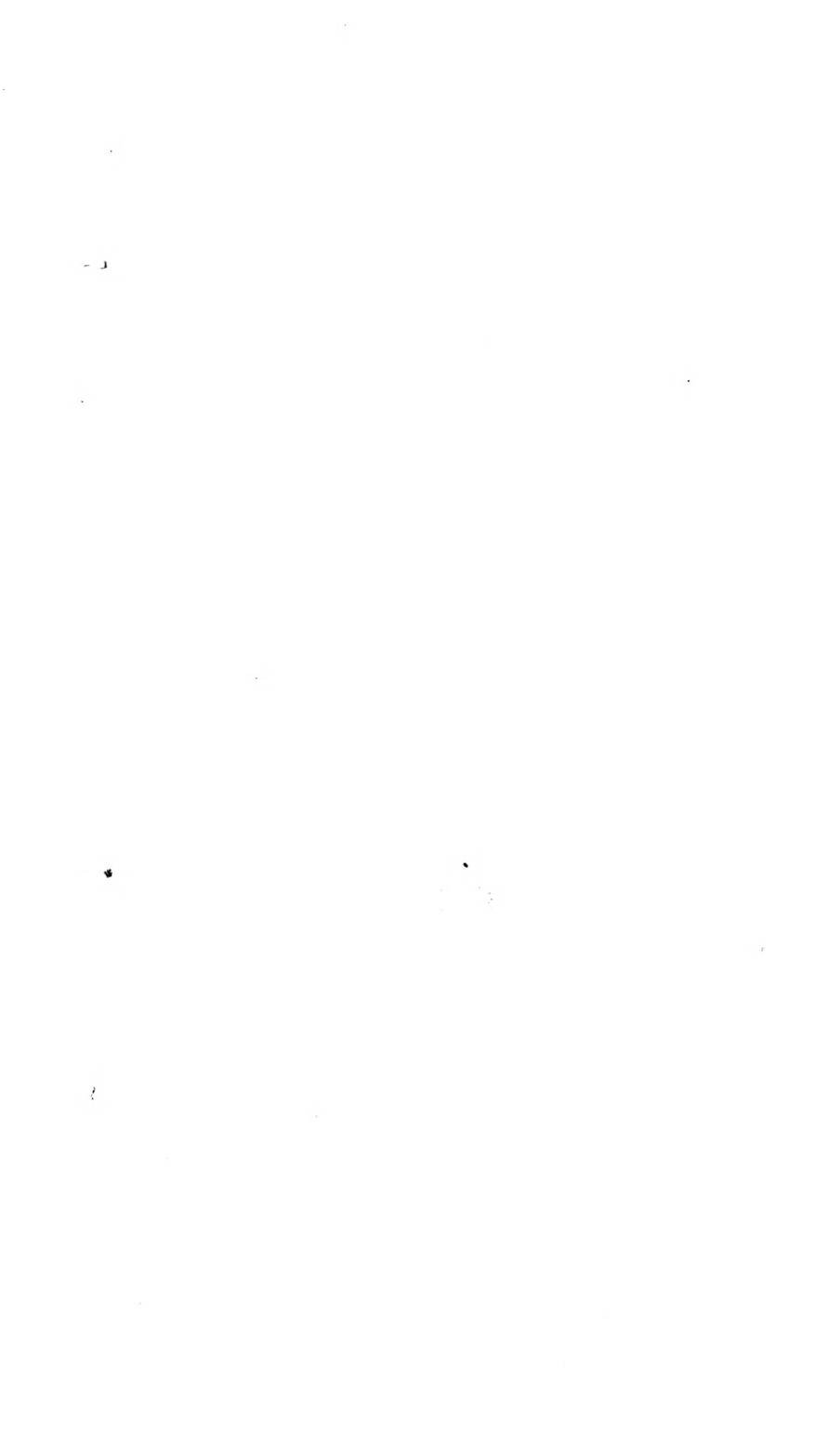




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A
S U P P L E M E N T

TO THE
FIRST and SECOND VOLUMES
OF THE

View of the Deistical Writers.

CONTAINING

ADDITIONS and ILLUSTRATIONS

Relating to those VOLUMES.

In several LETTERS to a FRIEND.

To which is added,

REFLECTIONS on the late Lord BOLINGBROKE'S
Letters on the Study and Use of HISTORY,
as far as relates to the HOLY SCRIPTURES.

The THIRD EDITION, corrected and enlarged.

W I T H
A LARGE INDEX to the THREE VOLUMES.

BY JOHN LELAND, D. D.

L O N D O N :

Printed for B. DOD, at the *Bible and Key*, in *Aus-Mary-*
Lane, near *Stationers-Hall*,

M D C C L V I.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

1950

PHYSICS 551

LECTURE NOTES

BY

ROBERT H. FERRY



P R E F A C E.

AS in the Conclusion of the second volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*, I seemed to have finished the whole design, I think myself obliged to give some account to the public of the reason of publishing another volume so soon after the former. That which gave occasion to it was this: Since the publication of the former volumes, I have received some Letters relating to the subject of them, which have put me upon reconsidering some things in them, and making farther additions and illustrations, which, I hope, may be of advantage to the main design. I had also by me, as was hinted in the Preface to the second volume, several observations which were originally designed to be inserted in that volume, but which were omitted, when I found it enlarged so much beyond my expectation. Some friends were willing to have them published,

and that there should be a new edition of the whole in three volumes, in which the several additions and illustrations should be distributed in their proper places. But as this would render the former edition very incomplete, and might seem to be a wrong to those that had purchased it, it was judged more advisable to publish a distinct volume, which should comprehend all those additions and illustrations, leaving the former volumes to stand as they are. Among the additions which are now published, one relates to the Earl of SHAFTESBURY. Some gentlemen, who are great admirers of that noble author, thought I had pushed the charge against him too far, especially on the head of future rewards and punishments. This occasioned my reviewing that part of the first volume, and adding to the observations which had been there made, and which, upon the most impartial consideration, I have found no reason to alter, or retract. Another large addition relateth to the pamphlet intituled, *Deism*

P R E F A C E. v

fairly stated, and fully vindicated, which some thought was too slightly passed over, in the first volume of the *View*, and which is now therefore more fully considered. There is also a considerable addition relating to the remarks I had made on Mr. *Hume's Essay on Miracles*; and which was occasioned by an ingenious paper that was sent me not long after the publication of the second volume. I have added some observations on those passages in Mr. *Hume's Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, which seem designed to cast a slur on the evangelical morality. These are the most considerable additions. The rest are smaller pieces, and are, for the most part, such as were originally designed to have been inserted in the second volume, when it was first published; to which several others, relating to both volumes, are now added. And the reader is directed by proper references to the passages in the two preceding volumes, to which they belong. I am sensible, that as they are now published, they have the

disadvantage of appearing as so many detached pieces, without much order or connection. This will stand in great need of favourable allowances. And I may perhaps be thought to presume too much upon the indulgence the public has shewn me, in publishing what may look like incoherent fragments. But I chuse rather to incur the censure this might subject me to, than to do any thing that might render the former edition less valuable to those who have so generously encouraged it. And I have endeavoured, in some measure, to make up for that defect, by introducing them in such a manner as to form some kind of connection between the scattered pieces; and, for that purpose, have thrown them into the form of Letters, which, like those of the former volumes, are directed to my worthy friend the Rev. Dr. *Wilson*.

It has been hinted to me, that an INDEX would be highly proper in a work of this kind, which treats of a great variety of matters, and in which many authors are referred to. I had thoughts
accord-

accordingly of adding an Index at the end of the second volume. But it was become so large, that I was afraid it would have swelled it beyond its due proportion; and therefore omitted it. But there is an Index now subjoined, which may serve for both the former volumes, and for that which is now published. And this may perhaps be looked upon as a real advantage to the work.

I have been desired to prepare a new edition of the *Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Use of History*. And as this hath a near affinity to the subjects treated of in the *View of the Deistical Writers*, and will help to complete that part of it which relates to Lord *Bolingbroke*, it is here added to this volume. The *political* part is left out, as not so well suited to the main design of this work; but there is a considerable addition made to it, with relation to *the curse pronounced upon Canaan*, which, in the opinion of some judicious friends, was not so fully considered before as it ought to have been.

A 4

This

This addition was drawn up by me some time ago, and sent over, in order to be inserted in the new edition of these *Reflections*, before I saw Dr. *Newton's* accurate dissertation on this subject, in his excellent dissertations upon prophecy, which came but very lately into my hands.---It will now probably be thought not so necessary: but I have chosen to let it stand as it was first drawn up; because it may possibly not be without its use, and will tend to render the *Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters* more complete.---The method I have pursued is something different from Dr. *Newton's*. He seems to incline to think there is an omission in the *Hebrew copies*.---But I chuse to defend the passage according to the present reading of the *Hebrew copies*, which is followed by almost all the antient versions, as well as by our own translators; and, in my opinion, good reasons might be given to shew that it is to be preferred to the reading some learned men would substitute instead of it.

This

This is all that is necessary to inform the reader of, with regard to the design of the volume that is now offered to the public. And I think myself obliged to take this occasion to acknowledge the favourable and candid acceptance the second volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*, as well as the first, has met with, and the particular notice which hath been taken of the author by some persons of great merit and distinction. This gives me no small satisfaction, not so much for any particular interest and advantage of my own, though I have a most grateful sense of the generous kindness that hath been shewn me, as because it gives me reason to apprehend, that my endeavours to serve so glorious a cause may, in some degree, answer the end for which they were honestly intended. If I can be any way instrumental to promote the sacred interests of religion among us, I shall esteem it the greatest happiness of my life. And it is a pleasure to think, that in an age in which it is too much neglected and
disre-

disregarded, there are still some among us eminently distinguished by their *high quality*, their *fortune*, and *figure* in the world, who shew a just concern for religion, and whose zeal for our common Christianity has caused them candidly to overlook lesser differences and distinctions. And it is to be hoped, and should be the matter of our earnest prayers to GOD; that all real Christians, who have the interests of our holy religion at heart, will join in united efforts to support so glorious a cause, in which the preservation and advancement of true goodness and virtue, the peace and good order of the society, and the present and eternal happiness of individuals is so nearly concerned.





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A VIEW of the
DEISTICAL WRITERS, &c.
In several LETTERS to a FRIEND.

L E T T E R I.

The account given of the Earl of Shaftesbury's writings in the first volume of the View of the Deistical Writers, vindicated against the exceptions that had been made against it. The being influenced by the hope of the reward promised in the Gospel hath nothing in it disingenuous and slavish. It is not inconsistent with loving virtue for its own sake, but tends rather to heighten our esteem of its worth and amiableness. Lord Shaftesbury seems in his Inquiry to erect such a scheme of virtue as is independent on religion, and may subsist without it. The apology he makes for doing so. The close connection there is between religion and virtue shewn from his own principles and acknowledgements. Virtue not wholly confin'd to good affections towards mankind, but takes in proper affections toward the Deity as an essential part of it. He acknowleges that man is born to religion. A remarkable passage of Lord Bolingbroke to the same purpose.

S I R,

W H E N I first formed the design of taking a view of the Deistical writers, I fixed it as a law to myself to make a fair representation,

LETTER I. as far as I was able, of the sentiments of those writers, and not to push the charge farther against them than there appeared to me to be just ground for. For I think the best cause in the world will not justify the making wrong charges against the adversaries, or representing them in a worse light than they really deserve. It has been no small satisfaction to me, that, except in a single instance, I have hitherto heard no complaints, as if the sentiments of the several deistical writers, of whom some account is given in *the View*, were not fairly and candidly represented. It is with regard to what is there said of the Earl of *Shaftesbury*, that the complaint has been made. Some persons who profess to be real friends to Christianity, and I doubt not are so, have let me know, that they wish I had not put that noble Lord into the list of the deistical writers; and they think the charge against him hath in some instances been carried too far. You may remember I informed you of this some time ago, and it was your opinion that it was not necessary to take any particular notice of that complaint, as you believed there were very few who made any doubt of his Lordship's coming very properly under that character, and that what had been produced in *the View* out of his own writings was a sufficient proof of it. So indeed it appeared to me. I thought it however incumbent upon me carefully to revise that part of my book. And I can declare with great truth, that it would have given me

pleasure to have had reason to think, that in this instance I had been mistaken in the judgment I had formed; and I should have thought myself obliged in that case publickly to have acknowledged it. But upon the most impartial consideration, I have not seen reason to retract any thing I had offered with regard to that noble Lord. It cannot I think be denied by any impartial person who hath read the characteristics without prejudice, which are the only works he avowed, and which had his last hand, that there are several passages in them, which seem plainly intended to expose Christianity and the holy scriptures. And there is great reason to apprehend, that not a few have been unwarily led to entertain unhappy prejudices against revealed religion, and the authority of the scriptures, through too great an admiration of his Lordship's writings. Some instances of this kind have come under my own particular observation. And therefore it appeareth to me upon the most mature consideration, that I could not, in consistency with the design I had in view, omit the making some observations upon that admired author, as far as the cause of Christianity is concerned.

That part of my observations on Lord *Shaftesbury's* works, which I find hath been particularly excepted against, is the account given of his sentiments with regard to future rewards and punishments. It hath been urged, that his design in what he has written on this subject, was not

LETTER to insinuate that we ought not to be influenced
 I. by a regard to future rewards and punishments,
 the usefulness of which he plainly acknowlegeth;
 but only to shew that it is wrong to be acted merely by a view to the reward, or by a fear of the punishment, without any real inward love to virtue, or any real hatred and abhorrence of vice. To this purpose his Lordship observes, that “to be brib’d only, or terrified into an honest practice, bespeaks little of real honesty or worth——and that if virtue be not really estimable in itself, he can see nothing estimable in following it for the sake of a bargain*.” He asks, “How shall we deny that to serve God by compulsion, or for interest merely, is servile and mercenary? †” And he puts the case of a person’s being “incited by the hope of reward to do the good he hates, and restrained by the fear of punishment from doing the ill to which he is not otherwise in the least degree averse;” and observes, that “there is in this case no virtue whatsoever ‡.” If his Lordship had said no more than this, he would have said no more than every real friend to Christianity will allow; though in this case there would still be great reason to complain of his Lordship’s having made a very unfair representation of the sense of those divines, who think it necessary to urge the motives drawn from future rewards and punishments. It is true, that if the belief of fu-

* *Characterist.* Vol. I. p. 97. † *Ib.* Vol. II. p. 272. ‡ *Ib.* p. 55.

ture retributions should have no other effect LETTER
 than the putting some restraint upon men's out- I.
 ward evil actions, and regulating their external
 behaviour, even this would be of great advantage to the community: but this is far from being the only or principal thing intended. Those certainly must know little of the nature and tendency of the Christian religion, who should endeavour to persuade themselves or others, that though a man had a real love of vice in his heart, and only abstained from some outward vicious practices for fear of punishment; and though he had an inward aversion to true goodness and virtue, and only performed some outward acts that had a fair appearance; this alone would denominate him a good man, and intitle him to the future reward. For this were to suppose that though he were really a vicious and bad man, without that purity and sincerity of heart on which the scriptures lay so great a stress, yet the practising some external acts of obedience, destitute of all true goodness, and of virtuous affections, would intitle him to the favour of God, and to that eternal happiness which is promised in the Gospel. If any persons should reach this, I would readily join with his Lordship in condemning them. But he hath not contented himself with striking at the supposed wrong sentiments of divines, whom he loves on all occasions to expose. There are several passages in his Lordship's writings which appear to be directly intended to represent the insinuating

LETTER I. so much as is done in the Gospel upon the eternal rewards and punishments of a future state, as having a bad influence on the moral temper; and particularly as tending to strengthen an inordinate selfishness, and to diminish the affections towards public good, and to make men neglect what they owe to their friends, and to their country. He plainly intimates the disadvantages accruing to virtue from the having *infinite* rewards in view, and that in that case the *common and natural motives to goodness are apt to be neglected and lose much by disuse* *. He represents the being influenced by a regard to future rewards and punishments as at best *disingenuous, servile, and of the slavish kind*; and to this he opposes a *liberal service*, and the *principle of love*, and the *loving God and virtue for God and virtue's sake* †: and accordingly he determines that those duties, to which men are carried without any view to such rewards, are for that reason more noble and excellent, and argue a higher degree of virtue. If the case really were as his Lordship is pleased to represent it, it must certainly give a very disadvantageous idea of Christianity; as if the insisting upon those most important motives drawn from a future eternal world, which our Saviour came to set in the strongest light, tended to introduce and cherish a wrong temper of mind,

* Several passages to this purpose were produced out of the Characteristics in the first volume of *the View*, which I need not here repeat. † See Characteristics, Vol. II. p. 271, 272, 273;

narrow and selfish, disingenuous and servile, to weaken our benevolent affections, both public and private, and to take us off from the duties and office of the civil and social life. At that rate it could not be said that the Gospel is a friend to society and to mankind: and instead of promoting the practice of true virtue, it would rather derogate from it, and degrade it from its proper dignity and excellence. It was therefore necessary to shew, as I endeavoured to do in my observations on Lord *Shaftesbury's* writings, that this is far from being a just representation of the nature and tendency of the Christian doctrine of future rewards and punishments. The most noble and extensive benevolence, exerting itself in all proper effects and instances, in opposition to a narrow selfish disposition, is what Christianity every-where commendeth and inforceth in the most engaging manner; and it is its peculiar advantage that it carrieth our views to a better state, where the benevolence which is now begun shall be completed, and shall be exercised in a more enlarged sphere, and extend to a nobler society. And can the hope of this possibly tend to diminish our benevolence, or must it not rather heighten and improve it? When a man hath a firm and steady persuasion, that the Supreme Being will reward his persevering constancy in a virtuous course with everlasting felicity, this instead of weakening his inward affection to virtue, and his moral sense of its worth and excellency,

LETTER
I.
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LETTER <sup>1.</sup> must in the nature of things greatly confirm and establish it. There is therefore an entire consistency between the loving virtue for its own sake, *i. e.* as his Lordship explains it, *because it is amiable in itself\**, and the being animated to the pursuit and practice of it by such rewards as the Gospel proposeth. For it never appeareth more excellent and lovely, than when it is considered as recommending us to the favour and approbation of him who is the supreme original Goodness and Excellence, and as preparing us for a complete happiness in a future state, where it shall be raised to the highest degree of beauty and perfection. In like manner it must mightily strengthen our abhorrence of vice, and our sense of its turpitude and malignity, to consider it as not only at present injurious and disgraceful to our nature, but as an opposition to the will and law of the most wise and righteous Governour of the world, who will in a future state of retributions inflict awful punishments upon those who now obstinately persist in a presumptuous course of vice and wickedness.

Our noble author himself, when he proposeth to shew *what obligation there is to virtue, or what reason to embrace it*, which is the subject of the second book of his *Inquiry*, resolveth it into this, that *moral rectitude or virtue must be the advantage, and vice the misery and disadvantage of every creature.* And that *it is the creature's interest to be wholly good and vir-*

\* Vol. II. p. 67.



tuons\*. To prove this seems to be the entire LETTER design of that book, which he concludes with I. observing, that *virtue is the good, and vice the ill of every one*. He seems indeed in displaying the advantages of the one, and disadvantages of the other, to confine himself wholly to this present life, and to abstract from all consideration of a future state. But if the representing virtue to be our interest here on earth, and conducive to our present happiness, be a just ground of *obligation to virtue*, and a proper *reason to embrace it*, which his second book is designed to shew, then surely if it can be proved, that it tendeth not only to our happiness here, but to procure us a perfect happiness in a future state of existence, this must mightily heighten the obligation to virtue, and strengthen the reason for embracing it. If having regard to the present advantages of virtue be consistent in his scheme with loving virtue for its own sake, and as amiable in itself, and doth not render the embracing it a mercenary or slavish service, why should it be inconsistent with a liberal service to be assured that it shall make us happy for ever? Or, why should they be accounted greater friends or admirers of virtue, who consider its excellency only with regard to the narrow limits of this transitory life, than they who regard it as extending its beneficial influence to a nobler state of existence, and who believe that it shall flourish in unfading beauty and

\* Vol. II. p. 81. 93.

glory

LETTER I. glory to eternity? That an affection in itself worthy and excellent should grow less so, by considering it as so pleasing to the Supreme Being, that he will reward it with everlasting happiness, and raise it to the highest perfection it is capable of in a future state, would be a strange way of reasoning.

It was observed in the account given of the Earl of *Shaftesbury's* writings, in the first volume of *the View*, that there are several passages in which he acknowledgeth, that the hope of future rewards, and fear of future punishments, is a great advantage, security, and support to virtue. If these passages had been concealed or disguised, there might have been just ground of complaint. But they were fairly laid before the reader, as well as those that seemed to be of a contrary import, that he might be able to form a judgment of his Lordship's sentiments, how far he is consistent with himself, and whether the censures be well founded, which he passeth upon those who insist upon the rewards promised in the Gospel, as powerful motives to virtue. He chargeth them as "reducing religion to such a philosophy, as to leave no room for the principle of love—— and as building a future state on the ruins of virtue, and thereby betraying religion, and the cause of God\*." He representeth them as if they were against a *liberal service, flowing from an esteem and love of God, or a sense of duty and gratitude, and a*

\* Vol. II. p. 272, 279.

love of the dutiful and grateful part, as good and amiable in itself\*. And he expressly declareth, That “the hope of future reward, and  
 “fear of future punishment, cannot consist in  
 “reality with virtue or goodness, if it either  
 “stands as essential to any moral performance,  
 “or as a *considerable motive* to any act, of  
 “which some better affection ought alone to be  
 “a sufficient cause †.” Here he seems not willing to allow, that the regard to future retributions ought to be so much as a *considerable motive* to well-doing; and asserteth, that to be influenced by it as such a motive cannot consist in reality with virtue or goodness. This is in effect to say, that we ought not to be influenced by a regard to future rewards and punishments at all. For if they be believed and regarded at all, they must be a considerable motive; since, as he himself observeth, where infinite rewards are firmly believed, they must needs have a mighty influence, and will over-balance other motives ‡. If therefore it be inconsistent with true virtue or goodness, to be influenced by them as a considerable motive, it is wrong to propose them to mankind. For why should they be proposed, or to what purpose believed, if it be inconsistent with true goodness to be influenced by them in proportion to their worth and importance? His Lordship elsewhere observes, “That by making rewards and punish-

LETTER  
I.



\* Vol. II. p. 270. † Ib. p. 58. ‡ Ib. p. 68.

“ments”

LETTER<sup>1.</sup> "ments" [*i. e.* the rewards and punishments proposed in the Gospel; for to these he evidently refers] "the principal motives to duty, the Christian religion in particular is overthrown, and the greatest principle, that of love, rejected \*." When he here brings so heavy a charge against those who make the rewards of the Gospel their *principal motives*, his meaning seems to be this: That they make the hope of future eternal happiness a more powerful motive than the present satisfaction and advantages virtue hath a tendency to produce, which are the motives he so largely insists upon, and which he calls *the common and natural motives to goodness*. And is the being more animated by the consideration of that eternal happiness which is the promised reward of virtue, than by any of the advantages it yields in this present state (though these also are allowed to have their proper weight and influence) so great a fault, as to deserve to be represented as a subverting of all religion, and particularly the Christian? If the eternal life promised in the Gospel be rightly understood, the hope of it includeth a due regard to the glory of God, to our own highest happiness, and to the excellency of virtue and true holiness; all which are here united, and are the worthiest motives that can be proposed to the human mind. There is a perfect harmony between this hope, and what his Lordship so much extols, the principle of di-

\* Vol. II. 279.

vine love, *such as separates from every thing worldly, sensual, and meanly interested.* Nor can it be justly said concerning this hope of the Gospel reward, what he saith of a *violent affection towards private good*, that the more there is of it, the *less room there is for an affection towards goodness itself, or any good and deserving object*, worthy of love and admiration for its own sake, *such as God is universally acknowledged to be* \*. The very reward itself includeth the perfection of love and goodness; and the happiness promised principally consisteth in a conformity to God, and in the fruition of him; and therefore the being powerfully animated with the hope of it is perfectly consistent with *the highest love and admiration of the Deity, on the account of his own infinite excellency.*

LETTER  
I.



It appeareth to me, upon considering and comparing what hath been produced out of Lord Shaftesbury's writings, that though his Lordship's good sense would not allow him absolutely to deny the usefulness of believing future retributions; yet he hath in effect endeavoured on several occasions to cast a slur upon Christianity, for proposing and insisting upon what he calls *infinite rewards*; and thus hath attempted to turn that to its disadvantage which is its greatest glory, *viz.* its setting the important retributions of a future state in the clearest and strongest light, and teaching us to

\* Vol. II. p. 58. 59.

LETTER I. raise our affections and views to things invisible and eternal. His Lordship hath, upon the most careful and diligent revival of his works, suffered those obnoxious passages still to continue there. Nor will any man wonder at this, who considereth the design and tendency of many other passages in his writings: That he hath taken occasion to ridicule the spirit of prophecy, and to burlesque several passages of holy writ: That he hath represented the scriptures as absolutely uncertain, and the important facts by which Christianity is attested, as not to be depended upon: That he hath insinuated injurious reflections upon the character and intentions of the blessed Founder of our holy religion: That he hath represented our faith in the Gospel as having no other foundation than the authority of the state; and hath hinted, that it could hardly have stood the test of ridicule, and even of *Bartholomew-Fair* drollery, had it been applied to it at its first appearance\*.

As I have been engaged so far in an examination of Lord *Shaftesbury's* writings, I shall take this occasion to make some farther observations on his celebrated Inquiry concerning Virtue.

He sets out with observing, That “ religion  
 “ and virtue appear to be so nearly related, that  
 “ they are generally presumed inseparable com-  
 “ panions. But that the practice of the world  
 “ does not seem in this respect to be answer-

\* See all this clearly shewn in the first volume of *The View of the Deistical Writers*, p. 101, et seq.

“able to our speculations:” That “many who  
 “have had the appearance of great zeal in re-  
 “ligion, have yet wanted the common affec-  
 “tions of *humanity* \*. Others again, who have  
 “been considered as mere Atheists, have yet  
 “been observed to practise the rules of mora-  
 “lity, and act in many cases with such good  
 “meaning and affection towards mankind, as  
 “might seem to force an acknowledgement of  
 “their being virtuous †.” His Lordship there-  
 fore proposeth to enquire, “What honesty or  
 “virtue is, considered by itself, and in what  
 “manner it is influenced by religion: how far  
 “religion necessarily implies virtue: and whe-  
 “ther it be a true saying, That it is impossible  
 “for an Atheist to be virtuous, or share any real  
 “degree of honesty or merit ‡.”

In that part of *the Inquiry*, in which he pro-  
 poseth to shew what virtue is, he seems to  
 make it properly consist in good affections to-  
 wards mankind, or in a man's having “his dif-  
 “position of mind and temper suitable and  
 “agreeing to the good of his kind, or of the  
 “system in which he is included, and of which  
 “he constituteth a part §.” And he had be-

\* It will readily be acknowledged, that the appearance of re-  
 ligion is often separated from true virtue: but real practical re-  
 ligion necessarily comprehendeth virtue; and as far as we are de-  
 ficient in the practice of virtue, we are deficient in what religion  
 indispensibly requireth of us.

† Character. vol. II. p. 5, 6.  
 ib. p. 31. 77, 78. 86, 87, et passim.

‡ Ibid. p. 7.

§ See

fore

LETTER  
I.



LETTER I. fore declared, that some who have been considered as mere Atheists, have acted with such good affection towards mankind, as might seem to force an acknowledgement that they are virtuous.

And as this is the notion his Lordship gives of the nature of virtue; so when he treats of the obligation to virtue, and the reason there is to embrace it, which is the subject of the second book of the *Inquiry*, he seems to place it in its tendency to promote our happiness in this present life, without taking any notice of a future state.

Accordingly, many have looked upon the *Inquiry* as designed to set up such a notion of virtue and its obligation, as is independent on religion, and may subsist without it. And in the progress of that *Inquiry*, his Lordship takes occasion to compare Atheism with superstition or false religion, and plainly gives the former the preference; and seems sometimes to speak tenderly of it; having observed, that nothing can possibly, in a rational creature, exclude a principle of virtue, or render it ineffectual, except what either, “ 1. Takes away the natural and  
“ just sense of right and wrong: 2. Or creates  
“ a wrong sense of it: 3. Or causes the right  
“ sense of it to be opposed by contrary affec-  
“ tions †.” As to the first case, the taking away the natural sense of right and wrong, he will not allow that Atheism, or any speculative

† Character. vol. II. p. 40.

opinion,



opinion, persuasion, or belief, is capable immediately or directly to exclude or destroy it; and that it can do it no other way than *indirectly* by the intervention of opposite affections, *casually* excited by such belief \*. As to the second case, the *wrong sense, or false imagination of right and wrong*, he says, That “ however Atheism  
 “ may be indirectly an occasion of men’s losing  
 “ a good and sufficient sense of right and wrong,  
 “ it will not, as Atheism merely, be the occasion of setting up a false species of it; which  
 “ only false religion, or fantastical opinion, derived immediately from superstition and credulity, is able to effect †.” As to the third case, which renders a principle of virtue ineffectual, *viz.* its being opposed by contrary affections, — he says, That “ Atheism, though  
 “ it be plainly deficient, and without remedy,  
 “ in the case of ill judgment on the happiness of virtue, yet it is not indeed of necessity the cause of such ill judgment. For without  
 “ an absolute assent to any hypothesis of Theism, the advantages of virtue may possibly be seen  
 “ and own’d, and a high opinion of it established  
 “ in the mind ‡.”

Our noble author was sensible of the offence he had given, by seeming to speak favourably of Atheists, and by erecting a system of virtue independent of religion, or the belief of a Deity: and in a treatise he published some years

\* Character. vol. II. p. 44, 45.

† Ib. p. 45, 51, 52.

‡ Ib. p. 69.

LETTER after the *Inquiry*, intitled, *The Moralists, a*  
 1. *Philosophical Rhapsody*, makes an apology for  
 it: That “ he has endeavoured to keep the  
 “ fairest measures he could with men of this  
 “ sort,” [*viz.* atheistical persons, and men of  
 no religion] “ alluring them all he was able,  
 “ and arguing with a perfect indifferency even  
 “ on the subject of a Deity — having this  
 “ one chief aim and intention, how in the  
 “ first place to reconcile those persons to the  
 “ principles of virtue; that by this means, a  
 “ way might be laid open to religion, by re-  
 “ moving those greatest, if not only obstacles to  
 “ it, which arise from the vices and passions of  
 “ men. — That ’tis upon this account chiefly he  
 “ endeavours to establish virtue upon principles  
 “ by which he is able to argue with those, who  
 “ are not yet inclined to own a God, or future  
 “ state. — He owns, he has made virtue his  
 “ chief subject, and in some measure inde-  
 “ pendent on religion; yet he fancies he may  
 “ possibly appear at last as high a divine, as he  
 “ is a moralist:” — And says, “ He will ven-  
 “ ture to affirm, — That whosoever sincerely  
 “ defends virtue, and is a realist in morality,  
 “ must of necessity in a manner, by the same  
 “ scheme of reasoning, prove as very a realist  
 “ in divinity \*.” And elsewhere he says, That  
 “ we may justly as well as charitably conclude,  
 “ that it was his design in applying himself to the  
 “ men of looser principles, to lead them into

\* *Character.* vol. II. p. 266, 267, 268.

“ such

“ such an apprehension of the constitution of LETTER  
 “ mankind, and of human affairs, as might I.  
 “ form in them a notion of order in things,  
 “ and draw hence an acknowledgement of the  
 “ wisdom, goodness, and beauty, which is Su-  
 “ preme; that being thus far become profelytes,  
 “ they might be prepared for that divine love  
 “ which our religion would teach them, when  
 “ once they should embrace it, and form them-  
 “ selves to its sacred character \*.”

This must be own'd to be an handsome apology: So that if we take his Lordship's own account of his intention in his *Inquiry*, it was not to favour Atheism, but rather to reclaim men from it; to reconcile Atheists to the principles of virtue, and thereby bring them to a good opinion of religion. It may no doubt be of real service to the interests of virtue, to endeavour to make men sensible of its great excellency in itself, and its present natural advantages, which his Lordship sets forth at large, and in a very elegant manner. And this is no more than hath been often represented by those divines, who yet think it necessary to insist on the rewards and punishments of a future state. There are indeed many that have said, what no man who knows the world, and the history of mankind, can deny, that in the present situation of human affairs, a steady adherence to virtue often subjects a man to severe trials and sufferings; and that it frequently happeneth, that bad

\* Character. vol. II. p. 279.

LETTER <sup>I.</sup> and vicious men are in very prosperous outward circumstances; but I scarce know any that have maintained what his Lordship calls that *unfortunate opinion*, viz. That “virtue is *naturally* “an enemy to happiness in life;” or, who suppose, That “virtue is the *natural ill*, and vice “the *natural good* of any creature \*.” Nor would any friend to Christianity have found fault with his Lordship’s endeavouring to shew, that by the very frame of the human constitution, virtue has a friendly influence to promote our satisfaction and happiness, even in this present life; and that vice has naturally a contrary tendency. But certainly it was no-way necessary to his design, supposing it to have been, as he professes, to serve the cause of virtue in the world, to throw out so many insinuations as he has done against the being influenced by a regard to future rewards and punishments; as if it argued a higher degree of virtue to have no regard to them at all. And though in several passages he shews the advantage which arises to virtue from religion and the belief of a Deity, yet whilst he seems to allow that virtue may subsist, and even be carried to a considerable degree without it, I am afraid it will give encouragement to those he calls *the men of looser principles*; and that, instead of reclaiming them from Atheism, it will tend to make them easy in it, by leading them to think they may be good and virtuous men without any religion at all.

\* Character. vol. II. p. 71, 72.

