory remarks on what remains, and conclude my Review.

The two remaining of Mr. Fuller's four scriptural reasons for rejecting the doctrine of Universal Restoration have not yet been touched upon. Mr. V. thinks that his "forcible" arguments in favour of the limited meaning of *aiōn*

and its derivatives, supersede the necessity of any discussion of his opponent's *third* argument; and therefore he contents himself with endeavouring to explain away the meaning of a few of the passages of scripture, by which it is supported. If however it has been shewn that what Mr. V. thinks is so "forcible" has no force at all, he must set himself to disprove the main argument, and not merely cavil at a few of the passages by which it is confirmed. And as for the *fourth* argument, viz. "All those passages which intimate "that a change of heart, and a preparedness "for heaven are confined to the *present* life," he dismisses it as having no relation whatever to the subject in debate! They refer to "Salvation and the kingdom of Christ," which have no connection, according to Mr. V., with future restoration!

In his three following letters, there is little else beside personalities, attempts at wit, affected humility, modest insinuations of profound critical acumen in the learned languages, and still the same "sing—song" of *aion* and *aionios*. With his page crowded with greek and hebrew words, he insists upon it that he is a scholar; and as there is no convincing him to the contrary, he must be permitted still to hug the pleasing delusion.

After Mr. F. has stated his reasons for rejecting the doctrines of Universalists, he proceeds, in his sixth letter, to examine their system and arguments in support of it. At the commencement of this controversy, Mr. V. disclaimed the test of reason, and rested the whole on the revealed word of God. He says, (No. i. p. 5.) “ Suffer me to tell you, worthy sir, that “ the question is not whether endless punish- “ ment is in itself just; but whether God “ has any where in his word threatened any “ description of sinners with it.” It is a pity Mr. V. did not follow up this sensible observation, and confine the truth of his doctrine to the sacred scriptures. But alas! finding but little to give even a colour to his system there, he has launched out among the dangerous rocks and shoals of metaphysical reasoning; and as some will think, has made “ shipwreck of faith,” if not of “ a good conscience.” He lays down two maxims, one of which Mr. F. charges with throwing “ a reproach on his Maker;” and the other he proves is trifling, and irrelevant; and in its application subversive of the system it was intended to support. The former is couched in these words: “ I lay it down as a maxim, to be “ doubted by few, and denied by none, That “ whosoever doth any thing, foreseeing the certain event thereof, willeth that event. If a “ parent send children into a wood in which

“ grow poisonous berries, and certainly knows
 “ that they will eat of them, it is of no import-
 “ ance in the consideration of common sense,
 “ that he cautions or forewarns; that they, hav-
 “ ing free will, may avoid the poison. WHO
 “ WILL NOT ACCUSE HIM OF THEIR DEATH
 “ IN SENDING THEM INTO SUCH CIRCUM-
 “ STANCES, WHERE HE FOREKNEW IT WOULD
 “ HAPPEN? *God foreknows every thing; to his*
 “ *knowledge every thing is certain.* Let us sup-
 “ pose him about to create twenty men: he
 “ knows ten of them will become vicious, and
 “ therefore damned; and thence inherit the un-
 “ ceasing penalty. *Who doubts, in such a case,*
 “ *THAT HE WILLS THE END, who being Al-*
 “ *mighty and all-knowing, does that without which*
 “ *it could not come to pass.*” (No. xxxv. p.
 330.) This is speaking out with a witness!
 Without making any observations on the just-
 ness of Mr. V.’s comparison, we may perceive
 his opinion of the author of sin; and moreover,
 that he considers deliverance from its conse-
 quences as an act of justice, and not of mercy.
 According to him, God is to be *accused* of their
 death, and ought to repair the injury he has
 wantonly brought upon them! In Mr. Fuller’s
 sixth letter there are many excellent remarks,
 and much just reasoning upon this blasphemous
 maxim; to which I beg leave to refer you, and
 to request your particular attention. Mr. V. in