His Lordship seems, from a desire of *keeping* LETTER I.  
*the fairest measures*, as he expresses it, *with*  
*men of this sort*, to have carried his complaisance  
too far, when he asserts, that Atheism has no  
direct tendency either to take away and destroy  
*the natural and just sense of right and wrong*,  
or to the setting up a *false species of it*. This  
is not a proper place to enter into a distinct con-  
sideration of this subject. I shall content my-  
self with producing some passages from the most  
applauded Doctor of modern Atheism, *Spinoza*,  
and who has taken the most pains to form it into  
a system. He proposeth, in the fifteenth chapter  
of his *Traëtatus Theologicopoliticus*, to treat of  
*the natural and civil right of every man. De*  
*jure uniuscujusque naturali et civili*. And  
the sum of his doctrine is this: That every  
man has a natural right to do whatever he has  
power to do, and his inclination prompts him  
to; and that the right extends as far as the  
force. By *natural right*, or *law*, *Jus et insti-*  
*tutum naturæ*, “ he understands nothing else  
“ but the rules of the nature of each indivi-  
“ dual, according to which it is determined to  
“ exist and act after a certain manner \*.” And  
after

\* Per jus et institutum naturæ nihil aliud intelligo, quam re-  
gulas naturæ uniuscujusque individui, secundum quas unum-  
quodque naturaliter determinatum concipimus ad certo modo ex-  
istendum et operandum. Ex. gr. pisces a natura determinati sunt  
ad natandum, magni ad minores comedendum, adeoque pisces  
summo naturali jure aqua potiuntur, et magni minores comedunt.  
— “ Sequitur unumquodque individuum jus summum habere ad  
omnia

L TER after having observed, that “ the large fishes  
 ET  
 I. “ are determined by nature to devour the  
 “ smaller, and that therefore they have a na-  
 “ tural right to do so;” — and that “ every in-  
 “ dividual has the *highest right* to do all things  
 “ which it has power to do;” he declares, That  
 “ in this case he acknowledges no difference be-  
 “ tween men and other individuals of nature,

“ omnia quæ potest. — Nec hic ullam agnoscimus differen-  
 “ tiam inter homines et reliqua naturæ individua, neque inter  
 “ homines ratione præditos, et inter alios qui veram rationem ig-  
 “ norant, neque inter fatuos, delirantes, et sanos.” Quare inter  
 homines quamdiu sub imperio solius naturæ vivere considerantur,  
 tam ille qui rationem nondum novit, vel qui virtutis habitum  
 nondum habet, ex solis legibus appetitus summo jure vivit, quam  
 ille qui ex legibus rationis vitam suam dirigit. Hoc est, sicuti  
 sapiens jus summum habet ad omnia quæ ratio dicitur, sive ex  
 legibus rationis vivendi; sic etiam ignarus et animi impotens  
 summum jus habet ad omnia quæ appetitus suadet, sive ex legi-  
 bus appetitus vivendi. Jus itaque naturale uniuscujusque homi-  
 nis, non sana ratione, sed cupiditate et potentia determinatur.—  
 Quicquid itaque unusquisque qui sub solo naturæ imperio confi-  
 deratur, sibi utile vel ductu sanæ rationis, vel ex affectuum im-  
 petu judicat, id summo naturæ jure appetere, et quacunquæ rati-  
 one, sive vi, sive dolo, sive precibus, sive quocunquæ demum  
 modo facilius poterit, ipsi capere licet, et consequenter pro hoste  
 habere eum, qui impedire vult, quo minus animum expleat  
 suum. Ex quibus sequitur jus et institutum naturæ sub quo  
 omnes nascuntur, et maxima ex parte vivunt, nihil nisi quod  
 nemo cupit, et nemo potest, prohibere; non contentiones, non  
 odia, non iram, non dolos, nec absolute aliquid quod appetitus  
 suadet, averfari. Nec mirum, nam natura non legibus humanæ  
 rationis, quæ non nisi verum utile et conservationem intendunt,  
 sed infinitis aliis, quæ totius naturæ, cujus homo particula est,  
 æternum ordinem respiciunt: ex cujus sola necessitate, omnia indi-  
 vidua certo modo determinantur ad existendum et operandum.—  
 Ostendimus jus naturale sola potentia cujusque determinari.—  
 Nemo, nisi promisso aliud accedat, de fide alterius potest esse  
 certus, quandoquidem unusquisque naturæ jure dolo agere po-  
 test; nec pacis stare tenetur, nisi spe majoris boni, vel metu  
 majoris mali.— Tract. Theolog. Polit. cap. xvi.

“ NOR

“ nor between men that make a right use of LETTER  
“ their reason and those that do not so; nor I.  
“ between wise men and fools.— That he that  
“ does not yet know reason, or has not attained  
“ to a habit of virtue, hath as much the highest  
“ natural right to live according to the sole  
“ laws of appetite, and to do what that in-  
“ clines him to, as he that directs his life by  
“ the rules of reason hath to live according to  
“ reason.” — Accordingly, he directly asserts,  
“ That the natural right of every man is deter-  
“ mined not by sound reason, but by inclina-  
“ tion, or appetite and power.— That there-  
“ fore whatever any man, considered as under  
“ the sole government of nature, judges to be use-  
“ ful for himself, whether led by sound reason,  
“ or prompted by his passions, he has the highest  
“ natural right to endeavour to procure it for  
“ himself any way he can, whether by force or  
“ fraud; and consequently to hold him for an  
“ enemy, who would hinder him from grati-  
“ fying his inclination: and that from hence it  
“ follows, that the right and law of nature,  
“ under which all are born, and for the most  
“ part live, only prohibits that which a man  
“ does not desire, or which is out of his power;  
“ nor is it averse to contentions, hatred, wrath,  
“ deceit, nor to any thing that the appetite puts  
“ him upon. And no wonder; for nature is  
“ not confined within the laws of human rea-  
“ son, which only intend the true benefit of  
“ mankind, but depends upon infinite other  
“ things,

LETTER<sup>“</sup>

I.

”

things, which respect the eternal order of universal nature, of which man is only a minute part; from the necessity of which alone all individuals are determined to exist and operate after a certain manner.” He often repeats it in that chapter, That “natural right is only determined by the power of every individual.” And he expressly asserts, That “no man can be sure of another man’s fidelity, except he think it his interest to keep his promise; since every man has a natural right to act by fraud or deceit, nor is obliged to stand to his engagements, but from the hope of greater good, or fear of greater ill.”

I think it must be owned, that these principles have not merely an *indirect* and *casual*, but a plain and direct tendency to take away or pervert the natural sense of *right* and *wrong*, or to introduce a false species of it, if the substituting power and inclination, instead of reason and justice, can be accounted so. This is to argue consequentially from Atheism, when all things are resolved into nature, and eternal necessity, by which are understood the necessary effects of matter and motion. *Spinoza* indeed owns, that it is more profitable to live according to the dictates of reason, or the prescriptions of the civil laws, than merely according to appetite or natural right. But whilst men think they have the highest natural right to do whatever they have power to do, and inclination



clination prompts them to, civil laws will be but feeble ties, and bind a man no farther than when he has not power, or thinks it not for his interest to break them. Virtue and vice, fidelity and fraud are on a level; the one equally founded in natural right as the other: And how any man can be truly virtuous upon this scheme I cannot see.

It appears to me therefore, that instead of endeavouring to shew that virtue may subsist without religion, or the belief of a God and a future state, one of the most important services that can be done to mankind is to shew the close connection there is between religion and virtue or good order, and that the latter cannot be maintained without the former. And this indeed plainly follows from some of the principles laid down by our noble author in his *Inquiry*.

Although he seems to have intended to shew that an Atheist may be really virtuous; and observes in a passage cited above, that without the belief of a Deity “the advantages of virtue may possibly be seen and own’d, and a high opinion of it established in the mind,” he there adds, “However it must be confessed, that the natural tendency of Atheism is very different\*.” Where he seems plainly to allow, that Atheism is *naturally* an enemy to virtue, and that the direct tendency of it is to hinder the mind from entertaining a right opi-

\* Character. vol. II. p. 69.

LETTER  
I. } nion of virtue, or from having a due sense of  
its advantages. And elsewhere speaking of the  
Atheistical belief he observes, that it “tends to  
“ the weaning the affections from every thing  
“ amiable and self-worthy. For how little  
“ disposed must a person be to love or admire  
“ any thing as orderly in the universe, who  
“ thinks the universe itself a pattern of disorder \*!” To this may be added another remarkable passage in which his Lordship declares, That “he who only doubts of a God may possibly lament his own unhappiness, and wish to be convinced.—But that he who denies a Deity is daringly presumptuous, and sets up an opinion against the sentiments of mankind, and being of society!” Where he seems plainly to pronounce that Atheism is subversive of all virtue, which in his scheme hath an essential relation to society, and the good of the public. And accordingly he adds, That ’tis easily seen, that “one of these,” *viz.* he that only doubts, “may bear a due respect to the magistrates and the laws, but not the other,” *viz.* he that denies a Deity, “who being obnoxious to them is justly punishable †.”

Several passages might be produced, in which his Lordship represents the tendency religion hath to promote virtue. He observes, That “nothing can more highly contribute to the

\* Character. vol. II. p. 70.

† *Ib.* p. 260.

“ fixing

“ fixing of right apprehensions, and a sound LETTER  
 “ judgment or sense of right and wrong, than I.  
 “ to believe a God, who is represented such,  
 “ as to be a true model, or example of the  
 “ most exact justice, and highest goodness and  
 “ worth \*!” And again, That “ this belief must  
 “ undoubtedly serve to raise and increase the af-  
 “ fection towards virtue, and help to submit and  
 “ subdue all other affections to this alone.---And  
 “ that, when this Theistical belief is intire and  
 “ and perfect, there must be a steady opinion of  
 “ the superintendency of a Supreme Being, a  
 “ witness and spectator of human life, and  
 “ conscious of whatsoever is felt or acted in  
 “ the universe, so that in the perfectest recess,  
 “ or deepest solitude, there must be one still  
 “ presumed remaining with us, whose presence  
 “ singly must be of more moment than that  
 “ of the most august assembly upon earth: and  
 “ that in such a presence, as the *shame* of guilty  
 “ actions must be the greatest of any, so —  
 “ must the honour be of well-doing, even un-  
 “ der the unjust censures of a world. And in  
 “ this case it is very apparent, how conducing  
 “ a perfect Theism must be to virtue, and how  
 “ great a deficiency there is in Atheism †.” He  
 shews, That “ where by the violence of rage, lust,  
 “ or any other counter-working passions, the  
 “ good affection may frequently be controuled  
 “ and overcome--if religion interposing creates a

\* Character. vol. II. p. 51.

† Ib. p. 57.

“ belief,

LETTER<sup>I.</sup> “ belief, that the ill passions of this kind, no  
 “ less than their consequent actions, are the  
 “ objects of a Deity’s animadversion; ’tis cer-  
 “ tain, that such a belief ‘must prove a season-  
 “ able remedy against vice, and be in a particu-  
 “ lar manner advantageous to virtue\*.” And  
 he concludes the first book of the *Inquiry con-  
 cerning virtue* with observing, That “ we may  
 “ hence determine justly the relation which  
 “ virtue has to piety: the first not being com-  
 “ plete but in the latter. And thus, saith he,  
 “ the perfection and height of virtue must be  
 “ owing to the belief of a God †.”

From these passages it sufficiently appears, that those who would separate virtue from religion cannot properly plead Lord *Shaftesbury’s* authority for it. And indeed not only is religion a friend to virtue, and of the highest advantage to it, but as it signifies proper affections and dispositions towards the Supreme Being, is itself the noblest virtue. It is true that his Lordship seems frequently to place virtue wholly in good affections towards mankind. But this appears to be too narrow a notion of it. He himself makes *virtue* and *moral rectitude* to be equivalent terms ‡; and moral rectitude seems as evidently and necessarily to include right affections towards God, as towards those of our own species. He that is deficient in this, must certainly be deficient in an essential branch of

\* *Character*, vol. II. p. 60, 61.  
 p. 77, 81.

† *Ib.* p. 76.

‡ *Ib.*

good affection, or moral rectitude. If a hu-<sup>LETTER</sup> man creature could not be said to be rightly disposed, that was destitute of affections towards its natural parents, can he be said to be rightly disposed, who hath not a due affection towards the *Common Parent*, as Lord *Shaftesbury* calls him, of all intellectual beings. This noble writer describes virtue to be that which is beautiful, fair, and amiable in disposition and action. And he asks, “ Whether there is on earth a fairer matter of speculation, a good-lier view or contemplation, than that of *a beautiful, proportioned, and becoming action* \*?” And is there any thing more beautiful, more justly proportioned, and more becoming, than the acting suitably to the relation we bear to the Supreme Being, and the serving, adoring, and honouring him, as far as we are capable of doing so? Is there such a beauty and harmony in good affections towards those of our own species, and must there not be still more beauty and excellency in having our minds formed to proper affections and dispositions towards our Maker, Preserver, and Benefactor, the *source and principle*, to use our author’s expressions, *of all being and perfection, the supreme and sovereign beauty, the original of all which is good and amiable*? His Lordship speaks in the highest terms of the pleasing consciousness which is the effect of love or kind affections towards mankind. But

\* Character. vol. II. p. 105.

certainly

LETTER  
I. } certainly there is nothing that can yield more of a divine satisfaction, than that which ariseth from a consciousness of a man's having approved himself to the best of beings, and endeavoured to promote his glory in the world, and to fulfil the work he hath given us to do. And it will be readily acknowledged, that a necessary part of this work is the doing good to our fellow-creatures.

The very notion he so frequently gives of virtue, as having an essential relation to a system, seems if understood in its proper extent to include religion, and cannot subsist without it. His Lordship indeed frequently explains this as relating to the system of the human species, to which we are particularly related, and of which we constitute a part. But he also represents the human system as only a part of the universal one, and observes that "as man must be considered as having a relation abroad to the system of his kind; so even the system of his kind to the animal system: this to the world (our earth) and this again to the bigger world, the universe \*." And that having recognized this uniform consistent fabric, and own'd the universal system, we must of consequence acknowledge an universal mind †." He asserts, that good affection in order to its being of the right kind must be *intire*: and that "a partial affection,

\* Character. vol. II. p. 286.

† Ib. p. 290.

“ or social love in part, without regard to a  
 “ complete society or whole, is in itself an in-  
 “ consistency, and implies an absolute contra-  
 “ diction \*.” But how can that affection to  
 the system be said to be intire, or of the right  
 kind, which hath no regard to the author of it,  
 on whom the whole system, the order and even  
 the very being of it, absolutely depends? and  
 without whom indeed there could be properly  
 no system at all, nothing but disorder and con-  
 fusion? On this occasion it will be proper to  
 produce a remarkable passage in his third  
 volume; where he observes, That “ if what  
 “ he had advanced in his *Inquiry*, and in his  
 “ following *Philosophic Dialogue* be real —  
 “ it will follow, that since man is so consti-  
 “ tuted by means of his rational part, as to be  
 “ conscious of this his more immediate relation  
 “ to the universal system, and principle of or-  
 “ der and intelligence, he is not only by na-  
 “ ture *sociable* within the limits of his own  
 “ species or kind, but in a yet more generous  
 “ and extensive manner. He is not only born  
 “ to virtue, friendship, honesty, and faith, but  
 “ to religion, piety, adoration, and a generous  
 “ surrender of his mind to whatever happens  
 “ from the *Supreme Cause* or order of things,  
 “ which he acknowleges intirely just and per-  
 “ fect †.”

\* Character. vol. II. p. 110, 113, 114.  
 p. 224.

† Ib. vol. III.

I have

LETTER I have insisted the more largely upon this, <sup>I.</sup> because many there are among us that talk highly of virtue, who yet seem to look upon religion to be a thing in which they have little or no concern. They allow that men are formed and designed to be useful to one another; but as to what is usually called piety towards God, or those acts of religion, of which God is the immediate object, this does not enter at all into their notion of virtue or morality. They slight it as a matter of no consequence; and think they may be good and virtuous without it. But not to urge, that religion or a true regard to the Deity, is the best security for the right performance of every other part of our duty, and furnisheth the strongest motives and engagements to it; which certainly ought greatly to recommend it to every lover of virtue; there is nothing which seems to be capable of a clearer demonstration from the frame of the human nature, and the powers and faculties with which man is endued, than that he alone of all the species of beings in this lower world, is formed with a capacity for religion, and that consequently this was one principal design of his creation, and without which he cannot properly answer the end of his being. To what hath been produced from the Earl of *Shaftesbury*, I shall add the testimony of another writer, whom no man will suspect of being prejudiced in favour of religion, the late Lord Viscount *Bolingbroke*; who, though he sometimes seems to  
make



make man only a higher kind of brute, and LETTER  
I.  
 blames those who suppose that the soul of man was made to *contemplate God*, yet at other times finds himself obliged to acknowledge, that man was principally designed and formed for religion. Thus in the specimen he gives of a meditation or soliloquy of a devout Theist, he talks of “feeling the superiority of his species;” and adds, “I should rouse in myself a grateful sense of these advantages above all others, that I am a creature capable of knowing, of adoring, and worshipping my Creator, capable of discovering his will in the law of my nature, and capable of promoting my happiness by obeying it\*.” And in another passage, after inveighing, as is usual with him, against the pride and vanity of philosophers and divines in exalting man, and flattering the pride of the human heart, he thinks fit to acknowledge, That “man is a *religious* as well as *social* creature, made to know and adore his Creator, to discover and to obey his will.— That greater powers of reason, and means of improvement, have been measured out to us than to other animals, that we might be able to fulfil the *superior* purposes of our *destination, whereof religion is undoubtedly the chief.* — and that in these the elevation and pre-eminence of our species over the inferior animals consists †.” I think it plainly followeth

\* Lord Bolingbroke's works, Vol. V. p. 390, 391. See also to the same purpose, *ib.* p. 340. † *Ib.* p. 470.

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from what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath here observed, and which seems to be perfectly just and reasonable, that they who live in an habitual neglect of religion, are chargeable with neglecting the chief purpose of their being, and that in which the true glory and pre-eminence of the human nature doth principally consist: and that consequently they are guilty of a very criminal conduct, and which they can by no means approve to the great Author of their existence, who gave them their noble powers, and to whom as the wise and righteous Governor of the world they must be accountable for their conduct.

I have been carried farther in my observations on this subject than I intended; but if this may be looked upon as a digression, I hope it will not be thought unsuitable to the main design I have in view.

*I am, Sir, &c.*



LETTER



## L E T T E R II.

*Unfair management in the French Translation of Mr. Collins's discourse of Free-thinking. Frauds of the Deistical writers in their quotations of authors. The parallel drawn by Mr. Chubb between the propagation of Christianity and the progress of Methodism, examined. Reflections on the Pamphlet intitled, Deism fairly stated, and fully vindicated. That author's pompous account of Deism, and his way of stating the question between Christians and Deists, considered. Concerning the differences among Christians about the way of knowing the Scriptures to be the word of God. The charge he brings against the Christian Religion as consisting only of unintelligible doctrines and useless institutions, and his pretence that the moral precepts do not belong to Christianity at all, but are the property of the Deists, shewn to be vain and groundless. The corruption of Christians no just argument against true original Christianity.*

S I R,

**I**N the article relating to Mr. Collins in the first volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*, some account is given of that gen-

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tleman's *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, and of the answers that were made to it. Since the publishing of that account, an observation hath occurred to me, which I think may be fitly inserted under that article. It may properly come in as a marginal note in p. 126. The observation is this.

“ There was a *French* translation of the *Discourse of Free-Thinking* carried on under Mr. Collins's own eye, and printed at the *Hague* in 1714, though it bears *London* in the title-page. In this translation several material alterations are made, and a different turn is given to several passages, from what was in Mr. Collins's original *English*. This is plainly done with a view to evade the charges which had been brought against him by Dr. Bentley under the character of *Phileleutherus Lipsiensis*; some of which charges that bore very properly against Mr. Collins's book as it was first published, will appear impertinent to those that judge only by this translation. But care is taken not to give the least notice of these alterations to the reader, upon whom it is made to pass for a faithful version of the original. All this is clearly shewn by the author of the *French* translation of Dr. Bentley's *Remarks on the Discourse of Free-Thinking*, which was printed at *Amsterdam* in 1738, under the title of *Friponnerie Laique des pretendus Esprits forts d'Angleterre*. The *Lay-Craft of the pretended Free-Think-*

“ *ers of England.* This Gentleman, Mr. DeLETTER  
 “ *la Chapelle,* has made it appear that Mr. II.  
 “ *Collins,* and his Translator who acted under  
 “ his direction, have been guilty of palpable  
 “ falsifications and frauds, which ill became one  
 “ who had in that very book raised such a loud  
 “ outcry against the Clergy for *corrupting* and  
 “ *mangling of authors,* and for *pious frauds*  
 “ *in the translating and publishing of books.*”

I cannot but observe on this occasion, what must have occurred to every one that has been much conversant in the Deistical writers, that it would be hard to produce any persons whatsoever who are chargeable with more unfair and fraudulent management in their quotations, in curtailing, adding to, or altering the passages they cite, or taking them out of their connection, and making them speak directly contrary to the sentiments of the authors. It is well known that they affect frequently to quote Christian divines; but they seldom do it fairly, and often wilfully misrepresent, and pervert their meaning. Many glaring instances of this sort might be produced out of the writings of the most eminent Deistical authors, if any man should think it worth his while to make a collection to this purpose.

What I shall next mention hath little coherence with what has been just now observed; but if it may pass for a proper hint I am satisfied. It relates to that part of the Remarks on Mr. *Chubb's posthumous works,* in the first vo-

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II.  lume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*, which concerns the argument from prophecy. In p. 369, lin. 12, from the bottom after *events*, the following paragraph may be inserted, without breaking the line.

It was wisely ordered that miracles and prophecy should go together, whereby not only the most striking evidence was given to the truth and divinity of the Revelation, at the time when it was first promulgated; but provision was made that there should be a growing evidence, which might acquire new force and strength by the successive accomplishment of the prophecies in the several different periods to which they refer.

There is another observation relating to Mr. *Chubb's posthumous Works* which I shall here subjoin; and which was originally prepared to be inserted in the first volume of *the View*, &c. but was neglected. In p. 384 of that volume lin. 9. after *Letter*, let there be a new line, and let what follows be inserted.

After having considered the attempts made by Mr. *Chubb* to invalidate the argument in behalf of divine Revelation from prophecy and miracles, it will not be improper to consider what he hath offered to take off the force of the argument, which hath been frequently urged, from the wonderful propagation of Christianity, in behalf of its divine original. He acknowledgeth, that “it is improbable that Christianity  
“ should take place, and prevail in the world,  
“ and to the degree it did, or at least that we  
“ are

“ are told it did, supposing the history of Christ’s  
 “ life and ministry to be a fiction \*.” But then as  
 if he had granted too much, he observes, that  
 “ The present run of Methodism, without any  
 “ miraculous power attending it, or any exter-  
 “ nal evidence to back it, takes off from the  
 “ weight and force of the argument †.” He  
 often returns to this, and in several parts of his  
 book seems willing to run a parallel between  
 the progress of Christianity, and that of Me-  
 thodism. But this only shews the strong pre-  
 judices of those who glory in the character of  
 Free-Thinkers, and how forward they are to  
 catch at the slightest pretences for setting aside  
 the evidences brought in favour of Christianity.  
 For in reality there can be no reasonable parallel  
 drawn between the one and the other. There  
 is no great wonder in it, that professed Chris-  
 tians pretending to a high degree of purity and  
 piety, and to teach true scriptural Christianity,  
 should make some progress, not in Pagan or Ma-  
 hometan, or even in Popish Countries, for I do  
 not find our Methodists take upon them to make  
 many conversions there, but in a country where  
 scriptural Christianity is professed, and a full to-  
 leration allowed. There is nothing in this but  
 what may be easily accounted for, without sup-  
 posing any thing supernatural in the case. They  
 do not pretend to new extraordinary revelations,  
 nor appeal to any miraculous facts, as the *French*

\* *Chubb’s Posthumous Works*, Vol. II. p. 40, 41. † *Ib.*  
 marg. note.

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and that the Religion they taught should in spite of all opposition prevail, and at length overturn the whole established superstition which had every worldly advantage to support it: this cannot be reasonably accounted for without supposing the interposition of a divine power, and the truth of the extraordinary facts on which it was founded.

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The next addition I propose is a large one relating to the Pamphlet intitled *Deism fairly stated, &c.* This was very slightly passed over in the first volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*. But as I find some are of opinion that it might be of use to examine it more distinctly, I shall now be more large and particular in my observations upon it. The account that was given of it in the first volume of the *View* reach'd from the beginning of the 14th Letter in p. 402, to p. 406 lin. 10. Instead of which read from the beginning of the 14th Letter as follows.

I am now hastening to the conclusion of the work. But first it will be proper to take notice of a pamphlet which was omitted before, intitled *Deism fairly stated, and fully vindicated*, and which was published in 1746. This tract though originally written by another hand is said to have been revised by Mr. *Chubb*, and to have undergone considerable alterations and amendments. And as it hath been much boasted of, I shall distinctly consider both the account the author of it gives of Deism, and the attempt he hath made to expose the Christian Revelation.

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of Dr. *Tindal*, and it might be sufficient to refer to the remarks that have been made upon that writer's scheme, of which some account was given in the 10th Letter. But let us examine our author's pretensions more distinctly.

He tells us that "Deism is no other than the religion essential to man, the true original religion of nature and reason\*." And because Christian divines have asserted, that the Gospel contains the true religion of reason and nature, he represents them, and particularly the present Bishop of *London*, and Mr. (now Dr.) *Samuel Chandler*, as acknowledging that "Deism is the alone excellency and true glory of Christianity," and pretends that what he has cited from them proves that "Deism is all in the Christian institution, that can possibly approve itself to the true genuine reason of man †." And accordingly he declares, that "every thing that is enjoined in the Gospel to be believed as a rational doctrine, or practised as a natural duty, relating to God, our neighbours, and ourselves, is an established part of Deism ‡." And through his whole book he supposes Deism to comprehend every doctrine and precept which is founded in reason and nature, or as he sometimes expresseth it, in *truth* and *reason*, *i. e.* it comprehendeth every doctrine and precept that is true and just and reasonable.

\* Deism fairly Stated, &c. p. 5. † Ib. p. 6. ‡ Ib. p. 7.

That

That we may judge of the fairness of this LETTER II. writer in stating the point, it is proper to observe, that the thing he would be thought to vindicate is the religion of those that call themselves Deists, and who reject revelation, and oppose Christianity. This is the only Deism in question, and which it concerneth him to state and vindicate. But he has thought fit all along to represent Deism and natural Religion as terms of the same signification: Whereas Deism, as we are now considering it, is to be understood, not precisely of natural Religion as comprehending those truths which have a real foundation in reason and nature, and which is so far from being opposite to Christianity, that it is one great design of the Gospel to clear and enforce it; but of that religion which every man is to find out for himself by the mere force of natural reason, independent of all revelation, and exclusive of it. It is concerning this that the enquiry properly proceeds. Dr. *Tindal* was sensible of it; and therefore is for sending every man to the oracle in his own breast as the only guide to duty and happiness, which alone he is to consult, without having any regard to revelation. And accordingly he frequently represents the religion of nature as so clearly known to all men, even to *those that cannot read in their mother tongue*, as to render any farther revelation perfectly needless and useless. But if the question be concerning natural religion in this sense, it is far from deserving all the fine  
 enco;

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II.  so liberally bestows upon it: He represents it as so perfect, that nothing can be added to it; and therefore will not allow that Christianity can be said to be “grounded on natural religion, or “to be an improvement of it.” For he declares, that he “cannot possibly conceive how an entire and perfect structure (which is the case of “natural religion) can be only a foundation of “a perfect structure, or how a perfect religion “can be improved\*.” Here he securely assumes the very thing in question, *viz.* That the religion which every man knoweth of himself by his own unassisted reason, is so perfect as to be incapable of receiving any addition or improvement, even from divine revelation: which is in other words to say that every man by his own reason exclusively of all revelation, takes in the whole of religious truth and duty, which is founded in the nature of things, and knows as much of it already as God can teach him: And that a divine Revelation can give him no farther light or stronger assurance, relating to any thing that it is proper for him to believe or practice in religion, than what his bare reason informs him of without it.

Among the encomiums which our author bestows upon Deism, one is, that it is “no other “than the religion essential to man†;” a phrase that he and others of the Deistical writers seem fond of.

\* Deism fairly Stated, p. 13.

† *Ib.* p. 5, 13.

But will these sagacious gentlemen undertake to inform the world, what kind or degree of religion is essential to the human nature? Or, if they could oblige the world with that discovery, is nothing valuable in religion, but what is essential to man? If revelation discovereth to us some things of importance which we could not attain to the knowledge of by bare unassisted reason; or giveth us farther assurances concerning some things, as to which we were doubtful before, and setteth them in a clearer light; or exhibiteth a more complete system of duty; or furnisheth more powerful motives to animate us to the practice of it; must all these discoveries be rejected, under pretence that what we thus receive by revelation is not essential to man? Might not all improvements of every kind be discarded for the same reason? And so man must be left in his pure essentials. And then what a fine figure would the human nature make?

Besides this general account of Deism, our author takes upon him to exhibit some fundamental *credenda* of a Deist. And he might easily find a plausible scheme of natural religion formed ready to his hand by Christian writers, and then put it upon the world for pure genuine Deism. Among these fundamental articles of the religion of a Deist, he reckons the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments. But is this a point in which the Deists are agreed? Lord *Bolingbroke* every-where sets up for a Deist of the first rank, and glories in that character,

LETTER II. rafter, and yet he does all he can to weaken or subvert that which is here put upon us as a fundamental article of the Deistical creed. And Mr. *Chubb*, who no doubt would pass with our author for a true Deist, though sometimes, like this writer, he makes a great shew of believing not only the truth but the importance of that doctrine, yet in several passages of his *Farewel to his Readers*, and especially in his fourth and fifth sections, where he treats professedly of this subject, setteth himself to shew that it is altogether uncertain, and incapable of being proved, and that the probability lies against it\*. Thus it is that these Gentlemen are sometimes willing to make a fair appearance with their principles, till persons are drawn in, and fully initiated in the mysteries of Deism.

This author gives us twelve propositions with great pomp, most of which have nothing to do with the debate between Christians and Deists, and others of them are very ambiguous †. In his seventh proposition he layeth it down as a principle, that “to govern our conduct by our reason is our duty, and all that God requireth of us.” If the meaning be, that God requireth nothing from us but what we know by our bare unassisted reason to be our duty; and that if any thing farther be revealed to be our duty, we are not obliged to perform it, because we did not know it to be so by our own natural reason in-

\* *View of the Deistical Writers*, Vol. I. p. 326, & seq.

† *Deism fairly Stated*, &c. p. 37.—40.

depend-

dependently of that revelation, it is false and absurd. For when God requireth us to be governed by our reason, it must be supposed to be his intention, that we should take in all proper helps and assistances. And if he is pleased in his great goodness to give us additional discoveries of his will and our duty for enlightening and assisting our reason, then certainly we are obliged, and it is what reason itself and the religion of nature requireth of us, to pay a regard to those discoveries; so as to believe the truths which he has been pleased to reveal, and to practice those duties which he has seen fit to injoin: and not to do so would be highly criminal.

The four last of his twelve propositions are designed to shew, that reason and nature sufficiently instruct us without revelation, as to the methods of reconciliation with the Deity when we have offended him by our sins, and give us a certain assurance that God will reinstate us in his favour upon our repentance and reformation. I have elsewhere considered this subject at large in answer to *Tindal* who had particularly insisted upon it\*. At present I shall only observe, that though nature and reason seem to direct us to repentance and reformation in case of our being conscious of having offended God, and transgressed his holy laws, yet reason and nature could not give us certain information, how far

\* The Answer to Christianity as old as the Creation, Vol. I. Chap. vi.

repent-

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repentance shall be available to avert the punishment we had incurred, or what shall be the extent of the divine forgiveness, or how far an obedience like our's mixed with many failures and defects, and which falleth short in many instances of what the divine law requires, shall be rewarded. We do not know enough of God, of the reasons and ends of the divine Government, and of what may be necessary for vindicating the authority of his laws, to be able to pronounce with certainty, by the mere light of our own unassisted reason, what measures his governing wisdom and righteousness may think fit to take with regard to guilty creatures that have sinned against him. Will any reasonable man pretend, that God himself cannot discover any thing to us, which it might be proper for us to know, relating to the methods of his dealings towards us, the terms of our acceptance with him, or the retributions of a future state, but what we ourselves knew as well before? Or, if he should condescend to make discoveries to us of this sort, and give us assurances relating to matters of such great importance, ought we not to be thankful for such discoveries? Especially since it is certain in fact, that men in all ages and nations have been under great anxieties and uncertainties about the proper means of propitiating an offended Deity.

Our author mentions it to the praise of Deism, that "it is that religion of nature and reason, which was believed and practised by *Socrates*"



“*crates* and those of old,” whom he repre-<sup>LETTER</sup> sents as having been *ornaments* to human nature\*. <sup>II.</sup> Thus he seems to think it a greater honour to be a disciple of *Socrates* than of *Jesus Christ*. But why are we to be turned back to the religion of *Socrates*, who have a light so vastly superior to that which he enjoyed? However he may be justly commended for having attained so far, considering the circumstances he was under (though in many things he fell in with the established superstitions of his age and country) is this a reason why we should be sent to that philosopher to learn a right scheme of religion, when we have a much more excellent one in our hands, and recommended by a far higher authority? He was himself sensible of his need of farther assistances, and a divine instructor; and shall we who have that inestimable advantage, despise the light given us from heaven, and be desirous to return to that state of darkness and uncertainty of which he complained, and from which he wanted to be delivered?

The remarks that have been made will help us to judge of those passages, in which he pretendeth to give the true state of the question between Deists and Christians. “The single  
“ question, saith he, between Christians and De-  
“ ists is, whether the belief of rational doctrines,  
“ and the practice of natural duties, are all that  
“ is strictly necessary with regard to the divine

\* Deism fairly stated, p. 5.

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“ approbation, and consequently human happiness \*?” And again, when he professes to come to the point, he says, “ The grand foundation of the difference between the Deists and the religious of all other persuasions is, whether any doctrine or precept that has not its foundation *apparently* in reason or nature, can be of the essence of religion, and with propriety be said to be a religious doctrine or precept †.” Here he supposes, and it runs through his whole book, that nothing can be properly said to belong to religion, but what plainly appeareth to the understanding of every man, without any assistance from divine revelation, to be founded in nature and reason. The question then, though not clearly stated by this writer, is this: Whether God can make any additional discoveries in relation to doctrines to be believed, or duties to be practised, concerning which we had no certain information by the bare light of unassisted nature and reason? And if God hath made such discoveries, whether it would not in that case be necessary that those to whom these discoveries are made, should believe those doctrines, and practise those duties? Whether because our own natural reason did not inform us of them without revelation, therefore when they are revealed to us we may safely and innocently reject them as uselets and unnecessary, and as not belonging

\* Deism fairly stated, p. 7. See also p. 8, 9, 10. † b. p. 14.

to religion at all? Or, whether reason and nature do not require it of us as an indispensable duty, to pay a just submission and regard to the significations and discoveries of the divine will concerning truth or duty, in whatever way they are made known to us? These are questions, which one should think, would admit of an easy decision; since nothing could be more absurd, than to lay it down as a principle, that God can make no farther discoveries of truth and duty to be believed and practised by us, but what all men know of themselves by their own unassisted reason; or, that if he should, we are not obliged to receive or regard those discoveries.

It is very usual with the Deistical writers, and this author among the rest, to put the question, whether reason or revelation be the best guide, as if there was an opposition or inconsistency between them. But the proper question is, whether reason left merely to itself, and with the many frailties, corruptions, and defects to which it is now subject, or reason with the assistance of divine revelation, be the best guide to duty and happiness? Revelation indeed would be of little use, if we were to take his account of it. He tells us, that by "pure revelation" must be meant that which is of such a nature as to be quite out of reason's province to form any judgment about it.—That matters supernatural are incapable of an examination by natural reason, or of being approved as

LETTER <sup>II.</sup> “reasonable—And that surely no man can be  
 “rationally convinced of what lies quite out  
 “of the reach of his reasoning faculties to  
 “form any judgment at all about\*.” This  
 he frequently repeats, and seems to value him-  
 self upon this way of putting the case. But  
 it is grossly misrepresented. None of the friends  
 of revelation understand by it, that about which  
 we are not capable of forming any judgment  
 at all. On the contrary, they generally agree,  
 that we must make use of our reason, both in  
 judging of the evidences of divine revelation,  
 whereby it is proved to be from God, and  
 of the sense and meaning of its doctrines and  
 precepts. But our author thinks fit to play  
 upon the word *supernatural*, as if by it were  
 meant that which is absolutely unintelligible  
 and absurd: Whereas a thing may be so far su-  
 pernatural, that we could not have discovered  
 it merely by our own reason without a divine  
 revelation, and yet when discovered to us we  
 may be able to form a judgment concerning  
 it, and may see it to be worthy of God, and  
 of an excellent tendency, and as such our rea-  
 son may approve it.

Having considered that part of the pamphlet,  
 in which the author pretends to give a fair state  
 and vindication of Deism as opposed to reve-  
 lation, I shall now take some notice of what he

\* Deism fairly stated, p. 2, 24.

hath advanced with regard to the Christian revelation in particular. LETTER  
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He says, “The material question between  
 “rational Christians and Deists depends upon  
 “the proof that is made by Christians, that  
 “the Scriptures are a divine revelation, and the  
 “very word of God. For if this point be  
 “proved, the controversy is at an end.” But  
 here he complains of the want of unanimity  
 among Christians in a point of such importance.  
 — “The Roman Catholics say, we know  
 “the Scriptures to be the word of God only  
 “by the testimony of the church. And among  
 “Protestants, some say, they are known to be  
 “the word of God by *themselves*, to those  
 “only whose eyes the spirit of God is pleased  
 “to open to perceive the characters of divine  
 “truth impressed on them: Others maintain,  
 “that they will manifestly appear to be the  
 “the word of God by themselves, upon an  
 “honest investigation of mere natural reason,  
 “to any man who shall impartially exercise it  
 “about them\*.” But if the matter be rightly  
 considered, there is not so great a difference  
 among Christian writers about the way of know-  
 ing the scriptures to be the word of God, as is  
 pretended. Christians in general are agreed,  
 that the extraordinary facts recorded in the Gos-  
 pel are true, and that those facts prove the divine  
 mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the truth

\* Deism fairly stated, p. 16.—24.

LETTER <sup>II.</sup> and divinity of that scheme of religion which was published to the world in his name. They agree, that the scriptures contain a faithful and authentic account of the doctrines and laws delivered by Christ and his apostles, and of the illustrious attestations whereby they were confirmed. That they were committed to writing by the apostles themselves, who were eye and ear witnesses of what they relate, or by their most intimate companions, and were published in the first age of the Christian church, the age in which those doctrines and laws were delivered, and the facts were done. That these writings have remarkable internal characters of truth and divinity in the goodness and excellency of the doctrines, the purity of the precepts, the force and power of the motives, that unaffected simplicity and impartial regard to truth which every-where appears, and in the admirable tendency of the whole to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind, without any traces or views of worldly policy, ambition, avarice or sensuality. And though some talk of these characters as discernible by the aid of the Holy Spirit, and others by the investigation of human reason, yet neither do the former intend to exclude human reason, from having any concern in that enquiry; nor do the latter design to exclude the assistance of the Holy Spirit; since it is generally acknowledged among Christians, and is highly agree-

agreeable to reason itself, that it is proper to apply to God, *the author of light, and giver of all inward illumination*, as Lord Herbert calls him, to assist us in our enquiries, and by purifying our souls from vicious affections and corrupt prejudices to prepare our minds for a due reception of religious and moral truth. I add, that though some have talked of corruptions in the sacred writings, yet Christians are generally agreed, that the scriptures are transmitted to us without any such general corruption as to make any alteration in the doctrines and facts, and that they are delivered down to us by a credible uninterrupted tradition, greater than can be produced for any other books in the world; by the testimony not merely of the church in one age, but in every age, from the time in which they were written; and not merely by any one party of Christians, but by those of different sects and parties, by friends and enemies. Any one that considereth the several things now mentioned, and which have been often urged by Christians of all denominations, by the best of the Popish as well as Protestant writers, who have appeared in defence of Christianity, will see that there is a more general agreement among them, in what concerneth the proofs of the divine original and authority of the sacred writings, than our author seems willing to allow.

With regard to *Prophecy* and *Miracles*, which are insisted on by all Christian writers as

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proofs of the divinity of the Christian religion, he will not allow them to be any proofs of it at all. Because they do not prove, that “ The collection of tracts commonly called the Bible were written by the persons respectively whose names they bear: That the Deity immediately dictated to each writer the subject matter contained therein: And that those books have been faithfully transmitted down to us without any corruption, alteration, addition, or diminution\*.” Mr. *Chubb* has the same thought, and seems very fond of it, for he has it over and over again in his *Farewel to his Readers*. But if prophecies and miracles exhibited sufficient credentials to the divine mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his apostles, who published to the world the doctrines and laws of the Christian religion; and if the scriptures contain a just and faithful account of those prophecies and miracles, and of the doctrines and laws so attested and confirmed, and delivered by those divinely authorized teachers; doth not this lay a just foundation for receiving those doctrines and laws as of divine authority? As to their being written by the persons whose names they bear, and their being safely transmitted to us without any material corruption or alteration, this needeth no miracles to prove it. It must be proved by other mediums, such as by the acknowledgement of

\* Deism fairly stated, p. 22, 26.



all mankind are sufficient to prove things of LETTER II. that kind. If these writings can be traced up, as they certainly may, from our own times by unquestionable evidence to the very age in which they were written; and if they have been all along acknowledged to have been written by those to whom they are ascribed, and even the enemies who lived nearest those times never contested it; and if it can be demonstrated, that, as the case was circumstanced, a general corruption of those writings in the doctrines and facts, if any had attempted it, would have been an impossible thing; this ought to satisfy any impartial enquirer. And this is capable of as clear a proof as the nature of the thing can admit, and which, as hath been already hinted, is superior to what can be produced for any other book in the world. And the man that would doubt of such evidence in any other case, would be looked upon as ridiculously scrupulous, and be thought to carry his scepticism to an unreasonable height.

As to the subject matter of the Christian revelation, this writer is for stripping it of every doctrine that is founded in nature and reason; though there are several important doctrines of that kind, *e. g.* those relating to the attributes and providence of God, and a state of future retributions, which Christianity was manifestly intended to confirm and establish, and set in a clearer light. If we are to take his account of it, it consisteth wholly of *speculative, metaphysical,*

LETTER  
II. } *sical, unintelligible doctrines, which lie out of the reach of reason to determine whether they be true or false, or to pass any judgment at all about them; and of positive institutions, which he pretends by the confession of Christian divines are no constituent parts of religion\**. By saying they are no constituent parts of religion, he evidently intends that they have nothing to do with religion, and are of no use or significance at all: Whereas the divines he refers to agree, that the positive institutions of Christianity do belong to religion as valuable instrumental duties, which have a tendency to subserve and promote the great ends of all religion, and are, when rightly improved, of signal use and benefit.

After having observed, that many parts of scripture are *mysterious and unintelligible*, he saith, that to suppose that God gives forth *unintelligible instructions and propositions to his creatures, is to prove him in fact a mere trifler* †. And he urges, that “As certain as a being of perfect rectitude has given a revelation, so certain it is, that not any thing in that revelation can be found on a strict enquiry unrevealed, *i. e.* not understood by men of learning, penetration, diligence, and industry ‡.” The design of this is to insinuate, that if there be any one thing in the bible,

\* Deism fairly stated, p. 2, 6, 16, 24, 58. † Ib. p. 26. 34.

‡ Ib. p. 95.

even in the prophetical parts of it, which is not understood by men of learning and diligence, the whole is false: or, if there can be any circumstance in the revelation obscure, it cannot be a true divine revelation. But may it not reasonably be supposed, that in a revelation designed not merely for any one particular age, but for the use of mankind in every succeeding age, as there are many things, and those of the greatest importance, sufficiently clear and intelligible at all times, so there may be some things not well understood at one time, which afterwards are cleared up by farther inquiry, or a more diligent search, or by comparing predictions with events? Or, may not things which are revealed to us as far as it is necessary they should be so, yet have some things attending them, the manner of which we are not able clearly to explain and understand? Is not this the case of many important points of what is called natural religion, relating to the providence and attributes of God, the divine eternity, immensity, omniscience, the creation of the world, &c.? And must we reject what we do understand, and the great usefulness of which we clearly apprehend, because there is something relating to it which we cannot distinctly conceive?

As to the objections he makes against some particular doctrines of Christianity, as unintelligible and absurd, or at least as absolutely useless, this intirely depends upon the strange and unfair

LETTER <sup>II.</sup> unfair representation he has been pleased to make of them. Thus he supposes Christians to maintain it as a doctrine of scripture, that “an original, uncompounded, immaterial and pure spirit, should, like one of the derived, compounded, material, human species, have a Son\*.” As if Christians understood God’s having a Son in the same gross, literal, and carnal sense, in which one man begets another.

He pronounces, that “the supposed satisfaction for sin by Christ’s death, is a doctrine entirely repugnant to reason, and as such ought to be rejected with scorn †.” Mr. *Chubb* has passed the same censure upon it, which is owing to the absurd light in which he has thought fit to represent it, concerning which see the first volume of *the View*, &c. p. 357, 358. But the doctrine of our redemption and reconciliation through the obedience and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, considered as taught in the holy scriptures, hath nothing in it but what is worthy of God, and of an excellent tendency.

He mentions another doctrine, which he owns to be intelligible enough, but represents it as good for nothing, and as of no more consequence to the world in general, than there being a burning mountain in the kingdom of *Naples* is an advantage to the people of *Eng-*

\* Deism fairly stated, p. 66.

† *Ib.* p. 41.

*land.* And he thinks “ it is greatly improbable, LETTER  
 “ that God should especially interpose to ac- II  
 “ quaint the world, with what mankind would  
 “ do altogether as well without \*.” The  
 doctrine he here refers to is that of God’s judg-  
 ing the world by Jesus Christ. But this rightly  
 considered is a noble part of the Gospel scheme,  
 and capable of being improved to the most ex-  
 cellent purposes. It renders the whole harmo-  
 nious and consistent, in that the same glorious  
 and divine Person by whom God made the  
 world, and by whom as the great instrument he  
 carried on his gracious designs for recovering  
 mankind from their ruinous and lost estate, is  
 appointed to be the judge of all men, and dis-  
 penser of future retributions. And what far-  
 ther shews the propriety of appointing Christ to  
 be the judge, is, that this is the last perfective  
 act of the kingdom and dominion committed  
 to him as Mediator, and that it is to be regarded  
 as a reward of his amazing humiliation and self-  
 abasement, and of his unparalled obedience  
 and sufferings in our nature, in compliance with  
 his heavenly Father’s will. To which it may  
 be added, that nothing can be fuller of comfort  
 to good men, than that the benevolent Saviour  
 of mankind will judge the world in the Father’s  
 name; since it yields a satisfactory proof that it  
 is the will of God, that the judgment should  
 be conducted, not with the utmost rigour of

\* Deism fairly stated, p. 35.

LETTER <sup>II.</sup> unallayed justice, but with great equity, so as to make all proper allowances for human weakness and infirmity, as far as is consistent with unbiassed truth and righteousness. And at the same time it hath a manifest tendency to strike an awe into the impenitent rejecters of the divine grace and goodness, to consider that they must be accountable to that Lord and Saviour whom they rejected and despised. What a mighty enforcement must it give to his authority and laws, that he himself shall call us to an account as to our obedience or disobedience to those laws, and will have it in his power to fulfil his own glorious promises to them that believe and obey him, and to execute his awful threatenings against the finally impenitent and disobedient!

There are several other things he repeats which are urged by almost every Deistical Writer, and which I have had occasion frequently to mention, such as the contradictory interpretations put on several passages of scripture, different translations, errors of transcribers, &c. But that which he seems to lay a particular stress upon is the corruption of Christians. He speaks of the *abominable wickedness that has rode triumphant* in the Christian world. And that “the *Americans* have too much reason to consider the coming of Christians and Christianity among them as the greatest evil and curse that ever befel them\*.” But if pro-

\* Deism fairly stated, p. 47, 48.

fessed Christians have made religion a cover for LETTER  
 their ambition, avarice, and cruelty, Christi- II.  
 anity is not accountable for this. And who-  
 ever considers the best accounts of the *Ameri-*  
*cans* before Christianity came among them ;  
 their gross ignorance and barbarity, their hu-  
 man sacrifices, and the abominable vices and  
 customs which prevailed among them \*, must be  
 sensible that if the pure religion of Jesus, as  
 taught in the Gospel by Christ and his apostles,  
 had been published and received among them in  
 its genuine purity and simplicity, it would have  
 been the happiest thing that could have befallen  
 them. And the greatest fault is, that little care  
 has been taken to instruct them and the other  
 heathen nations, in the true Christian religion as  
 delivered in the holy scriptures. Notwithstanding  
 the corruptions so complained of in the Christian  
 world, it is undeniable, that what there is of  
 knowlege and true religion among men, is  
 principally where Christianity is professed. But  
 if all were true that is pretended concerning the  
 depravity of those that call themselves Chri-  
 stians, it would only prove that they are very  
 much fallen from the religion they profess, but  
 not that Christianity itself is false, or was not  
 originally from God. Whilst it can be shewn,  
 as it may be with the utmost evidence, that con-  
 sidered in itself, and as contained in the scrip-  
 tures, it is of the most excellent tendency, and

\* See Bayle's Dictionary, under the article.

that.

LETTER II. that the uniform design of its doctrines, precepts, promises and threatenings, is to promote the cause of virtue and righteousness in the world, and to reclaim men from vice and wickedness; it is certainly very unreasonable and unfair to make Christianity answerable for the abuses and corruptions it condemneth. If every thing must be rejected which hath been abused, government and civil polity, knowledge and literature, religion, liberty, and reason itself must be discarded.

One of the most remarkable things in the tract we are now considering, is, that the author will not allow that the moral precepts of Christianity properly belong to it at all, or make any part of the Christian religion. He pretends, that Christian divines in order to render Christianity amiable, have decked her with the graceful ornaments of moral precepts; whereas in Christianity the moral precepts are but borrowed ware, the property of the Deists, and as much distinguished from Christianity, as Christianity is from Mahometanism. Thus he hath found out an admirable expedient to strip Christianity of what hath been hitherto esteemed one of its principal glories, the holy and excellent precepts which the great Author of our religion taught and enjoined in the name of God, and to enforce which by the most weighty and important motives was one great design of his and his apostles ministry, do not, it seems, belong to Christianity at all. Moral precepts, according



ing to this writer, make no part of divine revelation, and of the scheme of religion delivered in the Gospel, though to clear and shew them in their just extent, and enforce them by a divine authority, and by the most prevailing motives, seems to be one of the noblest ends for which a divine revelation could be given to mankind. Supposing, which was really the case, that the world was sunk into an amazing darkness and corruption, there was nothing that was more wanted, than to have a pure system of morals, containing the whole of our duty with respect to God, our neighbours, and ourselves, delivered not as the opinions of wise men and philosophers, but as the laws of God himself, and enforced by all the sanctions of a divine authority, and by all the charms of the divine grace and goodness. This is what hath been done by the Christian revelation; and its great usefulness to this purpose, and the need the world stood in of it, is excellently represented by Mr. *Locke* in his *Reasonableness of Christianity* \*, quoted at large by Dr. *Benson* in his remarks on this pamphlet, who very justly observes, that this great man had fully obviated before-hand, all that the author of *Deism fairly stated* hath advanced on this subject.

The last argument he urgeth against the Christian revelation, is drawn from its not having been universally spread in all ages and nations.

\* *Locke's works*, vol. II. p 575—579. 4th edit.

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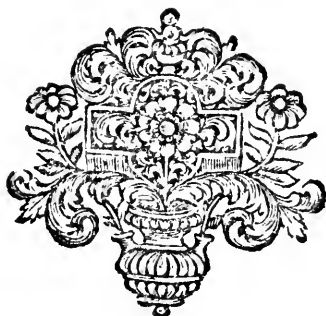
I shall not say any thing here to this objection, which hath been often repeated and answered. It had been particularly insisted upon by Dr. *Tindal*, and was fully considered in the answers that were made to him. Some notice was taken of it in the observations on Lord *Herbert's* scheme \*. And it may be observed that Mr. *Chubb* himself seems to think that no great stress should be laid upon it; and he will not take upon him to affirm, that the non-universality of a revelation is a just objection against its divinity †.

Soon after *Deism fairly stated*, &c. appeared, Dr. *Benson* published animadversions upon it, in the second edition of the *Reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the Scriptures*. London, 1746. To which there is added an appendix, in which he solidly vindicates the arguments he had offered in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, &c. against the exceptions of this writer; and charges him not only with false reasonings, but with gross misrepresentations. The same charge is urged against him in a tract published by the reverend Mr. *Capel Berrow*, though without his name, intitled, “ Deism  
“ not consistent with the religion of nature  
“ and reason, wherein are obviated the most  
“ popular objections brought against Christi-  
“ anity, those especially which are urged by a

\* See *View of the Deistical Writers*, Vol. I. p. 30, et seq. and Vol. II. p. 560, 561. † *Chubb's* post. works, Vol. I. p. 218, 219.

“moral philosopher, in a late extraordinary  
 “pamphlet, stiled, *Deism fairly stated and*  
 “*fully vindicated,*” in a letter to a friend.  
*London, 1751.* There were other answers to  
*Deism fairly stated,* which I have not seen. I  
 shall conclude my reflections upon it with ob-  
 serving, that this pamphlet furnishes remarkable  
 instances to verify the observation made in the  
 beginning of this letter concerning the unfair  
 conduct of the Deistical Writers, and the strange  
 liberties they take in misrepresenting the sense  
 of the Christian Writers whom they quote.

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LETTER III.

*Additional observations relating to Mr. Hume. His account of the nature of belief designed to exclude reason from any share in it. A transcript of a paper containing an examination of Mr. Hume's arguments in his Essay on Miracles. Observations upon it. The evidence of matters of fact may be so circumstanced as to produce a full assurance. Mr. Hume artfully confounds the evidence of past facts with the probability of the future. We may be certain of a matter of fact after it has happened, though it might seem beforehand very improbable that it would happen. Where full evidence is given of a fact, there must not always be a deduction made on the account of its being unusual and extraordinary. There is strong and positive evidence of the miracles wrought in attestation to Christianity, and no evidence against them. The miraculous nature of the facts no proof that the facts were not done. A summary of Mr. Hume's argument against the evidence of miracles. The weakness of it shewn. Considering the vast importance of religion to our happiness, the bare possibility of its being true should be sufficient to engage our compliance.*

S I R,

I Shall now proceed to lay before you some additional observations relating to that part of the second volume of the *View of the Deistical*

*Deistical Writers*, which contains remarks on Mr. *Hume*. LETTER II.

It is observed, p. 24. that Mr. *Hume* himself acknowledges, That “no durable good can ever be expected from excessive scepticism:” — And that “nature will always maintain her rights, and prevaieth in the end over any abstract reasoning whatsoever.” After this let it be immediately added line 4 from the bottom — And if so, I think we may justly conclude, that any abstract reasoning which is contrary to the plain voice of nature ought to be rejected as false and trifling, and of no real use or service to mankind.

In p. 41. it is shewn, That “we may reasonably argue from the traces of excellencies in ourselves to the infinitely superior perfections in the great Author of the universe, still taking care to remove all those limitations and defects with which they are attended in us.” Let it be immediately subjoined line II from the bottom. — This is what Mr. *Hume* himself elsewhere allows in his *Essay on the Origin of our Ideas*. “The idea of God, saith he, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, wise, and good Being arises from reflecting on the operations of our own minds, and augmenting those qualities of goodness and wisdom without bound or limit.” See his *Philosoph. Essays*, p. 24, 25.

It is observed, p. 90. that Mr. *Hume* taketh great pains throughout his whole *Essay on Liberty*

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*erty and Necessity* to shew, that there is as great a certainty, and as necessary a connexion, in what are called moral causes as in physical. Let it be there added, line 14.—This author undoubtedly in that Essay carrieth it too far, when in order to subvert human liberty, he would have it thought, that in all cases the power of motives worketh with as necessary a force upon the mind, as any physical cause doth upon the effect. But that in many particular cases things may be so circumstanced with regard to moral causes, as to afford a certainty equal to what arises from physical, cannot reasonably be denied. And such is the case here put.

In p. 134. line 4. from the bottom, a passage is quoted from Mr. *Hume*, in which he saith, That “our most holy religion is founded on “faith, not on reason.” After *reason* let a mark of reference be put, and the following note be inserted at the bottom of the page.

This author who takes care to make the principles of his philosophy subservient to his designs against religion, in the fifth of his *Philosophical Essays*, where he undertakes to treat of the nature of belief, gives such an account of it as seems to exclude reason from any share in it at all. He makes the difference between *faith* and *fiction* to consist wholly in some sentiment or feeling, which is annexed to the former, not to the latter. That the sentiment of belief is nothing but the conception of an object more lively and forcible, more intense  
and

and steady than what attends the mere fiction of the imagination; and that this manner of conception arises from the customary conjunction of the object with something present to the memory or senses. See his *Philosophical Essays*, p. 80—84. This gentleman is here, as in many other places, sufficiently obscure, nor is it easy to form a distinct notion of what he intends. But his design seems to be to exclude reason or the understanding from having any thing to do with belief, as if reason never had any influence in producing, directing, or regulating it; which is to open a wide door to enthusiasm. But this is contrary to what we may all observe, and frequently experience. We in several cases clearly perceive, that we have reason to regard some things as fictitious, and others as true and real. And the reasons which shew the difference between a fiction and a reality, shew that we ought in reason to believe the one and not the other: And so reason may go before the sentiment of belief, and lay a just foundation for it, and be instrumental to produce it. And in this case the belief may be said to be strictly rational.

What I shall next produce is a much larger addition, occasioned by a letter I received from a gentleman of sense and learning, soon after the publication of the second volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*, and which particularly related to that part of it which is designed in answer to Mr. *Hume*. He was

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pleas'd to say it gave him *uncommon satisfaction*, and at the same time sent me a paper which he seem'd to be very well pleas'd with, that had been drawn up by a young gentleman then lately dead. It was design'd as a confutation of Mr. *Hume* upon his own principles, which he thought had not been sufficiently attended to in the answers that had been made to that writer; and he allow'd me, if I should be of opinion that any thing in it might be serviceable to a farther confutation of Mr. *Hume*, to make use of his sentiments either by way of note or appendix, as I should judge most convenient. I return'd an answer in a letter which I shall here insert, as it containeth some reflections that may be of advantage in relation to the controversy with Mr. *Hume*. But first it will be proper to lay before the reader the paper itself here referred to, which is concisely drawn, and runs thus:

*An EXAMINATION of Mr. HUME's Arguments in his ESSAY ON MIRACLES.*

THE objects of human understanding may be distinguish'd either into propositions asserting the relation between general ideas, or matters of fact.

In the former kind, we can arrive at certainty by means of a faculty in our souls, which perceives this relation either instantly and intimately,



mately, which is called Intuition, or else by intermediate ideas, which is called Demonstration.

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But we can only form a judgment of the latter by experience. No reasoning *a priori* will discover to us, that water will suffocate or the fire consume us, or that the loadstone will attract steel: And therefore no judgment can be made concerning the truth or falshood of matters of fact, but what is constantly regulated by custom and experience; and can therefore never go higher than probability.

When we have frequently observed a particular event to happen in certain circumstances, the mind naturally makes an induction, that it will happen again in the same circumstances. When this observation has been long, constant, and uninterrupted, there our belief that it will happen again approaches infinitely near to certainty. Thus no man has the least doubt of the sun's rising to-morrow, or that the tide will ebb and flow at its accustomed periods. But where our observations are broke in upon by frequent interruptions and exceptions to the contrary; then we expect such an event with the least degree of assurance: And in all intermediate cases, our expectatious are always in proportion to the constancy and regularity of the experience.

This method of reasoning is not connected by any medium or chain of steps; but is plainly to be observed in all animate beings; brutes as well

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well as men \*. And it would be as absurd to ask a reason, why we expect to happen again, that which has regularly come to pass a great many times before, as it is to enquire, why the mind perceives a relation between certain ideas?

They are both distinct faculties of the soul. And as it has been authoris'd by some writers of distinction, to give the denomination of sense to the internal as well as external perceptions; the one may be called the *speculative*, and the other the *probable sense*.

From this last-mentioned principle Mr. *Hume* has deduced an argument to shew, that there is great improbability against the belief of any miraculous fact, how well soever attested: And as religion may seem to be greatly affected by this conclusion, (supposing it to be true) before we come directly to consider the argument, it may not be amiss to enquire how far religion, as a practical institution, may be concerned therein?

And for this purpose it is to be observed, that probable evidence for the truth or falshood of any matter of fact differs essentially from demonstration, in that the former admits of degrees, in the greatest variety, from the highest

\* May not the so long sought after distinction between brutes and men consist in this? That whereas the human understanding comprehends both classes; the brutal sagacity is confined only to matters of fact.

moral certainty, down to the lowest presumption; which the latter does not.

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Let it also be further observed, that probable evidence is in its nature but an imperfect kind of information, the highest degree of which can never reach absolute certainty, or full proof: And yet to mankind with regard to their practice, it is in many cases the very guide of their lives.

Most of our actions are determined by the highest degrees of probability. As for instance, what we do in consequence of the sun's rising to-morrow: of the seasons regularly succeeding one another: and that certain kinds of meat and drink will nourish. Others are determined by lesser degrees. Thus Rhubarb does not always purge, nor is Opium a soporific to every person that takes it: and yet for all that they are of constant use for these purposes in medicine. In all cases of moment, when to act or forbear may be attended with considerable damage, no wise man makes the least scruple of doing what he apprehends may be of advantage to him, even though the thing was doubtful, and one side of the question as supportable as the other. But in matters of the utmost consequence, a prudent man will think himself obliged to take notice even of the lowest probability; and will act accordingly. A great many instances might be given in the common pursuits of life, where a man would  
be

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be considered as out of his senses, who would not act, and with great diligence and application too, not only upon an over-chance, but even where the probability might be greatly against his success.

Suppose a criminal under sentence of death was promised a pardon, if he threw twelve with a pair of dice at one throw : here the probability is thirty-six to one against him ; and yet he would be looked upon as mad, if he did not try. Nothing in such a case would hinder a man from trying, but the absolute impossibility of the event.

Let us now apply this method of reasoning to the practice of religion. And supposing the arguments against miracles were far more probable than the evidence for them, yet the vast importance of religion to our happiness in every respect would still be very sufficient to recommend it to the practice of every prudent man ; and the bare possibility that it might prove true, were there nothing else to support it, would engage his assent and compliance: or else he must be supposed to act differently in this respect to what he generally does in all the other concerns of his life. So that whether Mr. *Hume's* reasonings be true or false, religion has still sufficient evidence to influence the practice of every wise and considerate man.

This being premised ; let us now proceed to consider Mr. *Hume's* arguments.

His reasoning may be briefly expressed in this manner :

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We have had a long universal and uninterrupted experience, that no events have happened contrary to the course of nature, from constant and unvaried observations. We have therefore a full proof, that the uniform course has not been broke in upon, nor will be, by any particular exceptions.

But the observation of truth depending upon, and constantly following human testimony, is by no means universal and uninterrupted, and therefore it does not amount to a full proof, that it either has, or will follow it in any particular instance.

And therefore the proof arising from any human testimony, can never equal the proof that is deduced against a miracle from the very nature of the fact.

This I take to be a full and fair state of this gentleman's reasoning.

But the answer is very plain. If by human testimony, he would mean the evidence of any one single man indifferently taken, then indeed his second proposition would be true. But then the conclusion will by no means follow from it. But if by human testimony he would understand the evidence of any collection of men, then the second proposition is false; and consequently the conclusion must be so too.

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That twelve honest persons should combine to assert a falshood, at the hazard of their lives, without any view to private interest, and with the certain prospect of losing every thing that is and ought to be dear to mankind in this world, is according to his own way of reasoning, as great a miracle to all intents and purposes, as any interruption in the common course of nature: Because no history has ever mentioned any such thing; nor has any man in any age ever had experience of such a fact.


But here it may be objected, that tho' it be allowed to be as great a miracle for twelve honest men to attest a falshood contrary to their plain interest in every respect, as that any alteration should happen in the common course of nature, yet these evidences being equal, they only destroy one another, and still leave the mind in suspence.

This objection draws all its force from Mr. *Hume's* assertion, that an uniform and uninterrupted experience amounts to a full proof, which when examined will not be found true; and indeed I wonder that a writer of his accuracy should venture on such an expression, since it is confessed on all hands, that all our reasonings concerning matters of fact, ever fall short of certainty, or full proof.

And besides, the very same objection which he makes against the veracity of human testimony, to weaken its authenticity, may be retorted with equal force against his unvaried  
certainty

certainty of the course of nature: for doubtless the number of approved histories we have relating to miracles, will as much lessen the probability of what he calls a full proof on his side of the question, as all the forgeries and falshoods that are brought to discredit human testimony, will weaken it on the other.

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But the best way to be assured of the falshood of this objection is to examine it by what we find in our own minds; for that must not be admitted as an universal principle, which is not true in every particular instance.

According to Mr. *Hume*, we have a full proof of any fact attested by twelve honest disinterested persons. But would not the probability be increased, and our belief of such a fact be the stronger, if the number of witnesses was doubled? I own my mind immediately assents to it. But if this be true, it will then evidently follow, that the proof against a miracle, arising from the nature of the fact, may, and has been exceeded by contrary human testimony.

Suppose, as before, that the testimony of twelve persons is just equal to it, and we have the evidence of twenty, for any particular miracle recorded in the Gospel; then subtracting the weaker evidence from the stronger, and we shall have the positive evidence of eight persons, for the truth of a common matter of fact.

*Q. E. D.*

The

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The answer I returned to the letter in which this paper was inclosed was in substance as follows:

*S I R,*

I AM very much obliged to you for the kind manner in which you have expressed yourself with regard to me. And it is a pleasure to me to find that my reply to Mr. *Hume* is approved by a gentleman of so much good sense, and of such eminency in his profession, as I am well informed you are accounted to be.

I agree with you that Mr. *Hume* is an elegant and subtil writer, and one of the most dangerous enemies to Christianity that have appeared among us. He has a very specious way of managing an argument. But his subtilty seems to have qualified him not so much for clearing an obscure cause, as for puzzling a clear one. Many things in his *Philosophical Essays* have a very plausible appearance, as well as an uncommon turn, which he visibly affects; but upon a close examination of them I think one may venture to pronounce, that few authors can be mentioned who have fallen into greater absurdities and inconsistencies. And it were to be wished there was not a sufficient ground for the severe censure you pass upon him, when you say, that “with all his art he has plainly discovered a bad heart, by throwing out some bitter sneers against the Christian revelation, which



“ which are absolutely inconsistent with a serious belief, or indeed with any regard for it, tho’ in some parts of his writings he affects a different way of speaking.”

You observe, that “ we seem to be greatly deficient in the logick of probability, a point which Mr. *Hume* had studied with great accuracy.” And I readily own, that there is a great appearance of accuracy in what Mr. *Hume* hath advanced concerning the grounds and degrees of probability, and the different degrees of assent due to it. But though what he hath offered this way seems plausible in general, he hath been far from being fair or exact in his application of it.

The paper you have sent inclosed to me, and which you tell me was drawn up by the young gentleman you mention, contains a sketch of an attempt to shew how Mr. *Hume* might be confuted on his own principles, and is executed in such a manner, that one cannot but regret that a gentleman of so promising a genius, and who might have proved signally useful, was snatched away by a fever about the twentieth year of his age. You allow me to make what use of it I judge proper, and seem to expect that I should tell you my sentiments of it with the utmost frankness and candour. And this obligeth me to acquaint you, that though I look upon the confutation of Mr. *Hume* in the way this gentleman hath managed it to be subtil and ingenious, yet in some things it doth

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 III. } not seem to me to be quite so clear and satisfactory, as were to be wished in a matter of so great consequence. He has, I think, from a desire of confuting Mr. *Hume* upon his own principles, been led to make too large concessions to that gentleman, and hath proceeded upon some of his principles as true and valid, which I think may be justly contested.

Mr. *Hume* frequently intimates, that there neither is nor can be any certainty in the evidence given concerning matters of fact, or in human testimony, which can be securely depended on; and that at best, it can be only probable. And the ingenious author of the paper having observed after Mr. *Hume*, that we can form no judgment concerning the truth or falshood of matter of fact, but what is constantly regulated by custom or experience, adds, that "it can never go higher than probability." And again he saith, that "probable evidence " is in its nature but an imperfect kind of information; the highest degree of which cannot " reach absolute certainty or full proof." Where he seems not to allow that the evidence concerning matters of fact can ever arrive at such a certainty as to make up a *full proof*. And he repeats it again, that "it is, confessed on all " hands, that all our reasonings concerning " matters of fact ever fall short of certainty or " full proof." And yet if we allow Mr. *Hume's* definition of a full proof, that it is *such arguments from experience as leave no*

*room for doubt or opposition*, the evidence for a matter of fact may be so circumstanced as to amount to a full proof, and even to a certainty. For I can see no reason for confining certainty to the evidence we have by intuition or by demonstration. In treating of certainty as distinguished from probability, a twofold certainty may very properly be allowed. The one is the certainty by intuition or by demonstration. The other is a certainty relating to matter of fact. This is indeed of a different kind from the former: But I think it may no less justly be called certainty, when it so fully satisfieth the mind as to leave not the least room for doubt concerning it, and produceth a full assurance. And that this is often the case with relation to matters of fact cannot reasonably be denied. The words *jure* and *certain* are frequently applied in common language to things of this kind, and for aught I can see very properly. And in the best and exactest writers it is often described under the term of *moral certainty*, an expression which this gentleman himself makes use of \*. And it is a great mistake to imagine,

\* The ingenious gentleman seems to grant what may be sufficient, when he saith, that probability *in some cases approaches infinitely near to certainty*. If it be allowed, that matter of fact may be so certain, that the mind may be fully assured of it, and so as to leave no room for a reasonable doubt, this is all that is really necessary in the present controversy. And this is what Mr. Hume himself seems sometimes to allow. But at other times he gives such an account of human testimony as tends to

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imagine, that the word *moral* in that case is always used as a term of diminution, as if it were not to be intirely depended on. It is only designed to shew that this certainty is of a different kind, and proceedeth upon different grounds from that which ariseth from demonstration; but yet it may produce as strong an assurance in the mind, and which may undoubtedly be depended upon. That there was a war carried on in *England* in the last century between King and Parliament, I only know by human testimony. But will any man say, that for that reason I cannot be sure of it? Many cases might be mentioned with regard to matters of fact which we know by human testimony, the evidence of which is so strong and convincing, that we can no more reasonably doubt of it, than of the truth of any proposition which comes to us demonstrated by the strictest reasoning. Mr. *Hume* himself seems sensible, that it would be wrong to say that every thing which is not matter of demonstration comes only under the notion of probability. And therefore tho' he frequently seems to class all matters of fact under the head of probabilities, yet in the beginning of his Essay on Probability, he seems to find fault with

render it in all cases uncertain. And the design of his representing it as never rising higher than probability, seems to be to convey an idea of uncertainty and doubt as inseparably attending all human testimony. And to guard against the wrong use that may be made of this is the design of what I have here observed.

Mr.

Mr. *Locke* for dividing all arguments into *demonstrative* and *probable*, and observes, that to conform our language more to common use, we should divide arguments into *demonstrations*, *proofs*, and *probabilities*: where he seems to place what he calls *proofs*, which he explains to be such arguments from experience as leave no room for doubt or opposition, in a higher class than probabilities. And Mr. *Locke* himself, though he seems to confine certainty to demonstration, yet allows concerning some probabilities arising from human testimony, that “they rise so near to certainty, that they govern our thoughts as absolutely, and influence our actions as fully as the most evident demonstration; and in what concerns us we make little or no difference between them and certain knowledge. Our belief thus grounded rises to assurance \*.” And in that case I think probability is too low a word, and not sufficiently expressive, or properly applicable to things of this kind. For according to Mr. *Locke’s* account of it, and the common usage of the word, that is said to be probable which is *likely to be true*, and of which we have *no certainty*, but only *some inducements*, as Mr. *Locke* speaks, to believe and receive them as true.

Another thing observable in Mr. *Hume’s* reasoning on this subject is, that in treating of

\* Essay on Human Understanding, book iv. chap. xv. sect. 6.

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probability or the evidence of facts, which he foundeth wholly upon experience, he confoundeth the evidence of past facts with that of the future. And the young gentleman himself seems not sufficiently to distinguish them. The instances he produceth to shew, that the judgments which the mind forms concerning the probability of events *will always be in proportion to the constancy and regularity of the experience*, all relate to the probability of future events from the experience of the past. But the question about the probability of any future fact hath properly nothing to do in the present controversy between Mr. *Hume* and his adversaries, which relateth wholly to the evidence of past facts. And it is only an instance of this writer's art, that by confounding these different questions he may perplex the debate, and throw dust in the eyes of his readers. It will be granted that with relation to future facts or events, the utmost evidence we can attain to from past observation or experience is a high degree of probability; but with relation to past matters of fact, we may in many cases arrive at a certainty, or what Mr. *Hume* calls a full proof, yea, it often happens, that the evidence of past facts may be so circumstanced, that we may be certain that such an event really came to pass, tho' if the question had been put before the event, the probability from past experience would have been greatly against it. Nothing therefore can be more weak and fallacious than Mr. *Hume's* reasoning,

reasoning, when from this principle of forming conclusions concerning future events from past experience, he endeavoureth to deduce an argument against the belief of any miraculous fact, how well soever attested. For though, if the question were concerning a future miracle in any particular instance, if we should judge merely from past experience, the probability might seem to lie against it; yet if the question be concerning a past miraculous fact, there may be such proof of it, as may not leave room for a reasonable doubt that the miracle was really done, though before it was done it might seem highly improbable that it would be done.