his eleventh letter, endeavours to roll away the reproach of having made God the author of sin; because, to whatever conclusions and inferences his reasoning may be liable, he intimates that he has expressed in other places his belief that man is the author of it. We must therefore discharge Mr. V. from the *premeditated* intention of reproaching the ever-blessed and holy God. But surely it would have been greatly to his credit to have renounced a maxim, and expressed his sorrow for ever advancing it, which so plainly and *almost directly* makes the Creator and Redeemer of the world, the author of all its sin and misery; and also to have given up a system, which renders such a maxim necessary for its support. I should apprehend that, if there be one part of this gentleman's letters which would cause him more uneasiness than another, should he ever seriously reflect on what he has written, it would be the contents of this maxim. Alas! sir, how little do we know of the counsels of Jehovah! What arrogance and presumption does it betray in a worm of the earth, to pretend to pry into what he has thought proper to conceal! Surely "clouds and darkness are round about him," though "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." I am well persuaded that if any man, from the known attributes of Deity, had reasoned *a priori*, as Mr. V. has done respecting the introduction of sin, this gentleman

would himself have condemned him, as impiously libelling the majesty of heaven! Whatever levity may be betrayed when men dispute with men, upon subjects which fall within the compass of the human understanding, surely it becomes us to speak with trembling, when we arraign the conduct of the divine Being before a human tribunal! Can the Almighty be pleased with such a short-sighted creature as man is, when he dares to speak with such positive certainty respecting his counsels of unfathomable wisdom, just as if they were clearly revealed, or as if he admitted man to a share in his government?

Mr. V. says again, “ I lay it down also as
“ an indubitable maxim, That whatever is done
“ by a Being of the divine attributes, is in-
“ tended by his goodness, conducted by his
“ wisdom, and accomplished by his power, to
“ a good end.” To this maxim, neither Mr. F. nor any other rational being can object; and particularly as it has the singular merit of utterly subverting, and being in direct opposition to, the blasphemous maxim upon which we have already animadverted. Instead of a cruel being, who is accused of sending his children into a wood, willing and intending them to eat poisonous berries for their destruction, we are here presented with a Being, who exercises his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, to the

best of purposes ! Though we cannot therefore but regret that Mr. V. should ever have carelessly thrown about his deadly poison, we certainly ought to be thankful that he has furnished us with an antidote at the same time. May the kindly influence of the latter be as extensive as the deadly mischief of the former !

But if it be asked, what reference this maxim has to the subject in debate ; it would not perhaps be easy to answer. Mr. F. presumes to think that in its application to his opponent's system, it is puerile, ridiculous, and subversive of universalism. He has set these points in their proper light ; but he has, I think, taken more pains to expose the absurdity of the application of this maxim, than its importance demanded. If, however, you should think there is any weight in what Mr. V. has advanced on this point, I would refer you to Mr. F.'s sixth letter, for a complete and satisfactory refutation of the whole. Indeed, I could heartily wish that this and the seventh letter,* together with what gave rise to them, were carefully weighed. I think you would find a clear understanding, compass of thought, and manly reasoning, opposed to a mind incapable of penetrating below

* The reader will recollect, that the *sixth* and *seventh* letters in the *Univ. Mis.* are the *seventh* and *eighth* in the series lately reprinted in a separate pamphlet, and which is often referred to in the former pages of this work.

the surface of things, deceived by an over-rated opinion of its own powers, ever endeavouring to strike out something new, and seldom discriminating between plausible fancies and solid argument. In short, you will see, if I do not greatly mistake, the Author of “the comparative view of Socinianism and Calvinism,” and of “the Gospel its own witness,” as vastly superior to the Editor of “the Universalist’s Miscellany,” as the dignified *Watson*, to the petulant *Thomas Paine*.

In these letters, the principal arguments and texts of scripture, which are supposed to favour Universalism are discussed, and the error of the one and inapplication of the other satisfactorily shewn. The seventh letter finishes the controversy, on Mr. Fuller’s side, and thus concludes: “Whether I have entered into “the merits of “the cause,” or conducted the controversy in a “becoming spirit, I consider as no part of my “province to determine. The impartial reader “will judge whether I have dealt in “soft “words” or “hard arguments;” and if I have “been so happy, as in this particular, to follow “your counsel, whether I have not been obliged “to deviate from your example. On this account I shall be excused from taking any “notice of your animadversions on these subjects, together with your new ally—the