Another fallacy Mr. *Hume* is guilty of, is his supposing that in all cases where the fact in itself considered is unusual, and out of the way of common experience, whatever be the evidence given for it, there must still be a deduction made, and the assent given to it is always weakened in proportion to the unusualness of the fact. Now this doth not always hold. A fact of an extraordinary nature may come to us confirmed by an evidence so strong, as to produce a full and undoubted assurance of its having been done: And in such a case there is no deduction to be made; nor is the assent we give to the truth of the fact at all weakened on the account of its being unusual and extraordinary. Thus, *e. g.* that a great king should be openly put to death by his own subjects upon a pretended

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formal trial before a court of judicature, is very unusual, and before it came to pass would have appeared highly improbable; but after it happened, there is such evidence of the fact as to produce a full assurance that it was really done, and the man who should go about seriously to make a doubt of it, and make a formal deduction from the credit of the evidence, on the account of the strangeness of the fact, and should pretend that we must believe it with an assent only proportioned to the evidence which remaineth after that deduction, would under pretence of extraordinary accuracy only render himself ridiculous. It will indeed be readily own'd, that more and greater evidence may be justly required with regard to a thing that is unusual and out of the common course, than is required for a common fact; but when there is evidence given sufficient to satisfy the mind, its being unusual and extraordinary ought not to be urged as a reason for not giving a full credit to it, or for pretending that the testimony concerning it is not to be depended upon. For the evidence for a fact out of the course of common observation and experience, may be so circumstanced as to leave no room for the least reasonable doubt. And the assent to it may be as strong and firm as to any the most common and ordinary event. Nor is any thing in that case to be deducted from the credit of the evidence, under pretence of the fact's being unusual or even miraculous.

You



You will allow me on this occasion to take notice of a passage in your letter, in which, after having observed that Mr. *Hume* had studied the point about probability, and treated upon it with great accuracy, you give it as your opinion, that “the best way of answering him” would be in the way himself has chalked out by comparing the degrees of probability in the evidence on both sides, and deducting the inferior.” Here you seem to suppose that there is evidence on both sides in the case of miracles, and that upon balancing the evidence, that which hath the higher degrees of probability ought to be preferred, at the same time making a deduction from it in proportion to the weight of the contrary evidence. But the supposition you here proceed upon appears to me to be a wrong one; *viz.* That in the case in question there is evidence on both sides, and consequently an opposition of evidence, *i. e.* evidence against the miracles wrought in proof of Christianity, as well as evidence for them. There is indeed positive strong evidence on one side, to shew that those facts were really done, an evidence drawn from testimony so circumstantiated, that it hath all the qualifications which could be reasonably desired to render it full and satisfactory \*. But what evidence is there on the other side? No counter-evidence

\* See this fully shewn in answer to Mr. *Hume*; *View of the Deistical Writers*, Vol. II. from p. 83 to p. 95.

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or testimony to shew the falshood of this is pretended by Mr. *Hume* to be produced. Nor are there any circumstances mentioned attending the evidence itself, which may justly tend to render it suspicious. Nothing is opposed to it but the miraculous nature of the facts, or their being contrary to the usual course of nature. And this cannot properly be said to be any evidence to prove that the facts were not done, or that the testimony given to them was false. Nor needs there any deduction to be made in the assent we give to such a full and sufficient testimony as is here supposed, on that account: because as the case was circumstanced, it was proper that those facts should be beyond and out of the common course of nature and experience: and it was agreeable to the wisdom of God, and to the excellent ends for which those facts were designed, that they should be so: since otherwise they would not have answered the intention, which was to give a divine attestation to an important revelation of the highest use and benefit to mankind.

It is an observation of the ingenious author of the paper you sent me, “ That twelve honest  
 “ persons should combine to assert a falshood  
 “ at the hazard of their lives without any view  
 “ to private interest, and with the certain pro-  
 “ spects of losing every thing that is and ought  
 “ to be dear to mankind in this world, is, ac-  
 “ cording to Mr. *Hume’s* own way of reason-  
 “ ing, as great a miracle to all intents and pur-  
 “ poses,

“ poses, as any interruption in the common  
 “ course of nature.” But then he observes,  
 that the thing these witnesses are supposed to at-  
 test being also a miracle, contrary to the usual  
 course of nature, it may be objected, that these  
 evidences being equal, they only destroy one  
 another, and still leave the mind in suspense.  
 The answer he gives to this does not seem to  
 me to be sufficiently clear. He first observes,  
 That “ this objection draws all its force from  
 “ Mr. *Hume’s* assertion, that an uniform and  
 “ uninterrupted experience is a full proof,  
 “ which when examined will not be found  
 “ true, because it is confessed on all hands,  
 “ that all our reasonings concerning matters of  
 “ fact ever fall short of certainty, or full proof.”  
 But besides that this doth not always hold, since  
 it hath been shewn, that our reasonings concern-  
 ing matters of fact may in some cases amount  
 to such a certainty as may be justly called a full  
 proof; it may still be urged, that an uniform un-  
 interrupted experience, though not strictly a full  
 proof, yet is such a proof against a miracle as is  
 able to counter-balance the evidence for it: in  
 which case the objection still holds, and the  
 mind is kept in suspense. And the gentleman  
 himself seems afterwards to grant, that a fact’s  
 being contrary to the usual course of nature af-  
 fordeth such a proof against it from the nature  
 of the thing, as is sufficient to counterpoise the  
 evidence of twelve such witnesses as are sup-  
 posed, though he thinks it would not do so, if  
 the

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I am persuaded, that the design of the ingenious gentleman in putting the case after this manner, was not to signify it as his real opinion, that the testimony of twelve such witnesses as are here supposed in proof of a miracle's having been really wrought, did not more than countervail the argument against it arising from the strangeness of the fact: But he had a mind to put the case as strongly as he could in favour of Mr. *Hume*, and yet to shew that there might still be an excess of proof, according to his own principles, on the side of miracles: which destroys his main hypothesis, that the evidence for a miracle can never exceed the evidence against it. It appears to me however, that this is making too large a concession, and that it is not the properest way of putting the case. It proceedeth upon the supposition which hath  
 3 been

been already shewn to be a wrong one, that a thing's being miraculous, or contrary to the usual course of nature, is alone in all circumstances a proper *proof* or *evidence* against the truth of the fact; whereas the case may be so circumstanced, that the miraculousness of the fact is in reality no *proof* or *evidence* against it at all. It will indeed be acknowledged, as was before hinted, that greater evidence is required with regard to a fact which is miraculous, than for any fact in the common and ordinary course. But when such evidence is given to prove that a miraculous fact was really done, as is suitable to the importance of the fact, and which cannot be rejected without admitting suppositions which are manifestly absurd; in such a case, a thing's being miraculous is no just reason for not giving a full assent to the testimony concerning it. For its being miraculous, in the case that hath been put, hath nothing in it absurd or incredible; whereas that twelve men of sound minds, and honest characters should combine to attest a falshood in opposition to all their worldly interests and prejudices, and to every principle that can be supposed to influence human nature, without any assignable cause for such a conduct (which has been shewn to be the case with regard to the witnesses for Christianity) is absolutely absurd, nor can in any way be accounted for. As to the pretence, that in this case there is a miracle on both sides, and that the one is to be opposed to the other,

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and destroys its evidence ; this sophism which has imposed upon many, and in which the chief strength of Mr. *Hume's* Essay lies, deriveth its whole force from an abuse of the word miracle, and a confounding, as this writer hath artfully done, a miracle and an absurdity, as if it were the same thing. That twelve men should in the circumstances supposed combine to attest a falsehood, at the hazard of their lives and of every thing dear to men, cannot properly be called a miracle according to any definition that can be reasonably given of a miracle, or even according to Mr. *Hume's* own definition of a miracle, that "it is a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposal of some invisible agent ;" but is a manifest absurdity. But in the case of an extraordinary event contrary to the usual course of natural causes, and wrought for a very valuable purpose, and by a power adequate to the effect, there is indeed a proper miracle, but no absurdity at all. It is true, that its being unusual and out of the ordinary course of observation and experience, is a good reason for not believing it without a strong and convincing evidence, a much stronger evidence than would be necessary, in common and ordinary facts. But when there is an evidence of its having been actually done, which hath all the requisites that can be justly demanded in such a case, and at the same time sufficient reasons are assigned worthy of the divine wisdom

and goodness to shew that it was proper it should be done, its being unusual and extraordinary is no proof at all that it hath not been done, nor can in any propriety of speech be called an *evidence* against it: and therefore no subtraction is to be made from the credit given to such a supposed full and sufficient evidence merely on this account. Perhaps my meaning will be better understood by applying it to a particular instance. And I chuse to mention that which is the principal miracle in proof of Christianity, our Lord's resurrection. The fact itself was evidently miraculous, and required a divine power to accomplish it. It was therefore necessary, in order to lay a just foundation for believing it, that there should be such an evidence given as was proportioned to the importance and extraordinariness of the fact. And that the evidence which was given of it was really such an evidence, appears, I think, plainly from what I have elsewhere observed concerning it\*. But if we should put the case thus, that not only was the fact extraordinary in itself, and out of the common course of nature, but the evidence given of it was insufficient, and not to be depended upon, and had circumstances attending it which brought it under a just suspicion: or, if contrary evidence was produced to invalidate it: *e. g.* If the soldiers that watched the sepulchre, instead of

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\* See *View of the Deistical Writers*, Vol. II.

pretending

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pretending that the body of Jesus was stolen away whilst they were asleep, which was no evidence at all, and was a plain acknowledgement that they knew nothing at all of the matter, had declared that the disciples came with a powerful band of armed men, and overpowered the guard, and carried away the body: or, if any of the *Jews* had averred, that they were present and awake when the soldiers slept, and that they saw the disciples carry away the body: or, if any of the disciples to whom Jesus appeared, and who professed to have seen and conversed with him after his resurrection, had afterwards declared, that they were among the disciples at those times when he was pretended to have appeared, and that they saw no such appearances, nor heard any such conversations as were pretended. On this supposition it might be properly said that there was evidence given on both sides, *viz.* for and against Christ's resurrection, and consequently that there was a real opposition of evidence; in which case it would be necessary carefully to examine the evidences, and compare them one with another, in order to judge which of them deserved the greater credit, and how far one of them weakened or impaired the force of the other. But as the case was circumstanced, since there was a very strong positive evidence given that Christ really rose from the dead, and shewed himself alive after his resurrection by many infallible proofs, and no contrary evidence produced





produced against it, nor any thing alleged to render the evidence that was given of it justly suspected; and since there are also very good reasons assigned worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness, which rendered it highly proper that Christ should be raised from the dead: on this view of the case, the extraordinariness of the fact, alone considered, cannot with any propriety be called an *evidence* against the truth of it, nor be justly urged as a reason for not yielding a full assent to the evidence concerning it. For it was necessary to the ends proposed by the divine wisdom, that the fact should be of an extraordinary and miraculous nature, and if it had not been so, it would not have answered those ends. I think therefore it may justly be affirmed, that taking the case in all its circumstances, considering the great strength and force of the evidence that is given for the fact, and the many concurring proofs and attestations by which it was confirmed, together with the excellent and important ends for which it was designed, there is as just ground to believe that Christ rose again from the dead, as that he was crucified; though the latter be a fact not out of the ordinary course of nature, and the former was evidently so. And here it may not be improper to mention a remarkable observation of Mr. *Locke*. He had in giving an account of the grounds of probability supposed one ground of it to be the conformity of a thing with *our own knowledge, observation, and experience*. And

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after taking notice of several things to this purpose, he observes, That “ though common experience and the ordinary course of things have justly a mighty influence on the minds of men, to make them give or refuse credit to any thing proposed to their belief, yet there is one case wherein the strangeness of the fact lessens not the assent to a fair testimony given of it. For where such supernatural events are suitable to ends aimed at by him who has the power to change the course of nature; there under such circumstances they may be the fitter to procure belief, by how much the more they are beyond or contrary to common observation. This is the proper case of miracles, which, well attested, do not only find credit themselves, but give it also to other truths which need such a confirmation \*.”

Thus this great master of reason is so far from thinking with Mr. *Hume*, that a thing’s being miraculous, or beyond the common course of observation and experience, absolutely destroys all evidence of testimony that can be given concerning the truth of the fact; that in his opinion it doth not so much as lessen the assent given to it upon a fair testimony; provided the supernatural facts thus attested were suitable to the ends of the divine wisdom and goodness, *i. e.* wrought in attestation to a revelation of the

\* *Locke’s Essay on Hum. Underst.* book iv. chap. xvi. sect. 13.



highest importance, and of the most excellent tendency; and that in that case the more evidently miraculous the fact is, the fitter it is to answer the end proposed by it.

The ingenious author of the paper you sent me has very properly summed up Mr. *Hume's* argument against the evidence of miracles, thus :

We have had a long universal and uninterrupted experience, that no events have happened contrary to the course of nature, from constant and unvaried observations. We have therefore a full proof that this uniform course has not been broken in upon, nor will be by any particular exceptions.

But the observation of truth depending upon, and constantly following human testimony is by no means universal and uninterrupted. And therefore it does not amount to a full proof, that it either has or will follow it in any particular instance.

And therefore the proof arising from any human testimony, can never equal the proof that is deduced against a miracle from the very nature of the fact.

This he takes to be a full and fair state of Mr. *Hume's* reasoning: and it appears to me to be so. And he says, "The answer is plain. If by  
" human testimony he would mean of any one  
" single man indifferently taken, then his second proposition would be true; but then  
" the conclusion would by no means follow

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“ from it. But if by human testimony he  
 “ would understand the evidence of any col-  
 “ lection of men, then the second proposition  
 “ is false, and consequently the conclusion is  
 “ so too.”

This answer relateth only to the second proposition \*. But it might have been said, that neither of the propositions are to be depended upon, and that they are utterly insufficient to support the conclusion he would draw from them. For as to the first proposition, it assumes the very point in question. It affirms that no events have ever happened contrary to the course of nature; and that this we know by a long, universal, and uninterrupted experience. If this be meant of the universal and uninterrupted experience of all mankind in all ages, which alone can be of any force in the present argument, how doth it appear that we know by universal and uninterrupted experience, that no such events have ever happened? Are there not several events of this kind recorded by credible testimonies to have happened? The

\* Though the ingenious gentleman hath not directly and formally answered the first proposition, yet he has plainly shewn that he doth not admit it, when he saith, That “ the very same objection Mr. *Hume* makes against the veracity of human testimony to weaken its authenticity, may be retorted with equal force against his unvaried certainty of the course of nature. And that doubtless the many approved histories we have relating to miracles, will as much lessen the probability of what he calls a full proof on his side of the question, as all the forgeries and falsehoods that are brought to discredit human testimony will weaken it on the other ”

whole argument then is upon a wrong foundation. It proceedeth upon an universal and uninterrupted experience, not broken in upon in any instance. And there is good testimony to prove that it hath been broken in upon in several instances. And if it hath been broken in upon in any instances, no argument can be brought from experience to prove that it hath not, or may not be broken in upon: and so the whole reasoning falls. If it be alleged, that these testimonies, or indeed any testimonies at all, ought not to be admitted in this case; the question returns. For what reason ought they not to be admitted? If the reason be, as it must be according to Mr. *Hume*, because there is an universal uninterrupted experience against them, this is to take it for granted, that no such events have ever happened. For if there have been any instances of such events, the experience is not universal and uninterrupted. So then we see what the boasted argument against miracles from uniform experience comes to. It in effect comes to this, that no such events have ever happened, because no such events have ever happened.

As to the second proposition, though if we speak of human testimony in general, it will be easily allowed, that it is not to be absolutely and universally depended upon; yet, as hath been already hinted, it may in particular instances be so circumstanced as to yield a satisfying assurance, or what may not improperly be called a

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full proof. Even the testimony of a particular person may in some cases be so circumstanced, as to leave no room for reasonable suspicion or doubt. But especially if we speak of what this gentleman calls *a collection of men*, this may in some cases be so strong, as to produce a full and intire conviction, however improbable the attested fact might otherwise appear to be. And therefore if we meet with any testimonies relating to particular events of an extraordinary nature, they are not immediately to be rejected under pretence of their being contrary to past experience; but we must carefully examine the evidence brought for them, whether it be of such a kind as to make it reasonable for us to believe them. And that the evidence brought for the miraculous facts recorded in the Gospel are of this kind hath been often clearly shewn.

The only farther reflection I shall make on this gentleman's paper is, that it contains good and proper observations concerning our being determined in matters of practice by probabilities. — That in all cases of moment, where to act or forbear may be attended with considerable damage, no wise man makes the least scruple of doing what he apprehends may be of advantage to him, even though the thing were doubtful. But in matters of the utmost consequence, a prudent man will think himself obliged to take notice of the lowest probability, and will act accordingly. — This he applies to the practice of religion, and observes, that considering the vast importance

importance of religion to our happiness in every respect,—the bare possibility that it might prove true, were there nothing else to support it, would engage his assent and compliance: or else he must be supposed to act differently in this respect to what he generally does in all the other concerns of his life.

This observation is not intirely new, but it is handsomely illustrated by this gentleman, and seems very proper to shew, that those who neglect and despise religion, do in this, notwithstanding their boasted pretences, act contrary to the plain dictates of reason and good sense. But we need not have recourse to this supposition. The evidence on the side of religion is vastly superior. And if this be the case, no words can sufficiently express the folly and unreasonableness of their conduct, who take up with slight prejudices and presumptions in opposition to it; and by choosing *darkness rather than light*, and rejecting *the great salvation* offered in the Gospel, run the utmost hazard of exposing themselves to a heavy condemnation and punishment.

Thus I have taken the liberty you allowed me of giving my thoughts upon the paper you sent me. I cannot but look upon the young gentleman's attempt to be a laudable and ingenious one, though there are some things in his way of managing the argument, which seem not to have been thoroughly considered, and which, I am

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satisfied, he would have altered, if he had lived to take an accurate review of the subject.

This, with a few additions since made to it, is the substance of the answer I returned to the worthy gentleman who had wrote to me, and which I have here inserted, because there are some things in it that may tend to the farther illustration of what I had offered in my remarks on Mr. *Hume's Essay on Miracles*. My next will contain some additional observations relating to the *Abbè de Paris*, and the miracles attributed to him; together with reflections on some passages in Mr. *Hume's Enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, which seem to be intended to expose Christianity.



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L E T T E R I V .

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IV.

Some reflections on the extraordinary sanctity ascribed to the Abbè de Paris. He carried superstition to a strange excess, and by his extraordinary austerities voluntarily hastened his own death. His character and course of life of a different kind from that rational and solid piety and virtue which is recommended in the Gospel. Observations on some passages in Mr. Hume's Enquiry concerning the principles of morals. He reckons self-denial, mortification, and humility among the Monkish virtues, and represents them as not only useless, but as having a bad influence on the temper and conduct. The nature of self-denial explained, and its great usefulness and excellency shewn. What is to be understood by the mortification required in the Gospel. This also is a reasonable and necessary part of our duty. Virtue, according to Mr. Hume, hath nothing to do with sufferance. But by the acknowledgement of the wisest moralists one important office of it is to support and bear us up under adversity. The nature of humility explained. It is an excellent and amiable virtue.

S I R,

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S I R,

THE miracles of the *Abbè de Paris* have made so great a noise in the world, and so much advantage hath been taken of them by the enemies of Christianity, and particularly by Mr. *Hume*, that I thought it necessary to consider them pretty largely in the 4th Letter of the second volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*. Some things have occurred since, which have some relation to that matter, and which I shall here take notice of.

In p. 120 of that volume lin. 1. mention is made of the high opinion the people had conceived of the Abbè's extraordinary sanctity, as what tended very much to raise their expectations of miracles to be wrought at his tomb, and by his intercession. If we inquire whence this opinion of his extraordinary sanctity arose, and upon what it was founded, we shall find it to have been principally owing to the excessive austerities in which he exercised himself for several years, of which therefore, and of some remarkable things in his life and character, it may not be improper to give some account. The particulars I shall mention are set forth at large by the learned Mr. *Mosheim* in a dissertation on the miracles of the *Abbè de Paris*, and which I did not meet with till after the publication of the second volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*. It is intitled *Inquisitio in veritatem miraculorum Francisci*
de

*de Paris seculi nostri thaumeturgi**. What he there tells us concerning *Monf. de Paris* is faithfully taken from those who hold him in the highest admiration, the *Jansenistical* writers. And from their accounts it sufficiently appears, that his whole life, and especially the latter part of it, was one continued scene of the most absurd superstition, and which he carried to an excess that may be thought to border upon madness.

He was the eldest son of an ancient, rich, and honourable family, and therefore born to an opulent fortune: though his father, when he saw his turn of mind, very prudently left him but a part of it, and that in the hands, and under the care of his younger brother. But though he still had an ample provision made for him, he voluntarily deprived himself of all the conveniencies, and even the necessaries of life. He chose one obscure hole or cottage after another to live in, and often mixed with beggars, whom he resembled so much in his customs, sordid and tattered garb, and whole manner of his life, that he was sometimes taken for one, and was never better pleased, than when this exposed him in the streets and ways to derision and contempt. Poverty was what he so much affected, that though he applied to his brother for what his father had left him, yet that he might not

* Vide Jo. Laur. Mosheimii *Dissertationum ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam pertinentium* Volumen secundum.

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have the appearance of being rich, he chose not to take it as what was legally due to him, but to supplicate for it in the humblest terms as for an alms freely bestowed upon a miserable object that had nothing of his own. And yet afterwards in his last will, he disposed of it as his own to various uses as he thought fit, especially for the benefit of those who had been sufferers for the *Jansenist* cause. For several of the last years of his life he seemed to make it his business to contrive ways to weaken, or harass, and torment his body, and thereby hasten his own death. Whilst he gave away his income to the poor, he himself voluntarily endured all the evils and hardships which attend the extremity of want and poverty. Mean and wretched was his garb, black bread, water, and herbs, but without oil, salt, or vinegar, or any thing to give them favour, was his only sustenance, and that but once a day. He lay upon the ground, and was worn away with continual watching. After his death were found his hair shirt, an iron cross, a girdle, stomacher, and bracelets of the same metal, all bestuck with sharp points. These were the instruments of penitence, with which he was wont to chastise himself, the plain marks of which he bore in his body. By such a course he brought himself not only into great weakness of body, but into disorders of mind: And this, which was the natural effect of his manner of living, he attributed to the influence of the devil, whom God had in just judgment

permitted to punish him for his sins. And in inquiring into the causes of the divine displeasure, he fixed upon this, that he had still too great a love for human learning and knowlege, and therefore from thenceforth did all he could to divest himself of it, and would have sold his well furnished library, if he had not been prevented by some of his friends, whose interest it was to preserve it. For two years together he refused to come to the holy supper, under pretence that it was not lawful for him to come, God having required him to abstain from it: And it was with great difficulty that he was brought to it at last, by the threatenings and even reproaches of his confessor. Finally, that no kind of misery might be wanting to him, he chose for his companion to dwell with him in his cottage, a man that was looked upon to be crazy, and who treated him in the most injurious manner. He did all he could to hide himself from his friends in one sorry cottage after another, and about a month before his death fixed himself in a hut in the corner of a garden, exposed to the sun and wind. When by such severities he had brought himself into an universal bad habit of body, and it was visible to his friends, that if he continued in that course he could not long support under it, a physician was called in, who only desired him to remove to a more commodious habitation, to allow himself more sleep, and a better diet, and especially to take nourishing broths for restoring his


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his enfeebled constitution. But all the persuasions of his physician, confessor, and of his friends, and the tears of an only brother, could not prevail with him to follow an advice so reasonable and practicable; though he was assured that if he used that method there was great hope of his recovery, and that his life could not be preserved without it. And when at last to satisfy their importunity, he seemed so far to comply, as to be willing to take some broth, it was only an appearance of complying, for he took care to give such orders to the person who was to prepare it for him, that it really yielded little or no nourishment. Thus it was manifest, that he had determined to hasten, as much as in him lay, his own death. And accordingly he told his confessor, that this life had nothing in it to make it worth a Christian's care to preserve it. His friends acknowledge that his death was the effect "of the almost incredible austerities that he exercised during "the last four years of his life." His great admirer the *Abbè de Asfeld* testifies, that he heard him declare it as his purpose to yield himself a slow sacrifice to divine justice. And this his extraordinary course of austerities, together with the zeal he expressed to the very last for the *Jansenist* cause, which he shewed also by the dispositions he made in his will, as well as by his appealing as with his dying breath to a future general council against the constitution *Unigenitus*, procured him so extraordinary

nary a reputation, that he has passed for one of the greatest saints that ever appeared in the Christian church. No sooner was he dead, but an innumerable multitude of people ran to his corpse, some of whom kissed his feet, others cut off part of his hair as a remedy against all manner of evil; others brought books or bits of cloth to touch his body, as believing it filled with a divine virtue. Thus were they prepared to believe and expect the most wonderful things.

Whosoever impartially considers the several things that have been mentioned, and which are amply verified in the places referred to in the margin*; will not think the learned *Mosheim* in the wrong, when he pronounceth that it cannot in consistency with reason be supposed, that God should extraordinarily interpose by his own divine power, to do honour to the bones and ashes of a man weak and superstitious to a degree of folly, and who was knowingly and wilfully accessory to his own death. In vain do his admirers, as he himself had done, extol his thus destroying himself as an offering up himself a voluntary sacrifice to divine justice. If a man should under the same pretence dispatch himself at once with a pistol or poniard, would this be thought a proper justification of his conduct? And yet I see not why the pretence might not as well hold in the one case as in the other;

* See *Mosheim*, ut supra, from p. 364. to p. 395.

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How different is this from the beautiful and noble idea of piety and virtue which the Gospel furnisheth us with, and from the perfect pattern of moral excellence which is set us by our blessed Saviour himself in his own holy life and practice! That the great apostle *St. Paul* was far from encouraging such austerities as tended to hurt and destroy the bodily health, sufficiently appeareth from the advice he gave to *Timothy*, *Drink no longer water, but use a little wine, for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities.* 1 Tim. v. 23. He condemneth those that under pretence of extraordinary purity, were for observing the *ordinances* and *traditions* of men, *Touch not, taste not, handle not*; and brands their practice under the name of *will-worship*, a *voluntary humility*, and *neglecting*, or as the word might be rendered, *not sparing the body*, Col. ii. 20, 21, 22, 23. That which in the case of *Abbè de Paris* is cried up by his admirers as a carrying religion to the highest degree of perfection, *viz.* his abstaining from flesh and confining himself to herbs, is represented by the apostle *Paul* as a sign of weakness in the faith. *Rom*, xiv. 2.

It hath always appeared to me to be the glory of the Christian religion as prescribed in the New Testament, that the piety it teacheth us
is

is solid and rational, remote from all superstitious extremes, worthy of a God of infinite wisdom and goodness to require, and becoming the true dignity of the reasonable nature. It comprehendeth not only immediate acts of devotion towards God, but a diligent performance of all relative duties, and the faithful discharge of the various offices incumbent upon us in the civil and social life. It requireth us indeed to bear with a noble fortitude the greatest evils, when we are regularly called to suffer for the cause of God, but not rashly to expose ourselves to those evils, or to bring them upon ourselves.

The wise and beneficent Author of nature hath stored the whole world about us with a variety of benefits: And can it be thought to be agreeable to his will, that instead of tasting his goodness in the blessings he vouchsafeth us, we should make a merit of never allowing ourselves to enjoy them? How much more rational is it to receive those blessings with thankfulness, and enjoy them with temperance, according to that of *St. Paul*, *Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.* 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. Can it be pleasing to our merciful heavenly father, that we should not merely humble and chasten ourselves on special occasions, but make it our constant business to torment ourselves, and to impair and destroy the bodies he hath given us, and thereby unfit ourselves for the proper offices of life? Is it reasonable to imagine, that under the

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mild dispensation of the Gospel; which breathes an ingenuous chearful spirit, and raiseth us to the noble liberty of the children of God, the best way of recommending ourselves to his favour should be to deny ourselves all the comforts he affordeth us, and to pass our lives in perpetual sadness and abstinence? Could it be said in that case, that *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come?* 1 *Tim.* iv. 8. It is true, that mortification and self-denial are important Gospel-duties, but how different from the extremes of superstitious rigour will appear, when I come to vindicate the evangelical morality against the objections of Mr. *Hume*. It was not indeed till Christians began to degenerate from that lovely form of rational, solid piety and virtue, of which Christ himself exhibited the most perfect example, that they laid so mighty a stress on those severe and rigorous austerities, which neither our Saviour nor his apostles had commanded. And in this respect some of those who were anti-ently deemed heretical sects carried it to a greater degree of strictness than the orthodox themselves. And many zealots there have been in false religions, and particularly some of the heathen devotees in the *East-Indies*, who in severe penances, and rigid austerities, and in voluntary torments inflicted on their own bodies, have far exceeded the *Abbè de Paris* himself.

I think no farther observations need be made with regard to Mr. *Hume's* essay on miracles,
which

which is directly levelled against Christianity. But any one that is acquainted with his writings must be sensible, that he often takes occasion to throw out insinuations against religion, which he usually represents either under the notion of superstition or enthusiasm. Even the morals of the Gospel have not escaped his censure, though their excellency is such as to have forced acknowledgements from some of those who have been strongly prejudiced against it.

There is a passage to this purpose in his *Enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, which deserves particular notice. In that *Enquiry*, as in all his other works, he assumes the merit of making new discoveries, and placing things in a better light than any man had done before him; and wonders that a theory so *simple and obvious* as that which he hath advanced, could have escaped the most elaborate scrutiny and examination*. I will not deny that there are in that *Enquiry* some good and curious observations; but I can see little that can be properly called new in his theory of morals, except his extending the notion of virtue (and it is concerning the principles of morals, and therefore concerning moral virtue that his *Enquiry* proceeds) so as to comprehend under it every agreeable quality and accomplishment, such as *wit, ingenuity, eloquence, quickness of conception, facility of expression, delicacy of*

* *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, p. 172.

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taste in the finer arts, *politeness*, *cleanliness*, and even *force of body**. I cannot see what valuable end it can answer in a treatise of morals to extend the notion of virtue so far. It is of high importance to mankind rightly to distinguish things that are morally good and excellent from those which are not so; and therefore great care should be taken, that both our ideas of these things, and the expressions designed to signify them, should be kept distinct. Wit, eloquence, and what we call natural parts, as well as acquired learning, politeness, cleanliness, and even strength of body, are no doubt real advantages, and when under a proper direction, and rightly applied, are both ornamental and useful, and are therefore not to be neglected, but as far as we are able, to be cultivated and improved. This will be easily acknowledged: and if this be all Mr. *Hume* intends, it is far from being a new discovery. But these things make properly no part of moral virtue; nor can a man be said to be good and virtuous on the account of his being possessed of those qualities. He may have wit, eloquence, a polite behaviour, a fine taste in arts, great bodily strength and resolution, and yet be really a bad man. And when these things are separated from good dispositions of the heart, from probity, benevolence, fidelity, integrity, gra-

* See the 6th, 7th, and 8th Sections of the Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, particularly p. 127, 128, 131, 135, 137, 162, 165.

titude,

titude, instead of rendering a man useful to the community, they qualify him for doing a great deal of mischief. These qualities therefore should be carefully distinguished from those which constitute a good moral character, and which ought to be principally recommended to the esteem and approbation of mankind, as having in themselves a real invariable worth and excellence, and as deriving a merit and value to every other quality. Nor is it proper in a treatise of morals, which pretends to any degree of accuracy, to confound them all together under one common appellation of virtue.

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And as Mr. *Hume* enlargeth his notion of virtue, so as to take in several things that do not seem properly to belong to the moral dispositions and qualities, so he excludeth from that character some things which are recommended in the Gospel as of importance to the moral temper and conduct, particularly humility and self-denial. He observes, that “Celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, solitude, and the whole train of Monkish virtues, are every-where rejected by men of sense, because they serve no manner of purpose. They neither advance a man’s fortune in the world, nor render him a more valuable member of society, neither qualify him for the entertainment of company, nor increase his power of self-enjoyment.—On the contrary, they cross all these desirable ends, stupify the understanding, and harden

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“ the heart, obscure the fancy, and sour the temper*.” Our author is here pleased to class *humility, mortification, and self-denial*, which are evidently required in the Gospel, with *penances, celibacy*, and what he calls the Monkish virtues; and pronounceth concerning all alike that they are rejected by all *men of sense*, and not only serve no manner of purpose, but have a bad influence in stupifying the understanding, hardening the heart, and souring the temper. This is no doubt designed to cast a slur upon the Gospel scheme of morality. And on the other hand he cries up his own theory of morals, as representing *Virtue in all her engaging charms*. That “ nothing appears “ but gentleness, humanity, beneficence, affability, nay even at proper intervals, play, frolic, and gaiety. She talks not of useless “ austerities and rigours, sufferance and self-denial, &c.†.” A scheme of morals which includeth *play, frolic, and gaiety*, and has nothing to do with *self-denial, mortification, and sufferance*, will no doubt be very agreeable to many in this gay and frolicsome age. But let us examine more distinctly what ground there is for our author’s censures, as far as the Christian morals are concerned.

To begin with that which he seemeth to have a particular aversion to, *self-denial*. This is

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 174.

† *Ib.* p. 188.

‘certainly

certainly what our Saviour expressly requireth of those who would approve themselves his faithful disciples. He insisteth upon it as an essential condition of their discipleship, that they should deny themselves. *Matt.* xvi. 24. *Mark* viii. 34. And if we do not suffer ourselves to be frighten'd by the mere sound of words, but consider what is really intended; this is one of the most useful lessons of morality, and a necessary ingredient in a truly excellent and virtuous character. One thing intended in this self-denial is the restraining and governing our appetites and passions, and keeping them within proper bounds, and in a due subjection to the higher powers of reason and conscience. And this is certainly an important part of self-government and discipline, and is undoubtedly a noble attainment, and which argueth a true greatness of soul. And however difficult or disagreeable it may at first be to the animal part of our natures, it is really necessary to our happiness, and layeth the best foundation for a solid tranquility and satisfaction of mind. Again, if we take self-denial for a readiness to deny our private interest and advantage for valuable and excellent ends, for the honour of God, or the public good, for promoting the happiness of others, or our own eternal salvation, and for serving the cause of truth and righteousness in the world; in this view nothing can be more noble and praise-worthy. And indeed whoever considers that an inordinate

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selfishness, and addictedness to a narrow fleshly interest, and the gratification of the carnal appetites and passions is the source of the chief disorders of human life, will be apt to look upon self-denial to be of great consequence in morals. Without some degree of self-denial nothing truly great, noble, or generous is to be achieved or attained. He that cannot bear to deny himself upon proper occasions, will never be of any great use either to himself or to others, nor can make any progress in the most virtuous and excellent endowments, or even in agreeable qualities, and true politeness. This writer himself speaking of *the love of fame*, which, he tells us, rules in all generous minds, observes, that as this prevaileth, *the animal conveniencies sink gradually in their value**. And elsewhere in the person of the Stoic philosopher, he saith, that “we must often make such important sacrifices, as those of life and fortune to virtue.” And that “The man of virtue looks down with contempt on all the allurements of pleasure, and all the menaces of danger—Toils, dangers, and death itself carry their charms, when we brave them for the public good †.” And even after having told us, that virtue talks not of sufferance and self-denial, he adds, that “Virtue never willingly parts with any plea-

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 188. † See the 19th of his moral and political Essays, p. 213.

“ sure

“ sure, but in hope of ample compensation in LETTER
 “ some other period of their lives. The sole IV.
 “ trouble she demands is of a just calculation,
 “ and a steady preference of the greater hap-
 “ piness*.” Here he allows that virtue may
 reasonably part with present pleasure in hope
 of an ample compensation in some other pe-
 riod of our lives, when upon a just calculation
 it contributes to our greater happiness. But then
 he seems to confine the hope of the compen-
 sation which virtue is to look for to some fu-
 ture period of this present life, which consi-
 dering the shortness and uncertainty of it is lit-
 tle to be depended on, and may perhaps be
 thought not to be a sufficient foundation for a
 man’s denying himself present pleasures and ad-
 vantages. But the Gospel proposeth a much
 more noble and powerful consideration, *viz.*
 the securing a future everlasting happiness; and
 supposing the certainty of this, of which we
 have the fullest assurance given us, nothing can
 be more agreeable to all the rules of reason and
 just calculation, than to part with present plea-
 sure, or to undergo present hardships to obtain
 it.

What hath been offered with regard to the
 important duty of self-denial may help us to
 form a just notion of *mortification*, which is
 nearly connected with it, and which our author
 also findeth great fault with. The chief thing

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 188,

intended

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intended by it is the subduing our fleshly appetites, and our vicious and irregular inclinations and desires. To this purpose it is required of us, that we *mortify the deeds of the body* Rom. viii. 13. that we *mortify our members that are on the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry*, Col. iii. 5. And that we *crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts*. Gal. v. 24. Mortification taken in this view is a noble act of virtue, and absolutely necessary to maintain the dominion of the spirit over the flesh, the superiority of reason over the inferior appetites. Where these prevail, they tend to *stupify the understanding, and harden the heart*, and hinder a man from being a *valuable member of society*, which is what Mr. *Hume* most unjustly chargeth upon that mortification and self-denial which is required in the Gospel. Mortification is properly opposed to that indulging and pampering the flesh, which tendeth to nourish and strengthen those appetites and lusts, which it is the part of a wise and virtuous man to correct and subdue. Even fasting upon proper seasons and occasions, however ridicul'd by Mr. *Hume* and others, may answer a very valuable end, and make a useful part of self-discipline. It may tend both to the health of the body, and to keep the mind more clean and vigorous, as well as when accompanied with prayer, promote a true spirit of devotion. But in this as in every thing else, the
Christian

Christian religion, considered in its original purity as laid down in the New Testament, preserveth a most wise moderation, and is far from carrying things to extremes, as superstition hath often done. It doth not any-where insist upon excessive, or what our author calls useless rigours and austerities. And so far is that mortification which the Gospel prescribeth, and which is nothing more than the keeping the body under a just discipline, and in a due subjection to the law of the mind, from being inconsistent with the true pleasure and satisfaction of life, that it layeth the most solid foundation for it. Mr. *Hume* himself takes notice of the “*supreme joy* which is to be found in the victories over vice, when men are taught to govern their passions, to reform their vices, and subdue their worst enemies, which inhabit within their own bosoms*.”

Not only does this gentleman find fault with self-denial and mortification, but with *sufferance*. Virtue, according to his representation of it, *talks not of sufferance and self-denial*. And yet certain it is that among the best moralists of all ages it has been accounted one of the principal offices of virtue to support us with a steady fortitude under all the evils that befall us in this present state, and enable us patiently and even chearfully to bear them. A virtue that cannot suffer adversity, nor bear us up under it with

* Moral and political Essays, p. 213.

dignity,

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dignity, and in a proper manner, is of little value in a world where we are exposed to such a variety of troubles and sorrows. And in this the Gospel morality is infinitely superior to that of the most admired Pagan philosophers. Mr. *Hume* has reckoned among virtues “an undisturbed philosophical tranquillity, superior to pain, sorrow, anxiety, and each affliction of adverse fortune*.” But what is this philosophic tranquillity, so much boasted of, relying only upon itself, compared with that which ariseth from the consolations set before us in the Gospel, from the assurances of divine assistances and supports, from the love of God and sense of his favour, from the lively animating hopes of glory, and the eternal rewards which shall crown our patience, and persevering continuance in well doing?

The last thing I shall take notice of, as represented under a disadvantageous character by Mr. *Hume*, though highly commended and insisted on by our Saviour, is Humility. And this rightly understood is one of the most amiable virtues, and greatest ornaments of the human nature. Our author is pleased to talk of a *certain degree of pride and self-valuation*, the want of which is a *vice*, and the opposite to which is *meanness* †. But to call a proper generosity of mind, which is above a mean or base thing,

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 152.
† Ib. p. 146, 147.

pride, is an abuse of words, which ought not to be admitted, if we would speak with exactness, in an enquiry concerning morals. It is to give the name of an odious vice to a very worthy disposition of soul. The Gospel humility is a very different thing from meanness. It is very consistent with such a just self-valuation, as raiseth us above every thing false, mean, base, and impure, and keepeth us from doing any thing unbecoming the dignity of the reasonable nature, and the glorious character and privileges we are invested with as Christians. True humility doth not absolutely exclude all sense of our own good qualities and attainments; but it tempers the sense we have of them with a just conviction of our absolute dependence upon God for every good thing we are possessed of, and of our manifold sins, infirmities, and defects. It is opposed to a vain-glorious boasting and self-sufficiency, and to such a high conceit of our abilities and merits, as puffeth us up with a presumptuous confidence in ourselves, and contempt of others, and which is indeed one of the greatest hindrances to our progress in the most excellent and worthy attainments. It manifesteth itself towards God, by an entire unreserved subjection and resignation to his authority and will, by proper acknowledgements of our own unworthiness before him, and a sense of our continual dependence upon him, and constant need of his gracious assistance. And it expresseth
itself

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itself towards men, by causing us to yield a due submission to our superiors, and to be affable and condescending to our inferiors, courteous and obliging towards our equals, in honour preferring one another, as *St. Paul* expresseth it, and ready to bear with each other's weaknesses and infirmities. In a word, it diffuseth its kindly influence through the whole of our deportment, and all the offices of life. Nothing is so hateful as pride and arrogance. And true humility is so amiable, so engaging, so necessary to render a person agreeable, that no man can hope to please, who hath not at least the appearance of it. Our author himself observes, that "among well-bred people, a mutual deference is affected, contempt of others disguised*." And that "as we are naturally proud and selfish, and apt to assume the preference above others, a polite man is taught to behave with deference towards those he converses with, and to yield the superiority to them in all the common occurrences of society†." So that according to him a shew of humility, and preferring others to ourselves, is a necessary part of good behaviour; and yet he is pleased to reckon humility among those things that neither render a man a more valuable member of society, nor qualify him for the entertainment of company,

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 161, 162.

† Moral and political Essays, p. 184, 185.

but

but on the contrary cross those desirable purposes, and harden the heart, and sour the temper. LETTER
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But enough of Mr. *Hume*; who, if we may judge of him by his writings, will scarce be charged with the fault of having carried humility to an excess. A pity it is that he hath not made a better use of his abilities and talents, which might have laid a just foundation for acquiring the praise he seems so fond of, as well as rendered him really useful to the world, if he had been as industrious to employ them in serving and promoting the excellent cause of religion, as he hath unhappily been in endeavouring to weaken and expose it.





LETTER V.

Additions relating to the remarks on Lord Bolingbroke. The natural immortality of the soul does not imply a necessity of existence independent on the will of God. No just ground for Lord Bolingbroke's sneer as to what he calls the edifying anecdote of Lot's daughters. The ancient Chinese sages, according to him, expressed themselves very obscurely concerning the Divinity: great difference between them and Moses in this respect. The most ancient nations had traditions among them concerning some of the facts recorded in the Mosaic history. The parallel drawn by Lord Bolingbroke between the times of the judges and the heroical ages of the Greeks examined. No proof that Moses adopted the Egyptian rites and customs. It is not true that the Jews abhorred only the worship of carved or graven images, but not of painted ones, and that picture-worship came from them to the Christians. Abraham and the Jews did not derive their knowledge of the one true God from the Egyptians and Chaldeans. Concerning God's having repented that he made man. The scripture account of the evil angels, both nothing in it absurd or contrary to reason.

S I R,

S I R,

THE observations I now send you relate to LETTER
V.
 that part of the second volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*, which is designed as a defence of natural and revealed religion against the attempts of the late Lord *Bolingbroke*. The additions proposed are for the most part not so large as those in the foregoing Letters, and consist of observations in a great measure independent one of another. But if they contain hints that may be of advantage to the main design, it will be sufficient to answer the end I have in view. Such as they are I commit them to your and the reader's candour, referring to the pages in the second volume to which they severally belong.

In the eighth Letter of that volume I have endeavoured to shew, that there is a real foundation in reason for the doctrine of the soul's immortality, and to take away the force of Lord *Bolingbroke's* exceptions against it. To what is there observed I would add this farther observation, which may be inserted in p. 259. as a new paragraph between line 9 and 10 from the bottom.

But though it is agreeable to reason to believe that the human soul is immaterial and immortal, this doth not imply, as Lord *Bolingbroke* is pleased to insinuate, that "it is immortal by the necessity of its nature, as God is self-existent

LETTER V. “existent by the necessity of his*.” Nor is it so understood by those who maintain the natural immortality of the human soul. What they intend by it is only this: That God made the soul originally of such a nature as to be fitted and designed for an immortal duration, not naturally liable, as the body is, to corruption and dissolution: but not, as if it were rendered so necessarily existent as to be independent of God himself. Still it is in his power to annihilate it, if he seeth fit to put an end to its existence; though there is no reason to think that he will ever do so. For since it was fitted for immortality by his own original constitution, this may be regarded as an indication of his will, that it shall continue in immortal being, though still in a dependence on the power and will of the Creator.

In the same eighth Letter, l. 6, 7. notice is taken of the unjust charge his Lordship hath advanced: That “the Christian goes murmuring and complaining through this life against the justice of God, &c.” Let there be a note added at the bottom of that page thus:

It is in the same spirit of misrepresentation and abuse, that he thinks fit to charge Christians with assuming, that happiness consists principally in health and the advantages of fortune, and with pretending to keep an account with God, and to barter so much virtue, and so *many acts*

* Lord Bolingbroke's works, Vol. III. p. 559.

of devotion, against so many degrees of honour, LETTER
or power, or riches *. V.

It is observed, p. 302. that Lord *Bolingbroke* speaks honourably of those nations among whom “no regard was had to degrees of consanguinity or affinity, but brothers mixed with sisters, fathers with daughters.” Let the following note be inserted at the bottom of that page:

Though our author in some of the passages above cited speaks of this worst kind of incest in softening terms, which seem to shew no great abhorrence of it, yet when he takes notice in a sneering way of *the edifying anecdote of Lot's daughters*, he calls that incest *a monstrous crime*, and intimateth as if according to the *Mosaic* accounts, the goodness of their intention *sanctified it* †. But *Moses* contenteth himself with relating the fact as it really happened; nor can it possibly be supposed, that he had any design to sanctify that crime, which is forbidden and condemned in his law in the strongest terms, and censured as an *abomination*.

In the latter end of p. 344. and beginning of p. 345. it is observed, that Lord *Bolingbroke* supposes that in *China*, in the most ancient times, they were governed by pure natural religion: but that of this he produceth no proof. Let there be a reference here to this marginal note:

* Vol. V. p. 401, 402.

† Ib. p. 112.

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His Lordship expresses himself on this head with a caution and modesty not usual with him. He saith, That “ among the countries with
 “ which we are better acquainted, he can find
 “ none where natural religion was established
 “ in its full extent and purity, as it *seems* to
 “ have been once in *China*.” It may be observed by the way, that having highly extolled the ancient *Chineſe* sages, he takes notice of
 “ the concise manner in which they expressed
 “ themselves, whenever they spoke of the Supreme Being.” And that “ their refining
 “ successors have endeavoured in part at least to
 “ found their Atheism upon what those sages
 “ had advanced *.” I think according to this account there must have been a great obscurity in their manner of expressing themselves concerning the Divinity, and that they were greatly deficient in the instructions they gave with relation to this great fundamental article of all religion. How vastly superior in this respect was *Moses* to all those admired sages, in whose writings, and in every part of the holy scriptures, the existence, the perfections, and providence of God are asserted and described in so plain and strong a manner, as is fitted to lead people of common capacities to the firm belief, obedience, and adoration of the Supreme Being, the great Creator and Governor of the world.

* Vol. V. p. 228.

In p. 367. line 12, &c. mention is made of considerable traces of tradition, which have been preserved in other nations, relating to some of the events recorded in the *Mosaic* writings.—Let there be a reference here to a marginal note; and let that note run thus:

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His Lordship frequently speaks with great contempt of the attempts made by the learned to support the history of *Moses* by collateral testimonies, those of *Egyptians*, *Phœnicians*, *Chaldeans*, and even *Greeks*\*. Yet he says, “The man who gives the least credit to the *Mosaic* history will agree very readily, that these five books contain traditions of a very great antiquity; some of which were preserved and propagated by other nations as well as the *Israelites*, and by other historians as well as *Moses*. Many of them may be true, though they will not serve as vouchers for one another.” And he farther observes, that “three or four ancient neighbouring nations, of whom we have some knowlege, seemed to have a common fund of traditions, which they varied according to their different systems of religion, philosophy, and policy †.” And since he here supposes, that the nations he refers to had different systems of religion and policy, and were evidently neither of the same country, nation, or religion with the people of *Israel*, the testimony they give to the facts re-

\* Vol. III. p. 280, 281.

† Ib. p. 282.

recorded in the *Mosaic* writings, may be justly regarded as *collateral testimony*, even according to the account he himself is pleased to give of it; *viz.* that it is the testimony of those *who had no common interest of country, religion, or profession*. So that after all his clamours against the *Mosaic* history for want of *collateral testimony*, he himself in effect owns, that in several instances at least, and with regard to some of the facts there related, collateral testimony may be produced, which is therefore very properly taken notice of by the learned. See also concerning this what is observed in the first volume of *the View*, &c. p. 407, 408.

In p. 375. line 20, *et seq.* notice is taken of Lord *Bolingbroke's* insinuations, that the *Mosaic* writings were forged; and that the likeliest time for such a forgery was that of the Judges. Here let there be a marginal note, as thus:

His Lordship is pleased to observe, That “ the  
 “ four centuries the *Israelites* passed under  
 “ their Judges, may be well compared to the  
 “ heróical ” (by which he understands the fabulous)  
 “ ages of the *Greeks*.” The reason he gives for this is pretty extraordinary. He says,  
 “ Those of the *Greeks* were generally bastards  
 “ of some god or other, and those of the *Jews*  
 “ were always appointed by God to defend his  
 “ people, and destroy their enemies.” As if the being a bastard of some god or other, and the being appointed by God for defending and  
 delivering

delivering his people, were of the same signifi-  
cancy, and equally absurd and fabulous: tho'  
under such a polity as the *Mosaical* was, their  
having their Judges and Deliverers extraordina-  
rily raised and appointed by God, had nothing  
in it but what was perfectly agreeable to the  
nature of their constitution. And whereas he  
mentions it to the disadvantage of the *Jewish*  
history under that period, that we there read of  
*Ehud an assassin*, and *Jephthah a robber*, and  
*David a captain of banditti*; it may be ob-  
served, that this last does not properly belong  
to the times of the Judges, and is only thrown  
in out of his great good-will to the memory of  
that illustrious prince: and as to the two  
former, without entering into a particular con-  
sideration of the accounts which are given of  
them\*, it may justly be affirmed, that these in-  
stances do not afford a shadow of a proof, that  
the history is fabulous, and doth not contain a  
true account of facts.

In p. 397. which by mistake is printed p. 367.  
line 7, 8. it is observed, that it is far from being  
so certain as Lord *Bolingbroke* pretends, that  
*Moses* adopted the *Egyptian* rites and customs  
in accommodation to the prejudices of the peo-  
ple. And here let there be a reference to a  
marginal note, as follows:

\* See concerning *Ehud*, *Answer to Christianity as old as the  
Creation*, Vol. II. p. 334. 2d edit.

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It appears indeed from the accounts of the *Egyptian* rites and customs given by some ancient writers, that there is a resemblance between some of those rites and customs, and those that were instituted in the *Mosaical* law. But there is no proof that the latter were derived from the former. Nor indeed is there any proof which can be depended on, that those particular rites were in use among the *Egyptians* so early as the time of *Moses*; since the authors who mention them are of a much later date. And notwithstanding all that hath been said of the improbability of the *Egyptians* borrowing them from the *Israelites*, yet the very high opinion the *Egyptians* of his time had conceived for *Moses*, as appeareth from *Exod.* xi. 3. and the great impressions which we may well suppose to have been made upon them by the extraordinary divine interpositions in favour of the *Israelites* at their departure out of *Egypt*, and during their abode in the wilderness, as well as at their entrance into the Land of *Canaan*, of which the *Egyptians* could scarce be ignorant, might give occasion to their copying after some of the *Mosaic* institutions. They might possibly apprehend that this would tend to draw down divine blessings upon them, or to avert judgments and calamities. These observances they might afterwards retain, tho' in succeeding ages, when the first impressions were over, they were too proud to acknowledge  
from



from whence they had originally derived them. Besides, it should be considered, that several of the rites and customs common to the *Israelites* and *Egyptians*, might be derived to both from the patriarchal times. The famous Mr. *Le Clerc*, notwithstanding the zeal he frequently expresseth for the hypothesis, that many of the *Mosaic* rites were instituted in imitation of the *Egyptians*, yet in his notes on *Levit. xxiii. 10.* speaking of the offering up of the first-fruits to God, observes, that this was neither derived from the *Egyptians* to the *Hebrews*, nor from the *Hebrews* to the *Egyptians*, but was derived to both from the earliest ages, and probably was originally of divine appointment. The same he thinks of the oblation of sacrifices; and adds, that there were perhaps many other things which both people derived from the same source. *Et alia forte multa ex æquo indidem traxit uterque populus.* So that many of those *Jewish* observances, which some learned men, and Mr. *Le Clerc* among the rest, have been fond of deriving from the *Egyptians*, had probably been in use in the times of the ancient patriarchs, and were retained, and farther confirmed, as well as other additional rites instituted, in the law of *Moses*.

In shewing how advantageously the *Jews* were distinguished in matters of religion above the most learned and polite heathen nations, it is observed, p. 400. that “ all worship of inferior

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“ferior deities, and of the true God by images,  
“was most expressly prohibited in their laws.”  
Here let there be a reference to this marginal  
note :

Lord *Bolingbroke* takes notice that *Moses* had made the destruction of idolatrous worship a principal object of his laws: and the zeal against images was great among the *Jews*. But he pretends that it was only carved or embossed images that were had in horror; but a flat figure, either painted or embroidered, was allowed; as, he thinks, is very clear from a passage which he has read quoted from *Maimonides*. And he intimates, that “picture-worship” came from the *Jews* to the Christians, as “did that of carved images from the Pagans\*.” If that was the *casuistry*, as he calls it, of the *Jews*, it is certainly not chargeable on their law, which most expressly prohibiteth the worshipping not only of *graven images*, but *the likenesses* of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. But this is one instance among many that might be produced of the wrong use his Lordship has made of his too superficial reading. He was ready to take up with the slightest appearances in favour of any darling point he had in view. He has here confounded the making or drawing pictures or images with the worshipping them. Neither *Maimonides*,

\* Vol. IV. p. 308.

nor any other *Jewish* author, ever pretended that it was lawful for them to worship painted, any more than carved figures. But as to the lawfulness of making images, or of painting and embroidering them, there were different opinions. Some carried it so far, that they were not for allowing any figures at all, either painted or carved, not so much as for ornament, for fear of giving occasion to idolatry. Others thought it lawful to have the figures of animals either painted or carved, except those of men; which were not allowed to be carved or embossed, though they might be painted, or drawn upon a plane. But neither the one nor the other were to be worshipped. If his Lordship had consulted Mr. *Selden*, whom he hath sometimes quoted, he would have found all this distinctly represented. *De jure nat. et gent. apud Hebr. lib. ii. cap. 6, 7, 8, 9.* There is no foundation therefore for his new discovery, that picture-worship came from the *Jews* to the Christians.

There is another note relating to the *Jews*, which may properly be inserted in p. 402. as follows:

His Lordship shews a strange unwillingness, that the *Jews* should have the honour of having had the knowlege and worship of the true God among them, in a degree far superior to other nations. Sometimes he insinuateth, as some others of the Deistical Writers have done, that the *Israelites*

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ites borrowed it from the *Egyptians*, though, according to his own representation of the case, this was among the *Egyptians* part of their secret doctrine, not communicated to the vulgar, or from the *Babylonians*. And then the wonder will be how it came to pass, that the knowledge and worship of the one true God was preserved among the *Jews*, whilst the *Egyptians* and *Babylonians* were immersed in the most absurd and stupid idolatries. He thinks, he might venture to affirm, that Abraham himself learned the orthodox faith, viz. relating to the knowledge and worship of the one true God, in Egypt, and the neighbouring countries \*, And he had said the same thing before †. There cannot be a greater proof of unreasonable prejudice than this. It is surmised not only without evidence, but against it; since nothing can be plainer from the account given us of *Abraham*, than that he knew and worshipped the one true God before he came into *Canaan* at all, and therefore long before he went into *Egypt*. Nor did he learn it from the *Chaldeans*, among whom idolatry had then made a considerable progress: as appears from *Jos. xxiv. 2*. And agreeable to this is the universal tradition of the East; that he was the great restorer of the ancient true religion, which had been corrupted with idolatry.

\* Vol. IV. p. 205.

† Vol. III. p. 299.

In p. 442. some notice is taken of the intention of those passages of scripture in which God is said to repent. At the bottom of that page let the following note be inserted :

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His Lordship seems to think it an unanswerable objection against the *Mosaic* writings, that in the account there given of the flood, God is represented as having *repented that he made man*. But it is manifest, that this is only an emphatical way of expression to signify God's just displeasure at the great and universal wickedness of mankind, and at their having so far fallen from the noble end of their creation ; and that therefore after having tried the methods of indulgence towards them, he saw fit to send a destructive deluge for exterminating that incorrigible race. And it is plain that according to the doctrine of the sacred writings, which every-where represent God as fore-knowing the actions of men, this corruption of mankind was what he foresaw from the beginning ; and the punishing them in this manner made a part of the original scheme of Divine Providence, though it did not actually take effect till the proper time came for executing it. As to what he mentions in a sneering way, concerning God's *smelling the sweet savour of Noah's burnt-offering*, it is sufficient to observe, that the design of the expression is plain and easily intelligible, *viz.* to signify God's gracious acceptance of the act of devotion performed

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 V. } formed by that good man, to acknowledge his gratitude, and implore the divine mercy ; and that on that occasion God was pleased, after having made so signal a display of his justice, to allay and dissipate the fears which might be apt to arise in the hearts of men, and to assure them of his merciful intentions towards them, and that he would not any more send an universal deluge upon the earth ; of which the rainbow in the clouds should be a constant memorial.

In p. 483. line 6, *et seq.* mention is made of an objection of Lord *Bolingbroke* against the doctrine of an inferior dependent evil being, such as Satan is represented to be. To what is there hinted in answer to that objection, may be added the following marginal note :

That God made creatures of a noble order, and of sublime capacities and powers, vastly superior to man, is what our author himself allows to be very probable \*. And as it is reasonable to believe that they were made free agents, why may it not be supposed that some of them made a wrong use of their liberty, and became depraved and corrupt ? And if one of them of distinguished power and dignity above the rest, by a perversion of his great abilities, became eminent in evil and wickedness, and particularly instrumental to draw others to

\* Vol. IV. p. 177. Vol. V. p. 329, 330.

sin and disobedience, it cannot be pretended LETTER that this supposition carrieth any absurdity in it. V. And in such a case it might be expected, that he and his associates would prove enemies to all goodness and virtue, and that having fallen from their own felicity and glory, they would envy the happiness of others, and endeavour to draw them into guilt and misery. This is what we often see bad men do, who are arrived to a great degree of corruption and depravity. His Lordship indeed pretendeth, that the supposition of *an inferior dependent being, who is assumed to be the author of all evil*, is more absurd than the doctrine of *two independent principles, the one good, the other evil*. But it is evident to the common sense of mankind, that there is a vast difference between the supposition of an almighty and independent evil being, a supposition full of absurdity and horror, and that of an inferior dependent being, who was made originally upright, but fell by his own voluntary defection into vice and wickedness, and who, though permitted in many instances to do mischief, and to act according to his evil inclinations, as wicked men are often permitted to do in this present state, yet is still under the sovereign controul of the most holy, wise, and powerful Governor of the world. For in this case we may be sure from the divine wisdom, justice, and goodness, that God will in the properest

season

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season inflict a punishment upon that evil being, and his associates, proportionable to their crimes, and that in the mean time he sets bounds to their malice and rage, and provideth sufficient assistances for those whom they endeavour to seduce to evil, whereby they may be enabled to repel their temptations, if it be not their own faults: and that he will in his superior wisdom bring good out of their evil, and over-rule even their malice and wickedness, for promoting the great ends of his government. This is the representation made to us of this matter in the holy scriptures; and there is nothing in all this that can be proved to be contrary to sound reason. And we may justly conclude, that in the final issue of things, the wisdom as well as righteousness of this part of the divine administrations will most illustriously appear.

In p. 490. after having observed, line 6, *et seq.* That the *Jews* were taught that noble lesson, That in and from God alone, they were to look for happiness, whether relating to the people in general, or to particular persons:— add as follows, without breaking the line:— And they were instructed to regard him as exercising a constant inspection over them, and taking cognizance both of their outward actions, and of the inward affections and dispositions of their hearts.

-There



There are several other additional observations relating to the second volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*, which I shall reserve to be the subject of another Letter. At present these may suffice.

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*I am, Sir, &c.*



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## LETTER VI.

*St. Paul vindicated against Lord Bolingbroke's charge of madness. The revelation published by Christ's apostles under the direction of his Spirit, truly and properly the revelation of Jesus Christ, as well as that which he delivered himself in the days of his personal ministry. Some manuscripts of the sacred writings, particularly the Alexandrian, so ancient, as to bring us near to the first ages of the Christian Church. Some of Christ's precepts in his sermon on the mount, which have been exclaimed against as excessively severe, own'd by Lord Bolingbroke to be reasonable and just. The primitive Christians unjustly charged by him with owning themselves to be Gnostics. The prosperity of the Roman state, according to him, owing to the belief of Religion and a Providence, and the neglect of Religion the cause of its ruin.*

S I R,

**I**N the beginning of p. 529. before the first line, let there be a new paragraph inserted, as follows:

Among other charges Lord *Bolingbroke* bringeth against *St. Paul* one is that of madness. He asks,

asks, " Can he be less than mad, who boasts a  
 " revelation superadded to reason to supply  
 " the defects of it, and who superadds reason  
 " to revelation, to supply the defects of this  
 " too; at the same time? This is madness, or  
 " there is no such thing incident to our nature."  
 And he mentions several persons of great name as  
 having been guilty of this madness, and parti-  
 cularly *St. Paul* \*. That reason and revelation  
 are in their several ways necessary, and assistant  
 to each other, is easily conceivable, and so far  
 from being an absurdity, that it is a certain  
 truth. But the stress of his Lordship's observa-  
 tion lies wholly in the turn of the expression,  
 and in the improper way of putting the case.  
 That revelation may be of signal use to assist  
 and enlighten our reason in the knowledge of  
 things which we could not have known at all,  
 or not so certainly by our own unassisted reason  
 without it, is plainly signified by *St. Paul*, and  
 is what the whole Gospel supposes. And on  
 the other hand it is manifest, that reason is ne-  
 cessary to our understanding revelation, and  
 making a proper use of it, and that in judging  
 of that revelation, and of its meaning and evi-  
 dences, we must exercise our reasoning faculties  
 and powers: *i. e.* revelation supposeth us to be  
 reasonable creatures, and to have the use of our  
 reason, and addresseth us as such. But this doth  
 not imply that revelation is defective, or that

\* *Lord Bolingbroke's works*, Vol. IV. p. 172.

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For let revelation be never so sufficient and perfect in its kind, or well fitted to answer the end for which it is given, yet still reason is necessary to understand and apply it. This is St. *Paul's* scheme, and there is nothing in it but what is perfectly consistent. It is evident from his writings that he supposeth the revelation which hath been given to be sufficient for all the purposes for which it was designed, able to make us wise unto salvation, and to instruct us in things of great importance, which reason, if left merely to itself, could not have discovered. And at the same time he supposeth those to whom the revelation is published to be capable of exercising their reasoning faculties for examining and judging of that revelation, and exhorteth them to do so \*. And though he frequently asserteth his own apostolical authority, and the revelation he received from Jesus Christ, yet he useth a great deal of reasoning in all his epistles. Thus are reason and revelation to be joined together, and are mutually helpful to one another. And in this view there is a real harmony between them. And what there is in this scheme that looks like madness is hard to see.

In p. 540. l. 4. add as follows, without breaking the line—And whereas he urgeth, That “ if “ we do not acknowlege the system of belief

\* See 1 *Cor.* x. 15. 1 *Theff.* v. 21.

“ and

“ and practice which Jesus left behind him to  
 “ be complete and perfect, we must be re- LETTER  
 “ duced to the greatest absurdity, and to little VI.  
 “ less than blasphemy; and that it must be  
 “ otherwise said, that he executed his commis-  
 “ sion imperfectly \*.” It will appear, if the  
 matter be rightly considered, that it was no way  
 dishonourable to our Saviour, that there were  
 several things more explicitly revealed to the  
 apostles afterwards, than was done during his  
 personal ministry. Some things were not pro-  
 per to be openly and distinctly published till  
 after Christ’s resurrection: nor were his disciples  
 fully prepared for receiving them before that  
 time. He himself told them before his passion,  
 that there were some things they did not know  
 then, but should know afterwards. And the  
 revelation published by his apostles according to  
 his commission, and under the influence of his  
 Spirit, and by power derived from him, was  
 as truly *the revelation of Jesus Christ*, as St.  
*Paul* calls it, as that which he delivered himself  
 in the days of his personal ministry. Nor did  
 it really differ from it in any article, but more  
 fully explained several things than was reason-  
 able, or could be conveniently done before. So  
 that Christ was faithful to the commission he  
 had received, and the whole was conducted  
 with admirable wisdom, and condescending  
 goodness.

\* Vol. IV. p. 315, 316.

In p. 543, line 20, *et seq.* it is observed, that by the acknowledgement of all mankind, there may be sufficient evidence of the truth and authenticity of ancient writings, though neither the originals, nor any attested copies of the originals be now in being. — Let a marginal note be here added, as follows :

How long the originals of the apostolic writings continued in the churches we cannot certainly take upon us to determine. Whether the noted passage of *Tertullian*, in which he speaks of the *Authenticæ literæ Apostolorum* as still read in the apostolical churches, relateth to the original manuscripts of the apostolic writings, or not, about which the learned are not agreed ; it is very possible, and not at all improbable, that some of the originals might have continued to that time. And considering how long pieces of that kind may be preserved, we are not removed at so vast a distance from the originals as may appear at first view. In the year 1715, when Cardinal *Ximenes* set forward the *Complutensian* edition of the scriptures, there were some manuscripts made use of which were looked upon to be then twelve hundred years old. The famous *Alexandrian* manuscript presented by *Cyrius Lucaris* to our King *Charles* the first, though learned men are not quite agreed about its age, is universally allowed to be of very high antiquity. Dr. *Grabe* thinks it might have been written about the latter end of the fourth century. Others, as Dr. *Mill*, suppose

suppose it was not written till near the end of the fifth century. If we take the latter computation, it may fairly be supposed that there were at that time, *viz* at the end of the fifth century, copies two or three hundred years old: and if the *Alexandrian* manuscript was copied from one of this sort, which is no unreasonable supposition, this will bring us to the third or latter end of the second century, when probably the very originals, or at least several copies taken from the originals, were in being.

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In p. 565. it is observed, that Lord *Bolingbroke* owns, that our Saviour's sermon on the mount contains excellent precepts of morality, and that it was right to carry the notion of virtue as high as possible. To what is there hinted, line 3 from the bottom, add as follows, without breaking the line. — Some have objected it as an instance of our Saviour's carrying things to an excessive rigour, that he not only forbids *murder*, but the being *angry without a cause*, and not only prohibits the gross act of *adultery*, but hath declared, That *whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart*, Matt. v. 28. But his Lordship acknowledgeth, that the law which forbids the commission of a crime, does certainly imply, that we should not desire to commit it; and that to want or extinguish that desire is the best security of our obedience \*. Yet he afterwards observes, &c.

\* Vol. IV. p. 298, 299.

P. 567. line 7, *et seq.* from the bottom, some notice is taken of the unfair representation his Lordship makes of the *legal* causes of divorce among the *Jews*.—Let the following marginal note be there added :

He is pleased to observe, That “ the people  
“ of God had an advantage in this respect above  
“ other people. Plurality of wives might have  
“ made divorces less necessary : or, if they  
“ were all alike disagreeable, the husbands had  
“ the resource of concubines.” Where he represents it, as if there was an allowance to the people of God in their law itself, both to have a plurality of wives, and besides these to have concubines which were not wives. So it is indeed in the law of *Mahomet*, where every man is allowed four wives, and as many female slaves as he can keep. But there is no such constitution in the *Mosaical* law. And the concubines we read of in scripture were really wives, tho’ without a dowry. Thus in the case of the Levite’s concubine, *Judg.* xix. he is said expressly to be her husband, and her father is several times called his father-in-law, ver. 3, 4, 5, 7, &c.

In p. 569. line 18. after *they should be one flesh*,—add,—The first instance of polygamy *Moses* mentions is that of *Lamech*, one of the descendants of wicked *Cain*, and who seems by the short hints given of him to have been of a very bad character. And though he afterwards gives instances, &c.



In p. 635. line 18, 19. notice is taken of the injurious representation Lord *Bolingbroke* has made of the primitive Christians.—And here let the following marginal note be inserted: LETTER  
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As a specimen how ready our author is to lay hold of the slightest appearances for casting a slur upon the ancient Fathers, and primitive Christians, I would observe, that after mentioning the Gnostics, and their pretences, he adds, That “ the Orthodox grew in time as much  
“ Gnostics as others, and we see that the Church  
“ of *Alexandria* thought it necessary to be so  
“ in order to be truly religious \*.” He is so fond of this thought, that he afterwards repeateth it, and talks of the “ Heretics assuming  
“ the pompous title of Gnostics, and despising  
“ the first preachers of Christianity, as ignorant  
“ and illiterate men: and that *Clement* of *Alex-*  
“ *andria* maintained, that to be a good Chri-  
“ stian it was necessary to be a good Gnostic †.” It would be hard to produce an instance of greater disingenuity than Lord *Bolingbroke* is here guilty of, and it can scarce be supposed that he himself was so ignorant as not to be sensible of it. The word Gnostic properly signifies a man of knowlege. Some corrupters of Christianity in the primirive times, who made high pretences to extraordinary knowlege, assumed that title to themselves. And because *Clement* describes the true Gnostic in opposition to the false, to shew that this name in which those

\* Vol. IV. p. 336.

† Ib. p. 458.

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Heretics gloried, belonged in its just sense only to the true Christian: therefore he and the orthodox Christians were Gnostics, *i. e.* of the same principles and practices with that sect which they condemned. It may be safely left to the reader to judge of the fairness of such a conduct.