“ Hoxton Student;” unless it be to thank you “ for affording additional proof of the justness “ of my remark, that *Socinians rejoice in the “ spread of Universalism.*” To the contents of these letters Mr. V. replies in his eleventh and twelfth letters, with which he also concludes, after stating several particulars, to which he invites the attention of his opponents as being necessary to the overthrow of his system. I had remarked many things to animadvert upon; but the task of reviewing has become so irksome, and the prospect of coming to a conclusion, (were I to canvass the whole as I have hitherto done) so remote, that I must now draw towards an end. I wish the concluding letters would have given me an opportunity of placing Mr. V.’s character, as a controversialist, in a more favourable point of view: but alas! he is of a piece throughout. There are the same misrepresentation, sophistry, illiberality, affected candour, pretensions to great learning, &c. at the end as at the beginning. I do not indeed justify all that has been said by his opponent. At the commencement of this controversy, there was too much asperity and sarcasm,—but he was greatly provoked; and the impartial reader will see, that as he proceeds, he loses sight of every consideration but the investigation of truth. He does not indeed contend for it with that cold-blooded indifference which many, in our days, so highly extol. He writes

as a man who feels his best interests at stake, and who considers the unadulterated gospel of Christ as infinitely more than paramount to that fashionable courtesy, which compliments the betrayer of his Lord and Master, with the title of "believer and christian."

If it were necessary to say any thing further, as an apology for the motive which dictated the preceding Review, and the stile in which it is written, I would observe that Mr. V. has taken great pains to represent himself under a character to which he can have scarcely the shadow of a pretence; and it is of great importance to those within the sphere of his publications, that he should stand before them unmasked. The perusal of his writings convinced me that he is by no means the man he wishes to be taken for; and therefore I considered myself as bound in duty to hold him up in his own light. The office of a Reviewer, as observed in the introduction, is widely different from that of a controversialist. While the latter has nothing to do but with the arguments of his opponent, it is the province of the former to exhibit the *writer*. That I have been too severe on Mr. V. I am persuaded no one will think, who has examined, with as much attention as I have, what he has written. His arrogance in condemning and cashiering the pious and learned translators of the

Bible, is insufferable. The high tone which he assumes in fixing the meaning of a disputed passage, would hardly become the most profound linguist,—much less a mere smatterer in greek and hebrew. His affectation of learning is excessively disgusting, and calculated to do the double mischief of unsettling the faith and subverting the minds of the ignorant and unwary. I am well convinced, from the specimens he has exhibited in the course of this controversy, that he can have no legitimate claim to classical erudition. It is true, he is not to be blamed, if, with the help of a grammar, a lexicon, and a translation, he should endeavour to make out the meaning of a word in the original scriptures; nor do I blame him for it: I think his diligence deserves commendation; but then let him know his place: let him propose his conjectures with modesty, and not assume the chair of the Censor, or the decision of an Aristotle. Were I to recal to your recollection the proofs I have given of his misrepresentation, his ungenerous disavowal of sentiments which he maintained at the beginning of this controversy, (especially that of Universal Salvation) his petulant illiberality, his unsupported pretensions to candour and impartiality—it might seem like indulging a vindictive spirit, against which I solemnly appeal. I have no enmity whatever against the *man*: it is simply against the *writer* that all my animadversions are

aimed: and if the representation here given of the disputant, should operate to the advantage of the man, I shall think myself well repaid for the trouble I have taken in this Review.

I would not conclude, my dear sir, without again pressing upon your most serious consideration the *tendency* of the universalists' doctrine. You know I long ago gave my opinion, that it is nearly allied to, if not inseparably connected with, focianianism. This you could not formerly admit; but I believe you now see my observations realized every day. Mr. V., though he has not the honesty to avow it, is a decided focianian, if *he* deserve that name who robs Christ of his Deity, and the sinner of the doctrine of the Atonement. His miscellany is almost exclusively occupied by writers of the focianian cast; and you daily observe his followers drinking into the same spirit. You read and hear scarcely of any thing else, but the blasphemous cant of those who would teach you that it is candid to think any thing about Jesus Christ, provided you think but favourably of those who take away the merit of his blood, and the glory of his godhead. I entreat you, my dear sir, look well to yourself. Make a voluntary surrender, if you please, of your understanding; take the self-confident, the smatterer in knowledge, the noisy boaster of superior candour and dis-

cernment, as your guide, in things that pertain to the present life; sacrifice every thing that is dear to you of a finite duration: but make a reserve of your *soul*! Whether you believe me or not, danger is at hand. May God give you eyes to see it, and grace to make a timely provision against it!

I am, dear sir,

in the sincerest affection,

Your well-wisher and friend,

SCRUTATOR.

ERRATUM.

P. 49, l. 21. For $\Theta\lambda\iota\psi\text{---}\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ read $\Theta\lambda\iota\psi\epsilon\omega\varsigma$.

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