In p. 655. line 13, 14. it is observed, that never was there any civilized government that did not take in religion for its support. Here let there be this note added at the bottom of the page:

His Lordship observes, That “ the good effects of maintaining, and bad effects of neglecting, religion were extremely visible in the whole course of the *Roman* government. — That though the *Roman* religion established by *Numa* was very absurd, yet by keeping up an awe of superior power, and the belief of a Providence that ordered the course of events, it produced all the marvellous effects which *Machiavel*, after *Polybius*, *Cicero*, and *Plutarch*, ascribes to it.’ He adds, That “ the neglect of religion was a principal cause of the evils that *Rome* afterwards suffered. Religion decayed, and the state decayed with her \*.” And if even a false religion, by keeping up an awe of superior power, and the belief of a Providence, had so advantageous an influence on the prosperity of the state, and the neglect of religion brought

\* Vol. IV. p. 428.

such evils upon it ; can they possibly be regarded as true friends to the public, who take so much pains to subvert the religion professed among us, a religion established upon the most rational and solid foundations, and to set men loose from the awe of a superior power, and the belief of a Providence ordering the course of events, and a manifest tendency of whose attempts and endeavours is to leave us without any religion at all ?

I have now finished the additions I purpose to make to my former observations on the late Lord *Bolingbroke's* posthumous works ; and as you and some others of my friends have thought it proper to reprint my REFLECTIONS on the late Lord *Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Use of History*, I have carefully revised that little pamphlet, and submit it to your judgment, whether it may not come in properly in this part of the supplement.

*I am, Yours, &c.*





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# REFLECTIONS

ON

The late Lord BOLINGBROKE's Letters

ON THE

Study and Use of History ;

Especially so far as they relate to

## CHRISTIANITY,

AND THE

## HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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## Advertisement to the Reader.

**I**N the former editions of these *Reflections*, besides the remarks that were made upon those passages in Lord *Bolingbroke's* Letters which relate to Christianity and the Holy Scriptures, there were several things added of a *political nature*, and care was taken to examine and detect his Lordship's misrepresentations. But in this edition it is thought proper not to intermix any thing of a *political nature*, which would not be so well suited to the design of the present work. For this reason, whereas in page 18 of these *Reflections* it was proposed to distribute the remarks into three heads, the third of which related to the severe reflections Lord *Bolingbroke* had made upon the consequences of the late revolution, and the state of things under the present establishment. — This third head, which in the former editions reached from p. 133 to p. 166, is omitted.

THE







T H E

P R E F A C E.

**A**LTHOUGH no man needs to make an apology for using his best endeavours in defence of our common Christianity, when it is openly attacked; yet as my engaging again in this cause, after having done it on some former occasions, might have an appearance of too much forwardness; it was with some reluctance that I was persuaded to undertake it. What had great weight with me was, the judgment and advice of a person of great worth \*, of whose sincere friendship I have had many proofs, and whom I greatly honour for his truly Christian and

\* The Rev. Dr. THOMAS WILSON, Rector of WALBROOK, and PREBENDARY of *Westminster*.

candid spirit, as well as his zeal for our holy religion. He urged, that it was highly proper to take notice of the contempt and abuse attempted to be thrown upon Christianity and the holy Scriptures, by a writer of so great name, and whose specious insinuations, and confident assertions, might probably make disadvantageous impressions upon minds too well prepared to receive them. And, as he had not then heard that any other had undertaken it, or intended to do so; he thought my drawing up Remarks on these Letters, which had made so much noise, might be of some use. This determined me to attempt it; and how far what is now offered is fitted to answer the intention, must be submitted to the judgment of the public. I am sensible of the disadvantage one is under in appearing against a writer of so distinguished a character as the late Lord Viscount *Bolingbroke*. His Lordship's admirers will no doubt expect, that a proper decent respect should be paid to his great abilities and talents, as well as quality. This I readily acknowledge. But there is certainly a still greater regard due to the honour of Christianity, which he hath unworthily insulted. However, it is hoped the reader will find, that care has been  
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taken not to transgress the rules of decency, or to push the charge against him farther than his own words give just ground for ; and that angry and reproachful expressions have not been made use of, even where there seemed to be a sufficient provocation given.

It might have been expected, from a person of his Lordship's genius, and who seems fond of saying things which had not been insisted upon before, that when he thought fit to appear against the authority of the holy Scriptures, and the Christian religion, he would have managed the argument in a different manner, and to greater advantage, than had been done by others in the same cause before him. But I do not find, that, with all his sagacity and penetration, he hath advanced any thing on the argument, that can be properly called a new discovery ; or that he hath given any additional force to the objections which have been urged by others, and to which sufficient answers have been made.

In that part of his Letters, in which he attempteth to expose the Scripture history as false or uncertain, there are several things thrown in, which seem rather calculated to shew his Lordship's reading, than to answer the main design he appears to have had in view. It would be no

difficult matter to point to some mistakes and inaccuracies he hath fallen into. But I have chosen for the most part to pass them by, and confine myself to those things that have a nearer relation to the argument.

Any one that is conversant with those that are called the Deistical Writers, must have observed, that it is very usual for them to put on an appearance of respect for Christianity, at the same time that they do all in their power to subvert it. In this his Lordship hath thought fit to imitate them.

He hath sometimes expressed a seeming regard for the holy Scriptures; and hath carried it so far as to make a shew of owning the divine inspiration of some parts of them. But I believe he would have been loth to have had it thought, that he was in earnest. It is not easy to see the justice, or even the good sense, of such a conduct; since the disguise is too thin to impose upon the most unwary reader: nor can I see what end it can answer, but to give one no very good opinion of the writer's sincerity.

This justice, however, must be done to the noble author, that he hath brought the controversy, relating to the divine authority of the Christian religion, into a narrower compass than some others engaged in the same cause have seemed  
willing

willing to do. He asserteth, that Christianity is a religion founded upon facts; and fairly acknowledgeth, that if the facts can be proved to be true, the divine original and authority of the Christian religion are established. And what he requireth is, that these facts should be proved, as all other past facts, that are judged worthy of credit, are proved; *viz.* by good historical evidence. This bringeth the controversy to a short issue: for if it can be shewn, that the great, important facts, recorded in the evangelical writings, have been transmitted to us with as much evidence as could be reasonably expected, supposing those facts to have been really done; then, by his Lordship's concessions, and according to his own way of stating the case, they are to be received as true; and consequently the Christian religion is of divine authority.

His Lordship had too much sense to deny (as some have been willing to do) the certainty of all historical evidence as to past facts, or to insist upon ocular demonstration for things done in former ages. Since therefore the best way of knowing and being assured of past facts is, by authentic accounts, written and published in the age in which the facts were done; all that properly remains is, to prove the credibility and authenticity of the Gospel-records; and that they

have been transmitted to us with such a degree of evidence, as may be safely depended upon. And notwithstanding what his Lordship hath insinuated to the contrary, this hath been often done with great clearness and force, by the writers that have appeared on the behalf of Christianity. What is offered in this way in the following Reflections, will, I hope, be judged sufficient; though I have done little more than point to the heads of things, which might easily have been enlarged upon, if I had not been afraid of swelling these Reflections to too great a bulk.

The chief danger to be apprehended from his Lordship's book, appears to me to arise from the contemptuous insinuations he has thrown out against Christianity, as if it could not bear the light, or stand the test of an impartial inquiry; and as if every man of sense that examines into first principles without prejudice, must immediately see through the delusion. This, from a man of his Lordship's known abilities, and fine taste, may be apt to do mischief among those, who, without any uncommon abilities, or giving themselves the trouble of much thinking, yet want to pass for persons of extraordinary penetration, and raised above vulgar prejudices. But if authority were to decide this cause, it were easy to produce, on the side of Christianity,  
many

many great names of persons, whose learning and good sense, and eminent merit, are universally acknowledged. I shall not mention any of the *Clergy* on this occasion, because they might perhaps be excepted against: tho', if extensive knowlege and learning, if depth of thought, and exactness of judgment, if great candour and probity of manners, or if fineness of genius, and elegance of taste, in polite literature, might recommend them as fit to judge in these matters; many of them might be named, so confessedly eminent in all these respects, as would render them ornaments to any profession in the world. But it may not be improper to mention some illustrious *Laymen*, who have either professedly written in defence of Christianity, and the holy Scriptures, or have, in their writings, shewn an high esteem and veneration for them. Of foreigners, among many that might be mentioned to advantage, I shall only take notice of the Lord *Du Plessis Mornay*, who was both a very wise statesman, and eminently learned; the celebrated Monsieur *Pascal*, one of the finest writers, and greatest genius's of the last age; that extraordinary man *Grotius*, not easily to be paralleled for force and extent of genius, as well as variety of learning; those great men the Barons *Puffendorf* and *Eszekiel Spanheim*, the

former deservedly admired for his great knowledge of the law of nature and nations, the latter peculiarly eminent for his acquaintance with the *Belles Lettres*, and refined taste in the politer parts of learning. To these might be added many excellent persons of our own nation, such as Lord *Bacon*, Mr. *Selden*, Sir *Charles Wolfely*, Sir *Matthew Hale*, the honourable *Robert Boyle*, Mr. *Locke*, Sir *Isaac Newton*, Mr. *Addison*, Mr. *Forbes* the late Lord President of *Scotland*. I believe there are few but would think it an honour to be ranked with these illustrious names, some of them remarkable for their eminent station and figure in the world, and great political abilities; and all of them justly admired for the extent of their learning and knowledge, the solidity of their judgment, or correctness of their taste. And I cannot help, on this occasion, mentioning two gentlemen now living, of acknowledged learning and fine sense, who have distinguished themselves by their writings in defence of Christianity; Sir *George Lyttelton*, and Mr. *West*.

No man needs therefore be apprehensive, as if his appearing to shew a zeal for Christianity, might be looked upon as a reflection upon his understanding, or as a mark of a narrow and bigotted way of thinking; since it cannot be denied,



denied, that some of the wisest men, the greatest genius's, and exactest reasoners of the age, have been persons that professed an high regard for the Christian religion. And the same might, I doubt not, be said of numbers of gentlemen now living, of eminent abilities, and distinguished worth, who might be mentioned with great honour, though they have had no occasion of appearing in the world as writers. But the controversy is not to be decided by the authority of great names. Christianity doth not stand in need of that support. It standeth fixed on its own solid basis; and only requireth to be considered with an attention suitable to its vast importance. It hath nothing to fear from a true freedom of thought, from deep reasoning, and impartial inquiry. What it hath most to apprehend, is a thoughtless levity and inattention of mind, and an absolute indifferency to all religion, and to all inquiries about it. It is no easy matter to prevail with those to think closely in such a case as this, who are under the power of sensual affections and appetites, who are sunk in *Indolence* and a *Love of Ease*, or carried off with a perpetual hurry of *Diversions* and *Amusements*, or engaged in the warm pursuits of *Ambition* or *Avarice*. But surely, if the voice of reason is to be heard, and if there be any thing at all that deserveth

a serious

a serious attention it is this. The inquiry whether Christianity be true, and of a divine original, or not, is a matter of high importance, and upon which a great deal dependeth. The Gospel itself most certainly representeth it so. If Christianity be true and divine, those to whom it is published, and who have an opportunity of inquiring into it, and yet neglect to do so, can never be able to justify their conduct to the great Ruler and Judge of the world. It cannot with any consistency be supposed, that if God hath sent his Son into the world, to bring a clear revelation of his will, and to guide men in the way of salvation, it is a matter of indifferency whether those to whom it is offered, and made known, pay any regard to this signification of the divine will or not, or comply with the terms which are there prescribed. And therefore for such persons to reject it at a venture, without giving themselves the trouble of a serious inquiry, or to continue in a wilful negligence and careless suspense of mind in a matter of such vast consequence, is a most unaccountable and inexcusable conduct, altogether unworthy of reasonable, thinking beings.

Let Christianity therefore be carefully examined. Let the evidence for the facts on which its divine authority is supported, be coolly and

impartially considered, whether it is not as much as could be reasonably desired, supposing those facts were true, and which would be accounted sufficient in any other case. Let the original records of Christianity be inquired into, whether they have not the characters of genuine simplicity, integrity, and a sincere regard to truth; and whether they have not been transmitted to us with an evidence equal or superior to what can be produced for any other writings whatsoever. Let the nature and tendency of the religion itself be considered; whether the idea there given us of the Deity be not such as tendereth to render him both most amiable and most venerable, to fill our hearts with a superlative love to God, as having given the most amazing proofs of his wonderful love and goodness towards mankind, and at the same time with a sacred awe and reverence of him as the wise and righteous Governor of the world, a lover of order, and an hater of vice and wickedness; whether its precepts be not unquestionably pure and holy, and such as, if faithfully complied with, would raise our natures to an high degree of moral excellence; whether the uniform tendency of the whole scheme of religion there held forth to us, be not to promote the honour of God, and the good of mankind, and the cause of piety, righteousness, and virtue,

in

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in the world ; to engage us to worship God with a pure adoration and devotion, to deal justly, kindly, and equitably, with all men, and to subdue the sensual irregular affections and lusts, and keep them within proper bounds. Superstition, and false devotion, have frequently put men upon unnatural and excessive rigours and austerities ; but Christianity, like the blessed Author of it, keeps clear of all extremes. It abridgeth us of no pleasures within the bounds of purity and innocence : nor doth it oblige us to extinguish our natural appetites and passions, but to govern and moderate them, and preserve them in a regular subjection to reason, and the law of the mind : and certainly it is necessary for our own quiet and happiness, and for the good order of society, that we should do so. And finally, let it be considered, whether any motives could possibly be exhibited more powerful and engaging, than those which the Gospel setteth before us. It proposeth the noblest models for our imitation, God himself, in his imitable moral excellencies ; and his well-beloved Son, the most perfect image of his own goodness and purity. It displayeth all the charms and attractions of redeeming grace and love to allure us. It giveth the greatest encouragement to sinners to repent, and forsake their evil ways ; and promiseth the most gracious

assistance.

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assistance to help our infirmities, and to strengthen our weak, but sincere, endeavours in the performance of our duty. It raiseth us to the most glorious *prospects*, and sublime *hopes*, than which nothing can possibly have an happier tendency to engage us to a patient continuance in well doing, amidst the many difficulties and temptations of this present state. The *rewards* it proposeth are such as are fitted to animate holy and generous souls, and to produce, not a servile and mercenary frame of spirit, but a true greatness of mind; *viz.* an happiness consisting in the perfection of our natures, in a conformity to God, and the eternal enjoyment of him, and in the pure pleasures of society and friendship with glorious angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect. And on the other hand, to make an impression upon those that are insensible to the charms and beauty of virtue, it maketh the most lively and affecting representations of the *terrors* of the wrath to come, and the *punishments* that shall be executed in a future state upon those that obstinately persist in a course of presumptuous sin and disobedience.

This is an imperfect sketch of the nature and design of Christianity, as laid down in the Gospel. In this view let it be considered, and not be unjustly charged, as it hath often been, with

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with corruptions that are only owing to a deviation from its original purity; or with the practices of those, who, though they make a profession of believing it, allow themselves in courses which it forbids and condemns. What an happy world would this be, if men could be more generally persuaded to yield a willing subjection to its divine authority, and to comply with its true spirit and design, and to give up themselves to be governed by its excellent precepts, and important motives!

What then can those propose that take pains to turn men from such a religion as this, and to weaken or subvert the evidences of its divine authority? Can they pretend to introduce a more pure and sublime morality, or to enforce it with more powerful motives? Do they propose to render men more holy and virtuous, more pious and devout towards God, more just and kind and benevolent towards men, more temperate and careful in the due government of their appetites and passions, than the Gospel requireth and obligeth them to be? Do they intend to advance the interests of virtue by depriving it of its most effectual encouragements and supports, or to exalt the joys of good men by weakening their hopes of everlasting happiness, or to restrain and reclaim the wicked and  
vicious

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vicious by freeing them from the fears of future punishment ?

There is a great complaint of a growing *dissoluteness* of manners, and of a general *corruption*. His Lordship representeth this in the most lively terms; but, instead of ascribing it to the proper causes, he is for laying the whole load of it on the present establishment. Far from directing to the proper cure, he hath done what he could to take away that which would be the most effectual remedy, the influence of Christianity on the minds and consciences of men. When the *restraints* of religion are once taken off, what can be expected, but that they should abandon themselves to the conduct of their passions? *Human Laws* and *Penalties* will be found to be weak ties, where there is no fear of God, nor regard to a future state, or the powers of the world to come. In proportion as a *neglect* or *contempt* of religion groweth amongst us, a *dissoluteness* of morals will prevail; and when once this becometh *general* among a people, *true probity* and *virtue*, a *right public spirit*, and *generous concern for the real interests of our country*, will be *extinguished*. Surely then all that wish well to the good order of society, and to the happiness of mankind, ought to wish, that true uncorrupted

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rupted Christianity should generally obtain and prevail ; and that men should not only heartily believe, but seriously consider it, and endeavour to get it wrought into the very frame and temper of their souls. For Christianity is not a mere outward form and profession, but a living principle, of a practical nature and tendency. And it is not enough to have a speculative notion and belief of it, but we must consider it with that attention which becometh us, and do what we can to enforce its excellent doctrines and motives upon our own hearts.



REFLECTIONS





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OF THE

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## E R R A T A.

In page 262. line 21. for *others observed*, read *others have observed*. P. 263. l. 20. for *crime*, r. *event*. P. 265. l. 28. for *them*, r. *Ham*.





ing from such an author on such a subject. And it will not be denied, that he has many good, and some very curious observations, expressed in a very genteel manner, and with great elegance and purity of stile: but these are interspersed with others of a very different kind, and of a dangerous tendency.

In these letters his lordship has done what he could to expose the authority of the Scriptures to contempt; and at the same time has made the most disadvantageous representation of the present state of the government and constitution of his country. If we are to trust the accounts he giveth us, Christianity hath no real foundation of truth in fact to depend upon; it hath been upheld by superstition, ignorance, and imposture; and hath been visibly decaying ever since the revival of learning and knowlege. And our civil constitution, instead of being rendered better at the late revolution, hath been ever since growing worse; and our liberties are in more real danger than they were in before. The natural tendency of such representations is to inspire a thorough contempt and disregard of the religion into which we were baptized, and to produce endless jealousies and discontents, if not open insurrections, against the government under which we live. No man therefore who hath a just zeal for either of these, can see without concern such an insolent attempt against both. And in this case, the quality, the ability, the reputation of the writer, as it maketh the attempt more dangerous,

dangerous, rendereth it more necessary to guard against it. If an inferior writer had said all that his Lordship hath advanced, it would have deserved very little notice. But there are too many that are ready almost implicitly to swallow down any thing that cometh to them recommended by a great name; especially if it be advanced with a very peremptory and decisive air. And if an author's account of himself must be taken, there perhaps scarce ever was a writer whose judgment ought to have greater weight, or who better deserves, that an almost implicit regard should be had to his dictates, than the author of these Letters.—

He enters upon his first Letter with declaring, that the rules he is going to recommend as necessary to be observed in the study of history, were—  
“ very different from those which writers on the  
“ same subject have recommended, and which  
“ are commonly practised.” — But he assureth his reader (and I believe him) that — “ this  
“ never gave him any distrust of them.” — And therefore he proposeth to tell his sentiments —  
“ without any regard to the opinion and practice  
“ even of the learned world \*.” — He declareth it as his opinion, that — “ A creditable kind  
“ of ignorance is the whole benefit, which the  
“ generality of men, even of the most learned,  
“ reap from the study of history, which yet ap-  
“ pears to him of all other the most proper to  
“ train us up to private and public virtue †.” —

\* Vol. I. p. 1, 2.

† <sup>6</sup>Ib. p. 15.

Surely then the world must be mightily obliged to an author who comes to give them instructions and directions in a matter of such great importance, which the generality of men, even of the most learned, were unacquainted with before.

In his Letter on the *true use of retirement and study*, he finely representeth, what — “ a desirable thing it must be to every thinking man, to have the opportunity indulged to so few, of living some years at least to ourselves in a state of freedom, under the laws of reason, instead of passing our whole time under those of authority and custom.”—And asks — “ Is it not worth our while to contemplate ourselves and others, and all the things of this world, once before we leave them, through the medium of pure and undefiled reason\*?”— He observes, that — “ They who can abstract themselves from the prejudices, and habits, and pleasures, and business of the world, which, he says, is what many are, though all are not, capable of doing, may elevate their souls in retreat to a higher station, and may take from thence such a view of the world, as the second *Scipio* took in his dream from the seats of the blessed.”—That this will enable them to — “ distinguish every degree of probability, from the lowest to the highest, and mark the difference between this and certainty, and to establish peace of mind, where alone it can rest securely, on resigna-

\* Vol. II. p. 197.

“ tion.”

“ tion \*.” — In what follows he seems to apply this to his own case. He represents himself as in a state of retirement from the world, abstracted from its pleasures, and disengaged from the habits of business: though at the same time he declareth his resolution *in his retreat* to contribute as much as he can to *defend and preserve the British constitution of government*; for which he expected his reward from God alone, to whom he *paid this service* †. He goes on to observe in the same Letter, that — “ he who has not cultivated his reason young, will be utterly unable to improve it old.” — And that — “ not only a love of study, and a desire of knowlege, must have grown up with us, but such an industrious application likewise, as requires the whole vigour of the mind to be exerted in the pursuit of truth, through long trains of discourse, and all those dark recesses, wherein man, not God, has hid it.” — And then he declares, that *this love*, and *this desire*, he has *felt all his life*, and is *not quite a stranger to this industry and application* ‡.

His Reflections upon Exile tend also to give one an high idea of the author. Speaking of the necessity of standing watchful as centinels, to discover the secret wiles and open attacks of that capricious goddess Fortune before they can reach us, he adds, — “ I learned this important lesson long ago, and never trusted to Fortune, even while

\* Vol. II. p. 199. † Ib. p. 201, 202. ‡ Ib. p. 205, 206.

“ she seemed to be at peace with me. The  
 “ riches, the honours, the reputation, and all  
 “ the advantages which her treacherous indul-  
 “ gence poured upon me, I placed so, that she  
 “ might snatch them away without giving me  
 “ any disturbance. I kept a great interval be-  
 “ tween me and them. She took them, but  
 “ she could not tear them from me \*.” He fre-  
 quently expresseth himself in those Reflections,  
 as one superior to fortune and exile, and that  
 had attained to a perfect philosophic calmness  
 and tranquillity, whose mind was not to be dis-  
 composed by any outward evils; as one who was  
*far from the hurry of the world, and almost an*  
*unconcerned spectator of what passes in it,* and  
 who, *having paid in a public life what he owed*  
*to the present age,* was resolved to *pay in a pri-*  
*vate life what he owes to posterity;* and who  
 was determined to *write as well as live without*  
*passion* †. And who would not be inclined to  
 pay a vast regard to the sentiments of a great  
 genius, that had always from his youth loved  
 study, and desired knowlege, and to this added  
 industry and application; who had an opportunity  
 for retirement from the world, and knew how to  
 improve it; and who had made use of his soli-  
 tude to contemplate himself and others, and all  
 the things of this world, through the medium of  
 pure and undefiled reason!

But there are several things that tend to take  
 off from that dependence one might otherwise

\* Vol. II. p. 234.

† Ib. p. 282.

be apt to have upon an author possessed of so many advantages.

It can scarce be denied, that there is a great appearance of vanity in these Letters. A certain air of sufficiency breathes through the whole. He every-where pronounceth in a dogmatical and decisive way, and with a kind of dictatorial authority; and seemeth to regard himself as placed in a distinguished sphere, from whence he looketh down with superiority and contempt upon those that have hitherto passed for learned and knowing. To this may be added, what can scarce escape the notice of the commonest reader, a visible affectation of advancing something new, and which had not been thought of, or insisted upon, before. How often doth the polite author of these Letters, when giving his directions, and making his observations upon the study and use of history, put his noble correspondent in mind, that they were quite different from any thing that had been observed by those learned men who had treated of this subject before him! In this I think him mistaken. But at present I only mention it as a proof of the desire he was possessed with of appearing to think in a way different from, and superior to, the rest of mankind, even of the learned world. Such a desire and affectation of novelty, and of thinking out of the common way, may lead persons of great parts astray in their inquiries after truth, and hath often done so.

But there are other passions and affections, that have a still less friendly influence, and which are apt to give a wrong bias to the mind. Such is that keenness and bitterness of spirit, which disposeth a man to find fault, and to put the most unfavourable constructions upon persons and things. I will not charge the late Lord *Bolingbroke* with having been really under the influence of such a temper; but there are several things in his Letters which have that appearance. In his *Reflections upon Exile* he layeth it down as a rule, *to live and write without passion*; he talks as if he had got above all outward evils, and had attained to a perfect tranquility. And yet in these very *Reflections* there are several passages that discover a very strong resentment, and great bitterness of spirit. He there intimates, that —

“ his country had reaped the benefit of his ser-  
 “ vices, and he suffered for them—That the per-  
 “ sons in opposition to whom he served, and  
 “ even saved the public, conspired and accom-  
 “ plished his private ruin: That these were his  
 “ accusers, and the giddy ungrateful croud his  
 “ judges: That art joined to malice endeavoured  
 “ to make his best actions pass for crimes, and  
 “ to stain his character — That for this purpose  
 “ the sacred voice of the Senate was made to  
 “ pronounce a lie; and those records, which  
 “ ought to be the eternal monuments of truth,  
 “ become the vouchers of imposture and ca-  
 “ lumny \*.” — This is very strongly expressed.

\* Vol. II. p. 270, 271.



I shall not at present inquire into the truth and justness of those Reflections. I shall only observe, that this is not the language of a man who *lives and writes without passion*, or who is so *indifferent to common censure or approbation*, as he professeth himself to be \*. Nor is it easy to reconcile this with that philosophic calmness, that moderation, and tranquility of mind, which he sometimes maketh so great a shew of. There are several parts of his Letters, as I may have occasion more distinctly to observe afterwards, in which he expresseth himself with all the rage and virulence of a passionate party-writer.

It were not so much to be wondered at, if he discovered a resentment against those whom he might apprehend to be the authors of his sufferings; but there are several things that look as if he were out of humour with mankind. Of the Critics, Chronologers, Antiquaries, and of the learned in general, even those of them that have been in the highest reputation, he frequently expresseth the utmost contempt. He inveighs severely against the Divines, antient and modern; and represents even those of them, who, he says, may be called so without a sneer, as not sagacious or not honest enough, to make an impartial examination. The gentlemen of the Law fall under his heavy censure; and he will scarce allow, that since Lord *Bacon*, and the Earl of *Clarendon*, there have been any of them that have attained to any eminent degree of

\* Vol. I. p. 6.

learning and knowlege; and he taketh upon him to foretel, that except there should come some better age, there will not be any such among them for the future. The Members of Parliament herepresents as regarding the business of Parliament only as a trade; that few know, and scarce any respect, the *British* constitution, and that the very idea of wit, and all that can be called taste, has been lost among the Great. Such general censures might be expected in a writer that professedly sets himself to display his talents in satire and ridicule; but do not look so well in one that appeareth in a superior character, and who taketh upon him to instruct and guide, to form mens taste, and direct their conduct, and enable them to pass right judgments on persons and things. Such a temper is not a very good disposition for an impartial inquiry; it is apt to represent persons and things in a disadvantageous light, and to give a malignant tincture to the Reflections: nor is it very surprising to see a writer of this turn pass harsh and severe censures, not only on the administration, but on the religion, of his country.

All the use I would make of these observations is, to keep us from suffering ourselves to be too strongly biased in favour of a writer so distinguished by his abilities, and who putteth on such specious appearances.

I shall now proceed to a more distinct examination of Lord *Bolingbroke's* Letters.

*Lord Bolingbroke's Letters.* 187

In them we may find, as hath been already hinted, many good and fine observations relating to the study and use of history; delivered with great clearness of expression, and propriety of sentiment. His directions are full of good sense, and many of them very aptly illustrated by proper and well-chosen instances. In general, it must be allowed, that his observations concerning the usefulness of history, the advantages he ascribes to it, and the ends to be proposed in it, are, for the most part, just; but there is not much in them that can be regarded as perfectly new. I do not say this by way of disparagement, to detract from the merit of his Reflections: perhaps on such a subject it is scarce possible to make any observation which hath not been made by some one or other before. It is a sufficient commendation of an author, if he hath placed his reflections and observations in an agreeable and advantageous light, if he hath disposed them in a beautiful order, and illustrated his rules by proper exemplifications. But his Lordship seems not to be contented with the praise of having done this. He appears to be extremely desirous to have it thought, that his observations are not only just, but new, and such as other writers have not made before him. He declareth, in a passage cited before from his first Letter, that the rules he gives—“ are very  
“ different from those which writers on the same  
“ subject have recommended, and which are  
“ commonly

“ commonly practised \*.”—And that—“ he  
 “ will have no regard to the methods prescribed  
 “ by others, or to the opinion and practice even  
 “ of the learned world †.”—And he speaks to  
 the same purpose in his third letter ‡. And  
 after having declared, that the study of history  
 will prepare us for action and observation; and  
 that — “ history is conversant about the past;  
 “ and by knowing the things that have been,  
 “ we become better able to judge of the things  
 “ that are,”—he adds,—“ This use, my Lord,  
 “ which I make the proper and principal use of  
 “ the study of history, is not insisted on by those  
 “ who have writ concerning the method to be  
 “ followed in this study; and since we propose  
 “ different ends, we must of course take dif-  
 “ ferent ways §.”—He immediately subjoins,  
 “ — Few of their treatises have fallen into  
 “ my hands.”—And is it not a little strange,  
 that he should so positively pronounce, that  
 others have not, in their treatises concerning the  
 method to be followed in the study of history,  
 insisted on that which he makes the proper and  
 principal use of it, when at the same time he  
 acknowledgeth, that few of their treatises had  
 fallen into his hands? One would think by his  
 way of representing it, that none before this  
 noble writer had mentioned it as the proper use  
 and end of history to promote our improvement  
 in virtue, to make us better men and better

\* Vol. I. p. 1.  
 § Ib. p. 67, 68.

† Ib. p. 2.

‡ Ib. p. 69.

citizens,

citizens, to teach us by example, and to prepare us for action and observation, that by knowing the things that have been, we may become better able to judge of the things that are. And yet I am apt to think, that few have set themselves to shew the use that is to be made of history, the ends to be proposed in it, and the advantages arising from it, but have in effect said the same thing. And it were no hard matter, if it were necessary, to fill up several pages with quotations to this purpose, from authors antient and modern.

History is, no doubt, capable of being improved to excellent purposes: and yet the author of these Letters seems sometimes to have carried it too far; as if history (not sacred history; for this, with the examples it affordeth, he discards as of little or no use) were the best, the only school of virtue, the most universal and necessary means of instruction, alone sufficient to make us good men and good citizens, and to furnish us with all the knowledge that is proper for our direction in practice. He observes, — That “ history is philosophy, teaching us by example, how to conduct ourselves in all the stations of private and public life.” — And that — “ it is of all other the most proper to train us up to public and private virtue\*.” — He declares, that — “ every one that is able to read, and to reflect upon what he reads, is able to make that use of history which he recom-

\* Vol. I. p. 15. 57.

mends:

“ mends : and every one who makes it, will  
 “ find in his degree the benefit that arises from  
 “ an early acquaintance with mankind, con-  
 “ tracted in this method \*.”—He adds, that —  
 “ we are only passengers or sojourners in this  
 “ world ; but we are absolute strangers at the  
 “ first steps we take in it. Our guides are often  
 “ ignorant, often unfaithful. But by this map  
 “ of the country which history spreads before  
 “ us, we may learn, if we please, to guide our-  
 “ selves.” — So that history is the guide he  
 proposeth to all men to conduct them in their  
 journey through this world, and by which  
 every man is capable of guiding himself in all  
 the situations and circumstances of public and  
 private life.

History is, no doubt, very useful in its proper  
 place ; but there are other means of instruction  
 to be joined with it in order to its answering the  
 end. It is not to serve instead of every thing,  
 and to supersede all other methods of instruc-  
 tion. We stand in need of being well-seasoned  
 and principled with a just sense of the moral  
 differences of things, and with the excellent rules  
 of religion, and the important considerations it  
 setteth before us, that we may form just senti-  
 ments of things, and may make a right use of  
 history for our improvement in virtue, and may  
 know how properly to apply the examples it  
 furnisheth. Accordingly our author himself in-  
 sisteth upon it, that we must apply ourselves to

\* Vol. I. p. 171, 172.

history — “ in a philosophical spirit and man-  
“ ner \*.” — He observeth, that — “ particular  
“ examples in history may be of use sometimes  
“ in particular cases, but that the application  
“ of them is dangerous.” — He would have a  
man therefore study history as he would study  
philosophy. And in the account he gives in his  
third Letter of what is necessary in order to  
make a right use of history, he carrieth it so far,  
and really maketh the work so difficult, as to be  
above what can be expected from the generality  
of mankind; and concludeth with saying, that—  
“ by such methods as these a man of parts may  
“ improve the study of history to its proper and  
“ principal use †.” — Where he seemeth to  
represent the making a right use of history as a  
very difficult thing, which none but men of parts  
and of philosophic spirits are capable of, and  
which requireth the exactest judgment, and nicest  
discernment, as well as a very close application.  
In this passage the use and advantage of history  
seems to be confined within too narrow bounds,  
as in some of the former it had been extended  
too far.

As to the method to be followed in the study  
of history, though the author of these Letters  
speaks with great disregard, and even contempt,  
of those that have written on this subject before  
him, yet the only one he particularly mentions  
is *Bodin*. He observeth, that—“ in his method

\* Vol. I. p. 28. † Ib. 65, 66:

“ we

“ we are to take first a general view of universal history and chronology in short abstracts, and then to study all particular histories and systems.” — Upon which his Lordship remarketh, that — “ This would take up our whole lives, and leave us no time for action, or would make us unfit for it \*.” — And afterwards he observes, that — “ the man who reads without discernment and choice, and, like *Bodin’s* pupil, resolves to read all, will not have time, nor capacity neither, to do any thing else †.” — But I cannot think it was *Bodin’s* intention to lay it as an injunction upon his pupil to read without choice and discernment all the particular histories that have ever been published. But the meaning is, that the best and most regular way of reading and studying history is, first to take a brief general view and survey of universal history and chronology, and then to proceed to the histories of particular countries, nations, and ages. And this appeareth to be a very reasonable and natural method. And if *Bodin* proposes the taking a large scope and compass in reading history, his Lordship, though he seems here to blame him for it, sometimes expresseth himself in a manner that looks no less extensive : for he recommendeth the reading history of all kinds, of civilized and uncivilized, of ancient and modern nations, as necessary to give us a right knowledge of the human species, and of ourselves. He observes in his

\* Vol. I. p. 69.

† Ib. p. 142, 143.



fifth Letter, that — “ man is the subject of  
“ every history, and to know him well, we must  
“ see him and consider him as history alone can  
“ present him to us in every age, in every coun-  
“ try, in every state, in life and in death.  
“ History therefore of all kinds, of civilized  
“ and uncivilized, of antient and modern na-  
“ tions, in short, all history that descends to a  
“ sufficient detail of human actions and charac-  
“ ters, is useful to bring us acquainted with our  
“ species, nay, with ourselves\*.”—And particu-  
larly, with respect to antient history, he men-  
tioneth it in his second Letter as a great advan-  
tage, that—“ in antient history the beginning,  
“ the progression, and the end, appear not of  
“ particular reigns, much less of particular enter-  
“ prizes, or systems of policy alone, but of go-  
“ vernments, of nations, of empires, and of all  
“ the various systems that have succeeded one  
“ another in the course of their duration †.”—  
And yet he afterwards seems to confine our at-  
tention to modern history. He will allow us in-  
deed to *read* the histories of former ages and  
nations, because it would be shameful to be in-  
tirely ignorant of them; but he would not have  
us *study* any histories, but those of the two last  
centuries. That these deserve a particular at-  
tention, will easily be acknowledged for several  
reasons; and, among others, for that which he  
assigns; the great change that has been brought

\* Vol. I. p. 170.

† Ib. p. 42.

about in the civil and ecclesiastical policy of these parts of the world since the latter end of the fifteenth century; of which he gives an elegant representation in his sixth Letter. But certainly there are many things in the histories of the preceding ages, both in other countries, and in our own, that well deserve to be not only read, but to be thoroughly considered by us; and which are capable of furnishing very useful reflections, and answering those excellent ends, for which, in the former part of these Letters, he had recommended the study of history. This might easily be shewn, if it admitted of any doubt, both with regard to civil history and ecclesiastical.

But, not to insist longer upon this, and some other observations that might be made on particular passages in these Letters, I shall proceed to what is the principal intention of these Remarks; *viz.* to consider those things in them, of which a bad use may be made, or which appear to be of a pernicious tendency:

And here first consider the reflections he has cast upon literature.

And then shall proceed to those passages in his Letters, which are designed to expose the holy Scriptures, and the Christian religion.

It may seem a little surprising, that so polite a writer, and one who, as he lets us know, always from his youth loved study and application, should yet, in several parts of these Letters, express himself

himself in a manner that seems calculated to throw a contempt upon learning, and to put men off from applying themselves to the pursuit of it. Every friend of learning should, I think, acknowledge, that there is a regard due to those that in their several ways have contributed to promote it. But this ingenious writer takes every occasion to place them in a ridiculous or contemptible light. In his first Letter, he gives a very disadvantageous idea of those who, as he expresseth it, — “ make fair copies of foul manuscripts, give the signification of hard words, and take a great deal of other grammatical pains.” — He owns indeed, that *they enable others to study with greater ease, and to purposes more useful*; but he assures us, that *they neither grow wiser nor better by study themselves*. He adds, that — “ the obligation to these men would be great indeed, if they were in general able to do any thing better, and submitted to this drudgery for the use of the public, as some of them, it must be own'd with gratitude, have done; but not later, I think, than about the time of the resurrection of letters.” — And he at length condescendeth to declare, that “ they deserve encouragement, whilst they continue to compile, and neither affect wit, nor presume to reason \*.” This is a very hard censure pronounced upon all those, without distinction, that since the time of the resurrection

\* Vol I p, 5, 6.

of letters, *i. e.* for these two centuries past, have compiled dictionaries or glossaries, or have revised and published antient manuscripts, or correct editions of books; or who have been employed in explaining hard words, and in clearing obscure passages in antient authors, or making critical observations upon them, and in other things of that kind. Not content to represent them as absolutely void of genius, and having no pretensions to wit or reason, and as neither wiser nor better for their studies themselves, he will not allow, that any of them had the public good in view in the drudgery they submitted to. But I scarce know a greater sign of a malignity of temper, than a disposition to give the worst turn to every thing, and to judge harshly of the inward intentions of mens hearts, when there is nothing in their actions to support such a judgment. It were easy to name persons, that within these two last centuries, have employed themselves in the way he mentions, who were unquestionably men of great judgment and genius, as well as industry: or, at least, a small share of good-nature and candour would incline one to allow them the praise of having had the public utility in view in works, which, by his own acknowledgement, have greatly served the interests of learning, and contributed to the spreading of it.

But how meanly soever he thinks of the grammarians, critics, compilers of dictionaries, and revisers and publishers of manuscripts, he maketh  
a still

a still more disadvantageous representation of antiquaries and chronologers. Speaking of persons that have hitherto been regarded as of great figure and eminence in the republic of letters, he avoweth — “ a thorough contempt for the  
“ whole business of their learned lives ; for all  
“ the researches into antiquity, for all the systems of chronology and history, that we owe  
“ to the immense labours of a *Scaliger*, a *Bochart*, a *Petavius*, an *Usher*, and even a *Marsden* \*.” — It seems very odd, for one that speaks so highly of the advantage of history, to express such a contempt for the labours of chronologers, which certainly are of great use for digesting history into its proper periods, in order to a regular and orderly conception and understanding of it. In a passage cited above, he mentioneth it among the advantages of history, especially ancient history, that we there see events as they followed one another ; — “ that there the beginning, the progression, and the end, appear not of  
“ particular reigns, much less of particular enterprises or systems of policy alone, but of governments, of nations, of empires, and of all  
“ the various systems that have succeeded one another in the course of their duration.” — This seems to shew the advantage, and even necessity, of chronology ; and, with regard to this, the labours of a *Scaliger*, a *Petavius*, and *Usher*, are highly useful and commendable. To endea-

\* Vol. I. p. 6.

vour to digest the history of mankind, and of the principal events that have happened in the world, in a regular series, to mark the rise and fall of cities and empires, to compare and connect the histories of different countries and nations, sacred history and profane; and, in order to this, to lay together the scattered hints and fragments of different ages, is, notwithstanding his degrading representation of it, a noble employment, an employment that even a Sir *Isaac Newton* judged not to be unworthy of his great genius. One would be apt to think, that every impartial person, who hath a just value for learning, must have a great honour for those that have taken pains to set these things in a proper light: and where absolute certainty cannot be attained to, an happy conjecture may be both pleasing and useful.

In his third Letter, he findeth great fault with those that make laborious inquiries into the first originals of nations. And in his fifth Letter, he warneth the noble Lord to whom he writes, to *throw none of his time away*, as he saith he himself had done, in *groping in the dark in his searches into antiquity* \*. He speaks with contempt of what he calls *dry registers of useles anecdotes*; and declares, that — “ ten millions of such  
 “ anecdotes, though they were true; and com-  
 “ plete authentic volumes of *Egyptian* or *Chal-*  
 “ *aeon*, of *Greek* or *Latin*, of *Gallic* or *British*,  
 “ of *French* or *Saxon* records; would be of no  
 “ value in his sense, because of no use towards

\* Vol. I. p. 149.

“ our improvement in wisdom and virtue; if  
“ they contained nothing more than dynasties  
“ and genealogies, and a bare mention of remark-  
“ able events in the order of time, like jour-  
“ nals, chronological tables, or dry and meagre  
“ annals \*.” — But whatever opinion I may  
have of his Lordship's taste, I cannot help think-  
ing, that in this he is too rigid. It seems to be a  
very natural and unblameable curiosity, to search  
as far as we can into the recesses of antiquity, and  
the originals of nations; and there is a pleasure  
even in those glimmerings of light that break  
through the obscurity, provided we do not re-  
present those things as certainties, which are only  
conjectural. And I believe there are few but  
would be apt to wish, that there were — “ au-  
“ thentic volumes of *Egyptian* or *Chaldean*,  
“ *Greek* or *Latin*, *Gallic* or *British* records,”  
— even though they were only like what he  
calls — “ dry and meagre annals,” — or, as he  
elsewhere speaks, — “ the gazettes of anti-  
“ quity;” — and contained dynasties and genea-  
logies, with a mention of remarkable events that  
happened to those nations in the order of time.  
like journals, or chronological tables. And if  
any learned man could discover such ancient au-  
thentic records or monuments, few, I should  
think, would blame him, or think him idly em-  
ployed in publishing them to the world.

It looks a little odd, that there is no kind of  
men for whom, throughout these Letters, he

\* Vol. I. p. 150.

sheweth a less regard than for those that are generally accounted men of learning. Speaking of those who — “affect the reputation of great scholars, at the expence of groping all their lives in the dark mazes of antiquity,” — he says, that — “all these mistake the true design of study, and the true use of history.” — Great as the advantages are that he ascribeth to history, and which he thinks every man is capable of that is able to read, and to reflect upon what he reads, yet — “a creditable kind of ignorance is, in his opinion, the whole benefit which the generality even of the most learned reap from it.” — And he intimates, that that the only effect of their reading and studying history is, to become pedants, *i. e.* as he explaineth it, — “worse than ignorant, always incapable, sometimes meddling and presuming\*.” — And elsewhere he representeth the credulous learned as only employed — “in wrangling about antient traditions, and ringing different changes on the same set of bells †.”

To all which may be added, what he saith, in his Letter on the true use of retirement and study, concerning — “the scholar and philosopher, who, far from owning that he throws away his time, reproves others for doing it; that solemn mortal who abstains from the pleasures and declines the business of the world, that he may dedicate his whole time to the search

\* Vol. I. p. 14, 15. 21

† *Ib.* p. 169.



“ of truth, and the improvement of know-  
“ lege.”—He supposes him to have read—  
“ till he is become a great critic in *Latin* and  
“ *Greek*, in the Oriental tongues, in history and  
“ chronology; and not only so, but to have  
“ spent years in studying philosophers, commen-  
“ tators, rabbies, and whole legions of modern  
“ doctors, and to be extremely well versed in all  
“ that has been written concerning the nature of  
“ God, and of the soul of man, about matter and  
“ form, body, and spirit, &c. \*”—And yet  
he pronounceth, that, notwithstanding all his  
learning, he is in a state of ignorance, for want of  
having —“ examined the first principles, and the  
“ fundamental facts, on which these questions  
“ depend, with an absolute indifference of judg-  
“ ment, and scrupulous exactness †.” — This  
he supposeth to be the case of — “ many a  
“ great scholar, many a profound philosopher,  
“ many a dogmatical casuist.”—Yea, and, as  
appeareth from other passages in his Letters, of  
every learned man, of every philosopher and di-  
vine whatsoever, that believeth Christianity. On  
the other hand, he declareth concerning —“ the  
“ man who hath passed his life in the pleasures  
“ or business of the world,”—that whenever  
he sets about the work of examining principles,  
and judging for himself —“ concerning those  
“ things that are of greatest importance to us  
“ here, and may be so hereafter, he will soon

\* Vol. II. p. 211, 212.

† Ib. p. 213, 114.

§ have

“ have the advantage over the learned philoso-  
 “ pher. For he will soon have secured what is  
 “ necessary to his happiness, and may sit down  
 “ in the peaceful enjoyment of that knowledge ;  
 “ or proceed with greater advantage and satisf-  
 “ faction to the acquisition of new knowledge ;  
 “ whilst the other continues his search after  
 “ things that are in their nature, to say the best  
 “ of them, hypothetical, precarious, and su-  
 “ perfluous \*.”

The natural tendency of these, and other reflections of a like kind, which occur in these Letters, seem to be to pour contempt upon what have been hitherto esteemed valuable branches of literature. Researches into antiquity, chronological studies, criticism and philosophy, disquisitions concerning the nature of God, the human soul, and other philosophical and theological subjects, all these are represented as of little or no use; and only a more specious kind of idleness. And if this be the case, I think it is wrong to complain of the *Goths, Vandals, Saracens*, and other barbarous nations, that burnt whole libraries, and destroyed the monuments of learning. They rid the world of a great deal of useless lumber, which tempted men to mis-spell their time and pains; and it would have been an advantage to mankind, if more of them had been destroyed: instead of being thankful to those learned persons that have taken such pains to recover and publish antient monuments, we are

\* Vol. II. p. 216, 217.

only to regard them as industrious triflers, to whose labours the world is very little obliged. Nor can I see, upon such a view of things, what use or need there is of seminaries of learning. But, in good earnest, can this be regarded as a proper way to mend our taste, and help forward our improvement? Such a way of thinking, if it generally obtained, would, it is to be feared, instead of producing an extraordinary refinement of taste, tend rather to sink us into ignorance and barbarism, and bring us back to the darkness of the most illiterate ages.

Taken in this view, I cannot think, that these Letters have a favourable aspect on the interests of literature. Methinks there appeareth to be no great necessity at present of warning persons not to spend their lives in laborious pursuits of learning. The prevailing turn of the age doth not seem to lie this way. Many of our gentlemen will no doubt be very well pleased to be assured, that though they pass their lives in the business or pleasures of the world, yet if they at length set themselves to examine first principles, and consult the oracle of their own reason, without any regard to the opinion of others, or troubling themselves to read the writings of philosophers or divines, they are in a more likely way of discovering truth, and making a progress in useful knowledge, than any of those — “*solenni mortals, who abstain from the pleasures and decline the business of the world, that they may dedicate their whole time to*”  
“*the*”

“ the search of truth, and the improvement of  
 “ knowlege.”—This is certainly a very flattering  
 scheme, and seems to open a very short and  
 easy way for attaining to wisdom. When they  
 find a man of his Lordship’s fine and elegant taste,  
 and great talents, and who by his own account  
 hath spent so much time and pains in learned in-  
 quiries, pronouncing them absolutely vain and  
 useles; they will be very apt to take his word  
 for it, and not give themselves the trouble of la-  
 borious study; the result of which might be  
 only filling their heads with what he calleth  
*learned lumber*, and exposing them to the ridicu-  
 lous character of *pedants*, i. e. as he describeth  
 them, — “ men worse than ignorant, always  
 “ incapable, sometimes meddling and presum-  
 “ ing.”—Instead of such learned drudgery, the  
 more easy and delightful task of studying modern  
 history, may be sufficient to furnish them with  
 all the knowlege they want, and answer every  
 end of useful improvement.

But surely such a manner of representing things  
 is not altogether just, nor is this the most effectual  
 way of promoting real improvement in wisdom  
 and virtue. Great is the extent, and wide the  
 field, of science. Many noble subjects there are  
 of inquiry, which well deserve our attention.  
 The desire of knowlege is the strongest in the  
 noblest minds; but comparatively small is the  
 progress that a man is capable of making by  
 his own unassisted ability, within the short  
 compass of this present life: and therefore, be his

abilities never so great, he will need the assistance of others, and ought to be very thankful for it. Many excellent persons in different ages have employed their pains this way; and a mighty advantage that man hath, who has the opportunity, and knows how to improve it, of profiting by their labours. He may, by reading, vastly increase his stock of knowlege, may meet with many valuable hints, which else would not have occurred to him, and may find important subjects set in a clearer light than otherwise he would have seen them. The Author of our beings, who hath implanted in us the desire of knowlege, and fitted us for communicating our sentiments, undoubtedly designed, that, in acquiring knowlege, as well as in other things, we should be helpful to one another, and not depend merely upon ourselves. And this is the great advantage of language, and of letters. We must indeed make use of our own reason, but we ought also to take in all the helps and advantages we can get: and he that is careful to improve those helps which are afforded him, and who, without submitting implicitly to the judgments and opinions of others, endeavours to make the best use he can of their labours and studies, as well as of his own thoughts, is in a far more likely way of improving his knowlege, and will better approve himself to God, and to all wise men, than he that, from a vain confidence in his own judgment, despiseth and rejecteth those helps,  
and,

and, under pretence of consulting the oracle of reason in his own breast (for, as his Lordship expresseth it, — “ every man’s reason is every “ man’s oracle,”) — will not give himself the trouble to read and to examine what others have said and thought before him. Such an high conceit of a man’s own capacity and judgment, such an arrogant self-sufficiency, and a contempt of the labours and judgments of others, is not a very proper disposition for finding out truth. A man of this character was *Epicurus*, who boasted that his knowlege was all of his own acquiring, and scorned to seem to be beholden to any other for his notions.

Having considered those parts of the late Lord *Bolingbroke’s* Letters that seem not very favourable to the interests of literature, I shall now proceed to what is the principal design of these Remarks, to examine the reflections he has cast upon the sacred monuments of our religion. He first attacks the history of the Bible, especially as contained in the books of the Old Testament; and then proceeds to a more direct attempt upon Christianity. And this appears not to be a thing he treats of merely by-the-bye, but to be a point he has formally in view, and for which he professes a kind of zeal. I shall therefore consider distinctly what he hath offered.

In his third Letter on the study of history, he setteth himself to consider the state of antient history, both sacred and profane: and begins  
with

with declaring his resolution — “ to speak  
“ plainly and particularly in favour of common  
“ sense, against an absurdity which is almost  
“ sanctified \*.” — After having made some ob-  
servations on the state of antient profane history,  
and shewn, that it is full of fables, and alto-  
gether uncertain ; he next comes to apply these  
observations to antient sacred history †. What  
he seems at first to propose, is, to shew, that it  
is — “ insufficient to give us light into the  
“ original of antient nations, and the history of  
“ those ages we commonly call the first ages.”  
— But it is evident, that, under pretence of  
shewing this, his intention is, to represent the  
whole history of the Bible as absolutely uncer-  
tain, and not at all to be depended upon for a  
just account of facts. He not only denieth,  
that the writers of the historical parts of the  
Old Testament were divinely inspired, but he  
will not allow them the credit that is due to any  
common honest historians. He represents those  
histories as — “ delivered to us on the faith of a  
“ superstitious people, among whom the custom  
“ and art of lying prevailed remarkably ‡.” —  
And observes, that — “ the *Jewish* history never  
“ obtained any credit in the world, till Christi-  
“ anity was established §.” He sometimes ex-  
presseth himself, as if he were willing to allow  
the divine inspiration of the doctrinal and pro-

\* Vol. I. p. 70.  
§ Ib. p. 91.

† Ib. p. 83. et seq.

‡ Ib. p. 87.

phetical

phetical parts of the Bible, and were only for rejecting the historical. And this he pretends to be the best way to defend the authority of the Scriptures \*. But it is evident, that this is only a sneer. For he was, no doubt, sensible, that the sacred history is so interwoven with the prophecies and laws, that if the former is to be regarded as lying fiction, and not at all to be depended upon, the divine authority of the other cannot be supported. And what he afterwards repeatedly affirmeth of Christianity, that the credit of its divine institution dependeth upon facts, holdeth equally concerning the Old Testament œconomy.

After having done what he can, in his third Letter, to shew the uncertainty of antient sacred as well as profane history, he begins his fourth with observing, that as——“ we are apt naturally  
 “ to apply to ourselves what has happened to  
 “ other men ; and as examples take their force  
 “ from hence ; so what we do not believe to  
 “ have happened we shall not thus apply ; and,  
 “ for want of the same application, the examples  
 “ will not have the same effect.”——And then he adds——“ Antient history, such antient history  
 “ as I have described,” —— [ in which antient sacred history is manifestly comprehended ] ——  
 “ is quite unfit in this respect to answer the ends  
 “ that every reasonable man should promise to  
 “ himself in this study ; because such antient

\* Vol. I. p. 93. 98, 99.



“ history will never gain sufficient credit with  
“ any reasonable man \*.” — And afterwards  
speaking of antient fabulous narrations, he de-  
clares, that — “ such narrations cannot make  
“ the slightest momentary impressions on a mind  
“ fraught with knowlege and void of super-  
“ stition. Imposed by authority, and assisted  
“ by artifice, the delusion hardly prevails over  
“ common sense; blind ignorance almost sees,  
“ and rash superstition hesitates: nothing less  
“ than enthusiasm and phrensy can give credit  
“ to such histories, or apply such examples.” —  
He thinks, that what he has said will — “ not  
“ be much controverted by any man that has  
“ examined our antient traditions without pre-  
“ possession:” — and that all the difference be-  
tween them, and *Amadis of Gaul*, is this, that  
— “ In *Amadis of Gaul* we have a thread of  
“ absurdities that lay no claim to belief; but  
“ antient traditions are an heap of fables, under  
“ which some particular truths inscrutable, and  
“ therefore useles to mankind, may lie con-  
“ cealed, which have a just pretence to nothing  
“ more,” — [*i. e.* to no more credit than *Amadis*  
of *Gaul*] — “ and yet impose themselves upon  
“ us, and become, under the venerable name of  
“ antient history, the foundation of modern  
“ fables †.” He doth not directly apply this  
to the Scriptures. But no one can doubt that  
this was his intention. It is too evident, that these

\* Vol. I. p. 113.

† Ib. p. 120, 121.

are designed to be included in what he calleth  
—“our antient traditions”—(a word which  
he had applied several times before to the sacred  
records); and which he representeth as “im-  
posed by authority, and assisted by artifice.”  
—And I think it is scarce possible to express a  
greater contempt of any writing, than he here  
doth of the history of the Bible, and the ex-  
amples it affords.

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# REFLECTIONS

On the Late

Lord BOLINGBROKE'S LETTERS.

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PART II.

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SECTION I.

*The History and Scriptures of the Old Testament vindicated against his Lordship's Exceptions.*

HAVING given this general view of the author's design, I shall now proceed to a more distinct and particular examination of the principal things he hath offered to invalidate the authority of the Old Testament History. What he saith of Christianity shall be considered afterwards.

P 2

I need

I need not take much notice of what he hath urged to shew, that the writers of the Sacred Books did not intend an universal history, or system of chronology \*. I know nobody that supposes they did; so that he might have spared that part of his pains. But notwithstanding the Bible was not designed for an universal history, or to exhibit a complete system of chronology, though it may safely be affirmed, that no one book in the world gives so great helps this way, it is sufficient if it gives us a true history as far as it goes, and which may be safely depended upon. This is what our author will not allow. It is manifest, that he placeth it in the same rank with the most fabulous accounts of antient times. This then is the point we are to consider. Let us therefore examine what proofs or arguments he hath brought against the truth and credit of the sacred history.

Some of the things offered by him to this purpose have scarce so much as the appearance of argument. Of this kind is what he saith concerning the use that has been made by *Jewish* Rabbies, and Christian Fathers, and *Mahometan* Doctors, of the short and imperfect accounts given by *Moses* of the times from the creation to the deluge. Let us grant, that the fables they have feigned concerning *Adam* and *Eve*, *Cain* and *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, and his sons, &c. are such as—"Bonzes or *Talapoins* would almost blush to relate;"—I do not see how this can

\* Vol. I. p. 202, et seq.

be reasonably turned to the disadvantage of the books of *Moses*, or hurt the credit of them; since his Lordship owns, that these fables are — “ profane extensions of this part of the *Mosaic* “ history.” — And that history is certainly no-way answerable for the additions which have been made to it. It would have been easy for *Moses*, if he had been a fabulous writer, to have filled up this part of his history with marvelous relations, and to have embellished it with such fictions concerning our first parents, and the most antient patriarchs, as our author here referreth to: and his not having done so is a strong presumption in his favour, that he did not give way to fancy or invention, but writ down the facts as they came to him, with an unaffected simplicity. His accounts are short, because he kept close to truth, and took care to record no more of those times than he had good information of, or than was necessary to the design he had in view; which seems principally to have been to give a brief account of the creation, the formation of the first human pair, the placing them in Paradise, the fall, and the flood, which were the most remarkable events of that period; and to continue the line from *Adam* by *Seth* to *Noah*, as afterwards he does from him to *Abraham*.

What his Lordship observes concerning the blunders of the *Jewish* chronologers \*, is not

\* Vol. I. p. 104.

much more to his purpose, except he could prove, that those blunders are chargeable upon the Scriptures; which is so far from being true, that, if accurately examined, arguments may be brought from those very Scriptures to confute the blunders he mentions.

As to the differences he takes notice of \* between the Scripture-accounts of the *Assyrian* empire, and those given by profane authors, *i. e.* by *Ctesias*, and them that copy from him, very able chronologers have endeavoured to shew, that those accounts may be reconciled. But if not, it would only follow, that the Scripture-history differeth from *Ctesias*, who, in his Lordship's own judgment, and by the acknowledgement of the most judicious among the *Greeks* themselves, was a very fabulous writer †; and how this can be fairly thought to derogate from the credit and authority of the Sacred History, I cannot see.

But to come to those things on which he seems to lay a greater stress. The sum of what he hath offered to destroy the truth and credit of the Sacred Writings amounteth to this, —  
 “ That the *Jews*, upon whose faith they are  
 “ delivered to us, were a people unknown to  
 “ the *Greeks*, till the time of *Alexander the*  
 “ *Great*. — That they had been slaves to the  
 “ *Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, and Persians*, as  
 “ these several empires prevailed. — That a great  
 “ part of them had been carried captive, and lost

\* Vol. I p. 114, 115.

† *Ib.* p. 76. So.

“ in the East: and the remainder were carried  
“ captive to *Babylon*, where they forgot their  
“ country, and even their language—And  
“ he intimates, that there also they lost their  
“ antient sacred books: that they were a su-  
“ perstitious people, among whom the custom  
“ and art of pious lying prevailed remarkably—  
“ That the original of the Scriptures was com-  
“ piled in their own country, and, as it were,  
“ out of the sight of the rest of the world—  
“ That the *Jewish* history never obtained any  
“ credit till Christianity was established; but  
“ though both *Jews* and Christians hold the  
“ same books in great veneration, yet each con-  
“ demns the other for not understanding, or for  
“ abusing them—That the accidents which  
“ have happened to alter the text of the Bible  
“ shew, that it could not have been originally  
“ given by divine inspiration; and that they  
“ are come down to us broken and confused,  
“ full of additions, interpolations, and transpo-  
“ sitions—That they are nothing more than  
“ compilations of old traditions, and abridg-  
“ ments of old records made in later times—  
“ and that *Jews* and Christians differ among  
“ themselves concerning almost every point that  
“ is necessary to establish the authority of those  
“ books. He concludes with some observations  
“ on the curse said to be pronounced by *Noah*  
“ upon *Canaan*, which he would have pass for  
“ an absurd fiction of the writer of the book  
“ of *Genesis*; and he seemeth to have singled

“ out this as one of the properest instances he  
 “ could find for exposing the Scripture.”—

Let us consider these things distinctly.

It is no just prejudice against the credit of the Scripture-history, that the *Jews*, among whom those writings were preserved, and whose affairs are there recorded, were, as appeareth from those writings— “ Slaves to the *Egyptians*, “ *Assyrians*, *Medes*, and *Persians*, as these several empires prevailed\*.”—It rather furnisheth a proof of the truth and impartiality of those records, that they give an undisguised account, not only of the flourishing times of their state; for there were times in which they were flourishing, free, and independent; but of their disgraces, defeats, captivities, and all the calamities that befel them, which, according to these accounts, were in a way of just punishment for their national iniquities, their disobedience and ingratitude. Yet under all these various revolutions their nation was never intirely lost, nor incorporated with their conquerors. Though many of them revolted, still there was a number of them that with an unalterable zeal and constancy adhered to their antient religion and laws, which they regarded as of a divine original: a religion remarkably distinct from that of the nations to which they were subjected, and, on the account of which, they were frequently exposed to hatred, persecution, and reproach.

\* Vol. I. p. 84.



If the *Jews* were unknown to the *Greeks* before *Alexander* the Great, this affordeth not the least probable presumption, that their ancient history is not to be depended upon. The *Greeks*, by this author's own acknowledgement, did not begin to write history till very late. The knowlege they had of other nations was very narrow and confined. And, particularly, they were in a great measure strangers to the languages, laws, customs, and history, of the eastern nations. He himself observes, that after the times of *Alexander* the Great, and even long after the *Jewish* Scriptures were translated into *Greek*, the *Jews*, and their history, were neglected by them, and continued to be almost as much unknown as before\*. And yet certain it is, that the *Jews* were then a considerable people, and that the *Greeks* had many opportunities of being acquainted with them. Let us grant what he insinuates, that this was owing, not to want of curiosity in the *Greeks*, since — “ they were, as “ he observes, inquisitive to the highest degree, “ and published as many idle traditions of other “ nations as of their own † ” — but to the contempt they had for the *Jews*. What can be inferred from thence? Doth it follow, that the *Jewish* Scriptures are not authentic, nor their histories to be credited, because the *Greeks* neglected or despised them, and did not own their authority? This is easily accounted for by any

\* Vol. I. p. 90.

† Ibid. p. 88.

one that considers the nature of the *Jewish* institutions. It is not to be wondered at, that a people so excessively vain as the *Greeks*, and who looked upon the rest of the world as *Barbarians*, should conceive an aversion or contempt for a nation whose laws and religion were so different from their own, among whom all image-worship was most expressly prohibited, and no adoration was paid to inferior deities, in which the religion of the *Greeks*, and of which they were extremely fond, principally consisted. If the *Jewish* sacred books had contained strange stories of the exploits of their gods, of their genealogies, battles, and amours, or traditions that tended to support a system of idolatry, the *Greeks* undoubtedly would have been ready enough to transcribe these things into their writings: these fables would have been suited to their taste. But it cannot be supposed, that they should pay any regard to the accounts given of extraordinary miraculous facts, that were designed to establish and give sanction to a constitution, the manifest tendency of which was to condemn and subvert that idolatrous worship, to which they were so excessively addicted.

Among all the heathen nations none expressed a greater enmity to the *Jews* than the *Egyptians*, who were themselves of all people the most stupidly idolatrous. One of their writers, *Apion* of *Alexandria*, is particularly mentioned by our author as having—"spoken of the *Jews* in a  
 " manner neither much to their honour; nor to  
 " that

“ that of their histories.”—This seems to have recommended him to his lordship's favour; for he speaks of him as a man—“ of much erudition, and as having passed for a curious, a laborious, and learned antiquary”—though he owns, that he passed also—“ for a vain and noisy pedant\*.”—But if we may judge of him by the fragments of his work, which *Josephus* has given us, he was, with regard to the *Jews*, an ignorant and malicious writer, who does not appear to have been acquainted with their histories and laws, though he pretended to write against them; and might so easily have procured information, if he had desired it. And this appears to have been the case of several others of the heathen writers that mention the *Jews*. They seem not to have given themselves the trouble to make any diligent inquiry into their history or laws, as delivered by themselves, but took up with idle reports and traditions to their prejudice: and yet in the accounts given of the *Jews* by the heathen writers, imperfect as they are, there are some valuable hints and traces to be discerned, which shew the falshood of other things they report concerning them †.

\* Vol. I. p. 90, 91.

† There is an heathen writer of a very different character from *Apion*, who gives a much more candid account of the *Jewish* nation: I mean the judicious *Strabo*, of whom our author himself speaks with the highest esteem. He makes the cause of *Moses's* forsaking *Egypt* to be his being dissatisfied with the false notions of God, and his worship, that had obtained

among

It

It is therefore a little odd, that such a stress should be laid upon this, that—"the *Jewish* history never obtained any credit in the world, till Christianity was established:"—*i. e.* it obtained no credit among the heathen nations; or, as he elsewhere expresseth it—"we do not find, that the authority of these books prevailed among the pagan world\*."—How could it be expected, that it should? Since the heathens could not acknowledge it, and continue heathens; for it was absolutely subversive of the whole system of paganism. The authority of those books was believed and received among all those, by whom it could be reasonably expected that it should be believed and received: that is, it was acknowledged and received by that nation among whom those writings, and the memory of the laws and facts, had been constantly preserved, and who regarded them with great veneration, as of a divine original; and also by those among the heathens themselves, who, upon the credit of the *Jewish* religion, laws, and records, quitted the heathen idolatry: and these were all

among the *Egyptians*; and supposes him to have entertained juster and nobler notions of the Divinity than the *Egyptians*, or *Libyans*, or *Greeks*: that with him went from *Egypt* many that honoured the Deity, πολλοὶ τιμῶντες τὸ Θεῖον: that he persuaded many good men, and brought them unto the country where *Jerusalem* is built; and that there they continued practising justice or righteousness, and being truly religious, or sincere worshippers of God, ἀπειθοπαγῶντες καὶ εὐσεβεῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ὄντες, but that afterwards they degenerated.—See *Strabo*. lib. xvi.

\* Vol. I. p. 87, 91.

that could be reasonably expected to acknowledge the authority of the *Jewish* sacred books, even supposing their authority to have been never so well founded.

But it is urged as a ground of suspicion against the *Jewish* Scriptures, that—"they were compiled in their own country, and, as it were, out of the sight of the rest of the world."—And it was certainly most proper, that the books in which their laws, and the most remarkable events relating to their nation, are recorded, should be published in their own country, the scene where the chief actions were laid. This is no diminution of their credit, but the contrary. And if they had been compiled in any other country, or by foreigners, and persons not of their own nation, it might have been said, and not without some appearance of reason, that they might be mistaken, and take up with wrong and imperfect accounts, both of laws and facts.

But what this author seems chiefly to insist upon, to shew that little credit is to be given to these writings, is—"that they are histories delivered to us on the faith of a superstitious people; among whom the custom and art of pious lying prevailed remarkably\*."

In order to form a proper judgment of this matter, let us take a brief view of the *Jewish* Scriptures, that we may see what likelihood there

\* Vol. I. p. 87.

is of their having been feigned by a superstitious and lying people.

In general, it may be observed, that if we compare the sacred books of the *Jews* with those of any other the most admired nations, such as *Greece* and *Rome*, we shall soon see a most striking and amazing difference. Their whole constitution was of a peculiar nature; so vastly different from that of other countries, that it well deserveth the attention and admiration of every impartial and considering observer. It was the only constitution in the world, where the acknowledgement and worship of the one true God, the sovereign Lord of the universe, and of him alone, is made the fundamental maxim of their state, and principle of their government, in which all their laws centre, and the main end to which they are all directed. All worship of inferior deities is forbidden; no deified heroes admitted; no images suffered. Many of their sacred rites seem to have been instituted in a designed opposition to those of the neighbouring nations, that they might not incorporate with them, or learn their idolatrous customs, to which the *Israelites*, for a long time, were very prone. Nor is there any likelihood that they would have embraced or submitted to a constitution so different from the then generally prevailing idolatry, if it had not been for the manifest proofs that were given them of its divine original. The author of these letters indeed intimates, that many of their rites were  
derived

derived from the *Egyptians*; but whatever conformity there might be in some particular instances, nothing is more certain and evident, than that the whole system of the *Jewish* religion was most essentially opposite to that of the *Egyptians*, and other pagan nations; and tended to cast contempt on their adored deities, and on that idolatrous worship to which the heathens were so much addicted, and which was established by the laws of their respective countries.

As to the moral and devotional treatises, which make up another part of their sacred writings, they are incontestably excellent. Their poetry is of a most divine strain, far superior to that of other antient nations, having an unexampled dignity, elevation, and sublimity in it, filled with the noblest sentiments of the Divinity, and of his glorious incomparable perfections, and governing providence.

The same observation may be made on the prophetic writings, in which we may discern many remarkable characters of genuine truth and purity. A fervent zeal for God, and for pure and undefiled religion, every-where appears: nor is there any thing in them that breathes the spirit of this world, or that favours of ambition, artifice, or imposture. The whole intention of them is manifestly to reclaim the people from idolatry, vice, and wickedness, to engage them to the pure worship of God, and to the practice of universal righteousness. With a noble freedom and impartiality do they reprove their kings,  
princes,

princes, priests, people; denouncing the most awful threatenings against them, if they should persist in their evil and sinful courses; and encouraging them with the most gracious promises to repentance, and new obedience: and all this mixed with many remarkable and express predictions of future events, which no human sagacity could have foreseen, and which derived such an authority to them, that tho' they were often reproached and persecuted when alive, their character and writings were afterwards regarded by the whole nation with the profoundest veneration. And it deserveth to be particularly remarked, that whereas the *Jews*, as well as mankind, in all ages, have been prone to place religion chiefly in external forms, and ritual observances, as if these would compensate for the neglect of the moral precepts, there are many passages in their sacred books, especially those of the prophets, which in the strongest terms represent the utter insufficiency of all ritual observances without real holiness of heart and life; and even speak of them in a very diminutive manner, and with a seeming contempt, when opposed to, or abstracted from, moral goodness and virtue; and such writings certainly do not look like the inventions of a superstitious and lying people.

But as the sacred history is what this writer setteth himself particularly to expose and invalidate, let us take a brief view of the historical parts of Scripture; and these are no less re-



markable, and worthy of our attention, than the laws, the prophecies, the moral and devotional writings.

As to a general idea of their history, it is of as different a complexion from that of other nations as their laws, and is of the same noble tendency with their other sacred books. It everywhere breathes the profoundest veneration for the Deity. The chief design of it is not merely to answer civil or political views, or to preserve the annals of their nation, or trace it up to its original, though this also is done, but for nobler purposes; to promote the true worship of God, and the practice of piety and virtue; to preserve the remembrance of God's wonderful works of providence towards his professing people; to shew the favours, the blessings, the deliverances, vouchsafed to them, the prosperity and happiness they enjoyed, when they kept close to the laws of God, and continued in the practice of virtue and righteousness; and on the other hand, the great calamities which befel them when they broke the divine law and covenant, and lapsed into idolatry, vice, and wickedness. Such are the useful lessons which their history is designed to teach, and to this excellent end is it directed.

To which it may be added, that there are observable in it remarkable characters of simplicity, and an impartial regard to truth. It is plain, from the whole tenor of their history, that it was not compiled to give false and flattering accounts of their nation, or partial and elegant

encomiums of their great men. Their great actions indeed are recorded, but their faults are also related with a simplicity and impartiality that deserves to be admired. Neither *Romans*, *Greeks*, *Egyptians*, nor any other people, have formed their histories so much to the disadvantage of their own nation, or charged them with such repeated revolts from the religion and laws of their country. Let us suppose the *Jews* never so much possessed with the spirit of lying, it would never have put them upon forging a body of history so much to the prejudice of their own national character. It tendeth indeed to give an high idea of the great things God had done for them, of the privileges conferred upon them, and the excellency of their laws (and that their laws are excellent, no man can doubt that seriously reads and considers them), but at the same time it setteth the ingratitude, the disobedience, the stupidity, of that people, their opposition to God's authority, and abuse of his goodness, their manifold backslidings and unsteadfastness in his covenant, in the strongest light. Their disgraces, defeats, captivities, are nowhere concealed; they are represented as frequently brought under the yoke of the neighbouring nations in a manner much to their dishonour; and their deliverances are ascribed, not to their own wisdom, conduct, and bravery, but to the mercy of God, upon their repentance. In a word, their history is a continued account of God's goodness, patience, and justice, exercised

cised towards them; and of their own strange, perverse, and unaccountable conduct. This is so manifest, that it hath been often turned to their reproach, and hath given occasion to the representing them as an obstinate, ungrateful, and rebellious race, and to such a charge as St. *Stephen* advanceth against them from their own Scriptures; *Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* Acts vii. 51.

These considerations naturally tend to derive a peculiar credit to the *Jewish* Scriptures, as containing true and faithful accounts, not forged by a superstitious lying people. Whatever opinion therefore we may have of the *Jews*, yet their Sacred Books deserve great regard. Nor is there any ground to suppose, that these books or records were of their inventing. At least, I believe, this will scarce be pretended with regard to the *Jews* in the latter times of their state, however they might otherwise be addicted to fiction and embellishment. They received these books as sacred from their ancestors, and were themselves so fully persuaded of the divine original and authority of their laws, and the certainty and authenticity of these records, that they adhered to them with a zeal scarce to be paralleled in any other nation: so great was the veneration they had for them, that after the canon was completed, they were extremely scrupulous not to make any additions to their Sacred Books, or

receive any others into their number as of equal authority, though written by the greatest and wisest men of their nation. And if any persons had endeavoured to alter or corrupt them, the fraud, the imposture, must have been immediately detected. For these Sacred Books were not, like those of other nations, confined to the priests only; they were in the hands of the people, constantly and publickly read in their synagogues; the laws, and the facts, were what they were all acquainted with, and instructed in, from their infancy.

If therefore there be any ground of suspicion, it must fall, not upon the latter *Jews*, but upon *EZRA*, and those by whom the sacred canon was finished. If their history and Sacred Books were forged or corrupted, the most likely time that can be fixed upon for it is upon their return from the *Babylonish* captivity. And this seems to be the era fixed upon by the author of these Letters. He observes—that “the *Babylonish* “captivity lasted so long, and such circum- “stances, whatever they were, accompanied it, “that the captives forgot their country, and “even their language, the *Hebrew* dialect, at “least, and character\*.”—And afterwards, he intimates, that the Scriptures were—“lost “during the captivity †.”—And he observes, that—“*Ezra* began, and *Simon* the Just finished, “the canon of the Scriptures ‡.”—

\* Vol. I. p. 84.

† Ibid. p. 101.

‡ Ibid. p. 85.

Let us grant, that in the *Babylonish* captivity, the *Jews* learned the *Chaldee* language, which thenceforth became more familiar to them than the *Hebrew*; and that the old *Hebrew* character was, as many learned men suppose, though it is far from being certain, changed for the *Chaldee*; the latter being fairer, easier, and more generally used among the people; yet this is far from proving, either that the *Hebrew* language was intirely forgotten by them, or that their Sacred Books were lost in the captivity. There are many things that plainly shew the contrary. The prophet EZEKIEL, who prophesied during the captivity to the *Jews* in *Chaldea*, writ and published his prophecies in *Hebrew*. So did the prophets HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, and MALACHI, who prophesied several years after the return from the *Babylonish* captivity: which shews, that the *Hebrew* language was still in use, and was understood by many of the people. The same thing may be concluded from this; that all the Sacred Books that were written after the captivity were written in *Hebrew*, except a part of EZRA and DANIEL. NEHEMIAH, who had been a great man in the *Persian* court, writ his own memoirs in *Hebrew*: which shews, that the *Jews* who continued in *Persia*, their great men at least, still retained the knowlege of that language. And as the *Hebrew* language was not absolutely forgotten among the *Jews* in their captivity, so neither were their Sacred Books intirely lost. Indeed it were absurd to suppose it. That cap-

tivity, though it lasted seventy years from the first beginning of it under *Jehoiakim*, yet from the time of the utter desolation of *Jerusalem*, and the temple, and the carrying away the last remainder of the people to *Babylon*, continued but about fifty years. And there were not a few of them that had been carried away from *Jerusalem*, who survived the whole time, and lived to come back. *Many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of the second house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, Ezra iii. 12.* All those among them that lived to seventy or eighty years were twenty or thirty years old when *Jerusalem* and the *Temple* were destroyed; and to suppose, that these should intirely forget their language, or their religion, history, and laws, is very absurd. Add to this, that the people were in expectation of a deliverance, and restitution to their own land, of which the prophets had assured them; and this would naturally make them more careful to preserve their laws, and the ancient authentic records and memorials of their nation. It appeareth from the accounts given of those that returned, that many of the *Priests* the *Levites*, the *Singers*, the *Porters*, the *Nethinims*, &c. had preserved their genealogies during the captivity, in prospect of their return, and of their being again employed in the sacred functions; and those who could not clearly shew their genealogies, were put from  
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the priesthood, *Ezra* ii. 62. *Neh.* vii. 64. Great numbers of the people could also prove their genealogies: and where there were any that could not do this, it is particularly taken notice of, that *they could not shew their fathers house*, *Ezra* ii. 59. It is manifest therefore, that there were *registers* of genealogies preserved in *Babylon*; and is it not reasonable to conclude, that they would be no less careful to preserve their Sacred Books, especially those of *Moses*, in which were their original records, and the laws on which their whole constitution depended?

If the *Jews* had been for changing their own laws and customs, we may suppose it must have been in order to their adopting those of their conquerors, and of the country to which they were transplanted, and in which they settled. But it is evident, that, in fact, they did not do this; since the whole system of their worship and constitution was, upon their return, very different from that of the *Babylonians*. If therefore they learned their language, or used their letters and characters in writing; yet still it is certain, that they worshiped not their gods, nor adopted their religion, and sacred rites. They still preserved their own; and the captivity and desolation of their nation, which they looked upon as a punishment for their manifold revolts, idolatries, and deviations from their law, tended to increase, instead of extinguishing, their veneration for it.

By DANIEL's solemn supplication and fasting, when the time came that had been marked out in the prophecies for their return, it appeareth, that he had the book of JEREMIAH's Prophecies before him, *Dan.* ix. 2. And the confession he there maketh is remarkable: *All Israel have transgressed thy law—therefore the curse is come upon us; and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him—And he hath confirmed his words which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us—As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us,* ver. 11, 12, 13. Here it is plainly supposed, that there was a written law of *Moses* extant in his time, known to him and to the people, and which was regarded as the law of God himself: that they had transgressed that law, and thereby had exposed themselves to the dreadful judgments denounced against them, and written in that law, as the just punishment of their revolt and disobedience. Soon after this, when the people returned, under the conduct of ZERUBBABEL, JESHUA, and others, we find them gathered together to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, in the seventh month, and offering the *daily burnt-offerings*, and those of the *new-moons*, and *set feasts*, besides *free-will offerings*: and all this is said to be done as *written in the law of Moses*, *Ezra* iii. 1—6. and this plainly sheweth, that they had the written law of *Moses* with them. They also appointed the Priests and *Levites*, in their several courses, and



and the Singers, and service of the temple, *according to the ordinances of David the man of God*, Ezra iii. 10, 11. The sacred hymns or psalms, therefore, that had been used in the temple-worship, were not lost in the captivity; and indeed the Psalms of *David* carry evident characters of genuineness in them. They were many of them composed on special occasions, and adapted to his peculiar circumstances, in a manner which plainly sheweth they were not forged in after-times. And the preserving so many of the psalms and hymns, some of which contain an abridgment of their sacred history, is a manifest indication of the care they took; and that there was not a general destruction of their Sacred Books in the captivity. The same observation may be applied to the prophetical writings, and to their sacred records. It is plain, that the history of their kings was preserved; to which there is frequent reference in the books compiled after the *Babylonish* captivity.

The commission afterwards given to EZRA by ARTAXERXES, plainly supposed the law of *Moses* to be then in being, and in the highest authority; and only impowered him to regulate every thing according to that law. He is described in *Artaxerxes's* commission as *a ready scribe in the law of Moses*; as one greatly skilled in that law, and fit to instruct others in it; and is required to set magistrates and judges to judge the people, such as *knew the law of God*, Ezra vii. 6, 10, 25. Soon after EZRA came

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NEHEMIAH, a great man in the *Persian* court, and who was appointed governor of *Judea*; and every thing throughout his book discovereth, that he and the whole people professed the highest veneration for the law of *Moses*. Before he came to *Judea*, he was well acquainted with that law, and regarded it as of divine authority, *Neh.* i, 7, 8, 9. During his administration, we have an account of a solemn reading of the Law, by *Ezra*, in the hearing of all the people; who heard it with the utmost reverence and attention: in this he was assisted by several *Levites*, who read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading, *Neh.* viii. 1—9. Again, we are told of another solemn reading of the Law, before all the people, *Neh.* ix. 1, 2, 3. And in the admirable confession made on that occasion by the *Levites*, there is an excellent summary of the principal events recorded in the historical parts of the books of *Moses*; such as, the calling of *Abraham*; their bondage and oppression in *Egypt*; their being brought out from thence with signs and wonders, and dreadful judgments executed upon *Pharaoh* and his people; the dividing of the sea before them, so that they passed through it as on dry land, whilst the *Egyptians* that pursued them were overwhelmed in the deep; the promulgation of the law at *Sinai*, with remarkable tokens of the divine presence and glory; the miracles wrought in the Wilderness, the leading them by a cloud in the day, and a pillar of fire by night; the giving them manna—bread

bread from heaven to eat, and cleaving the rock to give them water to drink; and finally, bringing them into possession of the land of *Canaan*. These things, which are the most remarkable facts in the history of their nation, together with their frequent rebellions, disobedience, and ingratitude, particularly their making and worshipping the molten calf in the Wilderness, the standing disgracé of their nation, and their subsequent revolts, calamities, and deliverances, after they came into the land of *Canaan*, are there taken notice of in the public confessions and acknowledgements made to God in the name and presence of all the people; and are mentioned as things commonly known and acknowledged among them, and as of undoubted truth and certainty.

Taking these things together, it seems to appear, with all the evidence which the nature of the thing is capable of, that the *Jewish* sacred books and records were not lost in the *Babylonish* captivity; that they were in possession of them, and had them in great veneration, before *Ezra* came to *Jerusalem*. And it would be a wild imagination to suppose, that he had it in his power, even if he had it in his inclination, so far to impose upon all the *Jews*, both those in *Judea*, and those that continued in *Babylon*, and other parts of the *Persian* empire, as to make them all with one consent receive those for their antient laws, by which their nation had been always governed, which were not their antient laws; and those for their antient authentic histories, and sacred

cred records, which were not the antient authentic records. All that his commission from *Artaxerxes* extended to was, to order things according to the law of *Moses*; and this he effected. When he came, he found several abuses contrary to that law, countenanced by men of great power and interest, and in which several of the chief priests, as well as numbers of the people, were engaged; and he set himself to reform them according to that law: and these regulations would not have been tamely submitted to, if it had not been well known, that the laws and constitutions he urged upon them, were the true original laws of *Moses*.

As to the establishing the sacred canon, which is attributed to *EZRA*, and to those whom the *Jews* call the men of the great synagogue; the last of whom was *SIMON THE JUST*; this is not to be understood as if these books were not accounted sacred, or were regarded as of no authority before. The books were already well known, and looked upon as sacred; they had not their authority, because *EZRA* acknowledged them; but he collected and published them, because they were known to be authentic. It may indeed be well supposed, that faults and variations might have crept into the copies of those books; and that they needed to be carefully revised. And this was a work for which *EZRA* was admirably fitted by his great skill in the law, and in the sacred records of his nation, as well as his noted integrity. And if he accordingly revised the  
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original Sacred Books, and published a more correct edition of them, or abridged some of their ancient records, to render them of more general use among the people, and here and there inserted some passages for explaining and illustrating things that were grown obscure; this was certainly a work of great use. And supposing him to have done this, and that this work continued to be afterwards carried on by some of the most knowing and excellent men of their nation, till it was with great care completed, I do not see how it in the least affects the authority or credibility of those books. The whole nation in general were so sensible of EZRA's great fidelity and diligence, that he was always afterwards had in the highest honour: and they were so convinced, that these were the original Sacred Books, that they received them with an extraordinary veneration. Nor did they ever pay the same regard to any other subsequent writings in their own nation. And though the SANHEDRIM continued to have great authority among them, they never pretended to put any other books upon them as divine, or as of equal authority with the Sacred Books. Now how comes it, that they put so great a difference between them, and that the authority of these books was universally acknowledged by the whole nation, and the other not? This sheweth, that however credulous the *Jews* might be in other things, yet they were particularly exact and scrupulous in not receiving any books into the sacred

canon, but what they judged they had good reason to look upon as authentic.

The most remarkable part of the *Jewish* history is, that which is contained in the books of *Moses*. It is there we have an account of the first constitution of their sacred polity; the promulgation of the ten commandments, with the most amazing demonstrations of a divine power and majesty; and the extraordinary miraculous facts done in *Egypt*, and in the *Wilderness*, by which the authority of that law was established. And whosoever alloweth this part of the *Jewish* history to be authentic, will not much scruple the subsequent parts of their history. Now it is evident, that as it was not *EZRA* that gave authority to the law of *Moses*, which was in the highest authority before, or who caused the people to receive it as divine; so neither were the *facts*, whereby the authority of that law was attested, *first* published by him. They had been all along believed, and the remembrance of them kept up, among the people. *The books of Moses* exhibit a remarkable intermixture of *laws* and *facts*: and it appears to be so from the beginning, though our author insinuates the contrary, but gives no reason for it\*. And it was wisely ordered, that the facts should go along with the laws; several of which suppose those facts, and have a manifest relation to them. And as the laws were received with great veneration, so the

\* Vol. I. p. 100.

facts were equally received and believed among the people, in all ages, from the time in which those laws were given. And it deserveth to be remarked, that the facts were of such a kind, that they could not have been imposed upon the people, however stupid we suppose them to have been, at the time the laws were given, if they had not been true. If MOSES had only told the *Israelites*, as MAHOMET did the *Arabians*, instead of working miracles before them, as they demanded, of a journey he made to heaven, where he received the law; or as *Numa* did the antient *Romans*, of conferences he had with the Goddess *Egeria* in a wood or grove, to which no other persons were witnesses, and which depended intirely upon his own word; this might have administred ground of suspicion, that he only feigned a divine commission, the more effectually to enforce his laws upon an ignorant and superstitious people. But he took a quite different method. The facts he relateth, and upon the credit of which the divine authority of his laws is rested, were of a most public nature, done in open view before the people, of which they were all said to be witnesses, and in which therefore, if they had not been true, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have detected him. And indeed, considering the stubborn disposition of the people, and their great proneness to idolatry, it can scarce be conceived, that they would have received or submitted to such a law and constitution, if they

themselves had not been assured of the truth of those facts whereby the divinity of it was confirmed. In the admirable recapitulation of the law, contain'd in the book of *Deuteronomy*, which carrieth as strong evidences of genuine *antiquity*, *simplicity*, and *integrity*, as any writings can possibly have, and in which he delivereth himself with an inimitable gravity, dignity, and authority, mixed with the most affectionate tenderness and concern, as becometh the lawgiver and father of his people, and exhorteth them to the observation of the law in the most pathetic and engaging manner; there is a constant reference to the great and extraordinary facts wrought in *Egypt*, and in the *Wilderness*; an appeal is made to the people, concerning them, as things which they themselves had seen and known. And never was there greater care taken to preserve a remembrance of any laws and facts than there was of these. He delivered the book of the law, containing an account both of laws and facts, not only to the *priests*, but to *the elders of Israel*, the heads of the several tribes, before his death. And the original of the law was deposited in the sides of the ark, in the most holy place. A most solemn charge was laid upon the people, in the name of God, as they valued his favour, and their own happiness, frequently to consider those laws and facts themselves, and to teach them diligently to their children. Sacred rites were instituted, and public festivals appointed, to preserve the memorials of the principal



principal facts, from the time in which those facts were done. And accordingly the remembrance of them was constantly preserved among them in all ages. In all the succeeding monuments of their nation, throughout their whole history, and in their devotional and prophetic writings, and in their public solemn forms of confession and thanksgiving there was still a constant reference to those facts as of undoubted credit; and upon the credit of those facts, those laws were both at first received, and continued afterwards to be acknowledged and submitted to: for notwithstanding the frequent defections of the people to the idolatrous rites and customs of the neighbouring nations, yet they never totally and universally apostatized from the law of *Moses*, but still acknowledged its sacredness and divine authority\*.

The author of these letters taketh particular notice of the fables invented by the *Hellenistic Jews*, to authorize the *Greek* version of the *Hebrew* Scriptures†. But I do not see how any argument can be fairly drawn from these fables to the prejudice of the Sacred Books themselves, which were thus translated, or to destroy their autho-

\* That the law of *Moses*, with the facts there recorded, may be traced, from the time in which that law was given, and the facts done, through all the succeeding ages of the *Jewish* nation; and that we have all the evidence of their having been transmitted without any material corruption or alteration, that can be reasonably desired; I have elsewhere more fully shewn in the *Answer to Christianity as old as the Creation*, Vol. II. chap. 4.

† Vol. I. p. 85, 86.

ity or credibility. The strong persuasion they had of the divine authority of the original Scriptures, might make the *Jews* at *Alexandria* more ready to entertain stories in favour of the translation of these Scriptures into *Greek*, from which they found great benefit; this being the language they best understood, and which was then become of general use. But those stories were not generally received by the *Jewish* nation, though they all universally agreed in acknowledging the authority of the originals; nor were they ever inserted in the sacred writings, or in any books, the authority of which was generally received among them.

The first thing that gave rise to those stories was, the history of *Aristeas*; which seems to have been contrived on purpose to do honour to that version, and gives a pompous account of it. And yet even in that history there is nothing said of those miraculous circumstances, which were afterwards invented to shew, that those interpreters were under an extraordinary divine guidance. On the contrary, that book, though it be the foundation of all that is said concerning the Septuagint, may be proved to be plainly inconsistent with those subsequent fables and fictions; and is sufficient to detect the falsity of them. There is therefore no parallel at all between these *Hellenistical* fables, and the sacred *Hebrew* records; except it could be proved, that one part of those ancient records is inconsistent with other subsequent parts of them, and furnisheth manifest

nifest proofs of their falshood; which neither his lordship, nor any other, has been able to shew.

Another argument, on which he seems to lay a mighty stress, in order to set aside the authority of the Scripture, is drawn from the accidents that have happened to the sacred text. He will not allow the answer made by *Abbadie* and others, that—"such accidents could not have been prevented without a perpetual standing miracle, and that a perpetual standing miracle is not in the order of Providence." On the contrary, it seems evident to him, that if the Scriptures had been originally given by divine inspiration, ——"either such accidents would not have happened, or the Scriptures would have been preserved intirely in their genuine purity, notwithstanding these accidents."—He thinks the proof of this—"is obvious and easy, according to our clearest and most distinct ideas of wisdom, and moral fitness\*." But, besides that the present question, as he has managed it, relating to the sacred history, is not about the divine inspiration of it; but whether it be a true and faithful history, an honest and credible relation of facts, which he absolutely denies; I see no consequence at all in his way of reasoning, even if the question were, whether those sacred books were originally written by persons divinely inspired. For all that could be reasonably concluded,

\* Vol. I. p. 95.

supposing any books to have been originally given by divine inspiration, is, that Providence would take care, that those books should be transmitted with a sufficient degree of certainty and integrity, to answer the end for which they were originally intended. But it was no way necessary to this purpose, that all the transcribers that should ever copy those writings in any age or nation, should be under an infallible guidance, so as to be kept by an extraordinary interposition from ever committing any mistake or blunder, or being guilty of any slips or negligencies; or that all those that have ever revised and compared those copies, should, in every instance, be infallibly guided in their judgments concerning them. This is evidently absurd. It would be a multiplying miracles without necessity; and would therefore be unworthy of the divine wisdom, and not very consistent with the methods of God's moral government of men, considered as reasonable creatures, free agents. For, will any man, in good earnest, undertake to prove, that supposing an excellent revelation given of doctrines, laws, &c. together with authentic accounts of extraordinary facts, tending to confirm and establish the divine authority of those doctrines and laws, this revelation could not be of any use, nor could those accounts of facts be at all fit to be depended on, if there were any variations, omissions, transpositions or mistakes, in any copies that should be taken of them in any age? If, not-  
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withstanding those variations, the copies should still so far agree, that from thence a sufficient notion might be formed of the doctrines and laws contained in that original revelation, and of the truth of the facts whereby it was attested and confirmed, this would be sufficient to answer the end which we might suppose the divine wisdom to have had in view in giving such a revelation. And this is actually the case with regard to the holy Scriptures. Whatever *additions, interpolations, or transpositions*, may be supposed to have crept into any of the copies, yet all the main laws and facts are still preserved. Of this we have a remarkable proof, by comparing the *Hebrew* and *Samaritan* codes of the Pentateuch. There are differences between them: but the laws, the precepts, the history, the important facts, whereby the law was attested, are the same in both. And, in general, it may be justly affirmed, that notwithstanding all the differences in the copies, about which such a clamour hath been raised, yet there is a sufficient agreement among them to satisfy us, that such and such laws were originally given, such prophecies were delivered, and that such facts were done. And the variations among the copies in smaller matters, the mistakes that have crept into the genealogies, numbers, dates, catalogues of names, ages of some of the patriarchs, and the like (and it is in these things that the differences principally lie), do really confirm their harmony in the main; and therefore are far from destroying the autho-

rity of the Sacred Writings, or the credibility of the Scripture-history.

The learned *Capellus*, who had thoroughly considered this matter, and who, it is well known, allowed himself great liberties in judging concerning the variations in the copies of the *Hebrew* Scriptures, justly observeth, in his defence of his *Critica Sacra*, that all these variations are of little or no moment as to faith or manners; so that in that respect it is indifferent which reading we follow: *Sanè omnes illæ varietates, uti sæpius in Critica Sacra repeto, nullius aut penè nullius sunt quoad fidem et mores momenti, ut eo respectu perinde sit hanc an illam sequaris lectionem* And I believe there are few competent and impartial judges of these things, but will be ready to own, with Mr. *Le Clerc*, the freedom of whose judgment in such matters must be acknowledged, that, through the good providence of God, no books, from the earliest antiquity, have come to us equally correct with the Sacred Books of the *Hebrews*, particularly the *Masoretical* copies. *Nullos libros ex ultima antiquitate ad nos Dei beneficio pervenisse æquè emendatos ac sacros Hebræorum codices, et quidem Masoreticos.* See his *Dissertatio de Lingua Hebræa*, prefixed to his *Commentary on the Pentateuch*.

What our author himself maketh a shew of granting is very true, that — “amidst all the  
 “ changes and chances to which the books, in  
 “ which they are recorded, have been exposed,  
 “ neither

“ neither original writer, nor later compilers,  
“ have been suffered to make any essential al-  
“ terations, such as would have falsified the  
“ law of God, and the principles of the *Jewish*  
“ and Christian religion, in any of those divine  
“ fundamental points\*.”—And indeed the pre-  
cepts, the doctrines of religion inculcated in the  
Scriptures of the Old Testament, are so frequent-  
ly repeated, and the principal facts there related  
are so often referred to, in different parts of  
those Sacred Volumes, as to be abundantly suf-  
ficient to answer the design for which they were  
originally intended; *viz* to instruct men in the  
knowledge, adoration, and obedience of the one  
true God, and to engage them to the practice of  
righteousness, and to prepare the way for a more  
perfect dispensation, which was to be introduced  
in the fulness of time, by THAT DIVINE PERSON,  
whose *coming, character, offices, sufferings, glory,*  
and *kingdom,* were there prefigured and foretold.  
Accordingly our SAVIOUR speaketh of the writ-  
ings of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, as of signal use  
to instruct and direct men in the knowledge and  
practice of religion, *Luke* xvi. 29, 30, 31. And  
though it be not true, which our author asserteth,  
that the *Jewish* Scriptures had no authority but  
what they derived from Christianity (for they  
had an authority founded upon sufficient creden-  
tials before Christianity was established); yet their  
being acknowledged as divine, by Christ and his

\* Vol. I. p. 97. 98,

Apostles, giveth them a farther confirmation : For when a subsequent revelation, which is itself founded on convincing proofs and evidences, giveth testimony to a prior revelation, and referreth to it as of divine authority, when both together concur to form one system of religion, and to exhibit the history of God's various dispensations towards his church, the former being subservient and preparatory to the latter, and the latter giving farther light, and a fuller completion, to the former ; this confirmeth the authority of both, and sheweth one great uniform design and plan carried on by the divine wisdom and goodness from the beginning.

It is no just objection against the authority of the Sacred Books of the Old Testament, though the writer of these Letters seems to think it so, that——“ though *Jews* and Christians hold the “ same books in great veneration, yet each condemn the other for not understanding, or for “ abusing them\*.” This is to be understood, not of the Sacred History, which yet he would be thought to have particularly in view ; for, as to this, the *Jews* and Christians are generally agreed ; but of some passages in the prophetic writings, in the interpretation of which they differ. And with respect to these, it may be observed, that if the *Jews*, at the time of our Saviour's appearing, had universally interpreted the prophetic writings as the Christians do,

\* Vol. I. p. 92.



and applied them to Jesus Christ; and had accordingly turned Christians, and embraced *Jesus* as the MESSIAH promised to their fathers; it would undoubtedly have been alleged, that they forged or corrupted the prophecies in favour of the Christian system; whereas now there is no room for this pretence. Their vouching and acknowledging those writings, as of divine authority, notwithstanding the difficulty they have been put to, in answering the arguments brought from thence against their own favourite notions and prejudices, giveth their testimony to the prophetic books great force.

There is another remarkable passage in his third Letter, which it is proper to take some notice of. He observes\*, that——“the *Jews* and Christians differ among themselves, and from one another, concerning almost every point that is necessary to be known, and agreed upon, in order to establish the authority of books which both have received as authentic and sacred. Who were the authors of these Scriptures, when they were published, how they were composed, and preserved, or renewed; in fine, how they were lost during the captivity, and how they were retrieved after it; are all matters of controversy to this day.”——That the SACRED BOOKS were *not lost* in the captivity, and that consequently they were *not retrieved* after it by immediate inspiration,

\* Ibid. p. 100, 101.

hath been clearly shewn. A fiction which seems to have had its rise from the apocryphal second book of *Esdra*s, the authority of which never was acknowledged either in the *Jewish* or Christian Church. There are indeed differences, both among *Jews* and Christians, concerning several points relating to those Sacred Books; but these differences are, for the most part, about things that do not properly concern the divine authority or credibility of those writings. There is a general agreement among them, that the prophetic books were written by persons divinely inspired; and that the PENTATEUCH was written by MOSES, the greatest of all the prophets; and that the historical writings were either the very original authentic records, or faithfully compiled out of them; and were received and acknowledged by the whole nation, as containing true and just accounts of facts. And whereas he urgeth, that it is matter of controversy, who were the authors of those Scriptures, or when they were composed or published; it is certain, that, with respect to the much greater part of the Sacred Books, both *Jews* and Christians are generally agreed who were the authors of them.

This is true concerning all the writings of the *Prophets*, the books of *Solomon*, most of the *Psalms*, the *five books of Moses*, which have been constantly received by the *Jewish* and Christian church, in all ages, as written by *Moses*; though a few in these latter times have attempted

tempted to contest it. The books of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Daniel*, seem plainly to shew their authors. And concerning all these, there has been a general agreement. The books therefore, concerning the authors of which there is properly any ground of controversy, are the historical books of *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, and *Chronicles*. As to the first of these, viz. the book of *Joshua*, the antient Jews in general, and the greater part of Christian writers, with good reason look upon it to have been written by *Joshua* himself; though there are some particular passages in it that were inserted afterwards, by way of illustration. It is principally concerning the books of *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, and *Chronicles*, that there is any colourable pretence for saying with our author, that they were——“ abridgments of old records “ made in later times\*.”——Some of them seem plainly to have been compiled after the return from the *Babylonish* captivity, probably by *Ezra*, from antient authentic records, which are frequently quoted and referred to in them as books of acknowledged credit and authority; so that there is little room to doubt of the truth and certainty of the accounts there given. For that they were faithfully extracted from those original records, to which they refer for a larger account of the things there related, there is the highest reason to believe. And it was wisely

\* Vol. I. p. 96.

ordered,

ordered, that these shorter accounts should be inserted in the sacred canon, when it was to be brought, as it were, into one volume for the lasting instruction and edification of the church. For as the sacred history was intended not merely to gratify curiosity, but to promote the purposes of religion, piety, and virtue, and to keep up the remembrance of the remarkable actions of Divine Providence towards them, both in a way of mercy and judgment according to their behaviour, it was proper that it should be brought into as narrow a compass as was consistent with that design. This would make it more generally known, and easily remembered; whereas larger and more particular accounts might have been too voluminous for a book designed for universal use.

The only thing that yet remaineth to be considered with regard to the Sacred Books of the Old Testament is what he saith concerning the *curse* pronounced upon *Canaan* by *Noah*; of which we have an account, *Gen.* ix. 24, 25, 26, 27. This he seems to have fixed upon as one of the properest instances he could find to expose the authority of the Scripture. He treateth it as an invention of the writer to justify the *Israelites* in their invasion of the *Canaanites*; and representeth this curse as *contradicting all our notions of order and justice.*—“ One is  
 “ tempted to think, says he, that the patriarch  
 “ was still drunk; and that no man in his senses  
 “ could hold such language, or pass such a sen-  
 “ tence.

“ tence. Certain it is, that no writer but a  
 “ *Few* could impute to the œconomy of Pro-  
 “ vidence the accomplishment of such a pre-  
 “ diction, nor make the Supreme Being the  
 “ executor of such a curse.”

His Lordship observes, that “ *Ham* alone of-  
 “ fended: *Canaan* was innocent—*Canaan*  
 “ was however alone cursed: and became ac-  
 “ cording to his grand father’s prophecy a *ser-*  
 “ *vant of servants*, *i. e.* the vilest and mean-  
 “ est of slaves—to *Sem*, not to *Japhet*, when  
 “ the *Israelites* conquered *Palestine*; to one of  
 “ his uncles, not to his brethren. Will it be  
 “ said—it has been said—that where we read  
 “ *Canaan*, we are to understand *Ham*, whose  
 “ brethren *Sem* and *Japhet* were? At this rate,  
 “ we shall never know what we read: as these  
 “ Critics never care what they say. Will it be  
 “ said—this has been said too—that *Ham*  
 “ was punished in his posterity, when *Canaan*  
 “ was cursed, and his descendants were exter-  
 “ minated? But who does not see, that the  
 “ curse and punishment in this case fell on  
 “ *Canaan* and his posterity, exclusive of the  
 “ rest of the posterity of *Ham*; and were there-  
 “ fore the curse and punishment of the son,  
 “ not of the father properly? The descendants  
 “ of *Misraim* another of his sons were the  
 “ *Egyptians*: and they were so far from being  
 “ servants of servants to their cousins the *Sem-*  
 “ *ites*, that these were servants of servants unto  
 “ them, during more than fourscore years.

“ Why

“ Why the posterity of *Canaan* was to be  
 “ deemed an accursed race, it is easy to account ;  
 “ and I have mentioned it just now : But it is  
 “ not so easy to account why the posterity of  
 “ the righteous *Sem*, that great example of filial  
 “ reverence, became slaves to another branch  
 “ of the family of *Ham*\*.”

Before I proceed to a distinct consideration of what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered, it will be proper to lay before the reader the sacred text, as it is in our translation. *Gen. ix. 21—27. Noah—was uncovered within his tent : and Ham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japhet took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father ; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their fathers nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, cursed be Canaan ; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem : and Canaan shall be his servant.*

It is acknowledged, that there is a considerable difficulty in this passage. And if we were not able to account for it at all at this distance, it

\* Vol. I. p. 110, 111, 112,

would be much more reasonable to suppose, that some circumstances have been passed by in this short narrative, which if known would help to clear it; or that there may have been some defects in the copies not now to be remedied; than upon the account of one difficult and obscure passage, to throw off all regard to writings which have the most just pretensions, both to the greatest antiquity, and most venerable authority.

But that the difficulties which his Lordship hath urged are far from being unanswerable, will appear from the following observations.

*First*, The foundation of the whole charge, and that upon which the greatest stress is laid is this, That "*Ham* alone offended: *Canaan* was "innocent. — *Canaan* however was alone "curfed: and he became, according to his "grandfather's prophecy, a servant of servants, "i. e. the vilest and worst of slaves." Some learned persons have supposed, that where the curse is pronounced upon *Canaan* ver. 25. the word *abi* father, is to be understood, which is expressly mentioned ver. 22. and that instead of *curfed be Canaan* it should be read *curfed be Ham the father of Canaan*. And though Lord *Bolingbroke* speaks of this with great contempt, there are instances of such ellipses or omissions to be found in some other passages of Scripture. A remarkable one of this kind is in 2 *Sam.* xxi. 19. where our translation has it, that *Elhanan* — *slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's*

*weaver's beam.* Which is certainly right, as appears from the nature of the thing, and from a parallel passage 1 *Chron.* xx. 5. where he is expressly called *the brother of Goliath the Gittite &c.* But the word *brother* is not in our present copies of the original in 2 *Sam.* xxi. 19. where it runs thus, *Elhanan—slew Goliath the Gittite &c.* instead of *the brother of Goliath the Gittite.* In like manner the word *father* may be supplied here, as well as the word *brother* in the place now mentioned; so that for *curst be Canaan*, it may be read, *curst be Ham the father of Canaan.* So the *Arabic* reads it, and so *Vatablus* renders it. And it is followed by other learned writers, particularly by the present bishop of *Clogher* in his *Vindication of the Histories of the Old and New Testament.* But if that be not admitted, as not only the *Hebrew*, but the *Samaritan*, the *Septuagint*, and all the antient versions, except the *Arabic* which is of no great authority, read as we do, this will not prove, either that *Canaan* was entirely innocent, or that he alone was curst. The *Jews* are generally of opinion, in which they follow a very antient tradition, that *Canaan* was the first that saw *Noah's* nakedness, and made a jest of it to his father *Ham*, who, instead of reprovng him went himself to see it, and in a mocking way told it to his brothers *Shem* and *Japheth.* Lord *Bolingbroke* makes mention of this, and endeavoureth to obviate it by observing, that  
 “ the *Hebrew* and other doctors, who would  
 “ make



“ make the son an accomplice with his father,  
“ affirm not only without, but against the ex-  
“ press authority of the text.” This is confi-  
dently said. But if the text doth not expressly  
mention *Canaan* as an accomplice, neither can  
it be said, that the authority of the text is ex-  
pressly against that notion. On the contrary,  
whosoever impartially examineth the story as  
there related, will be naturally led to believe,  
that *Canaan* was in some degree accessory to his  
father's crime. *Ham* is in this story particularly  
characterized as the *father of Canaan*, and  
*Canaan's* being so often mentioned affordeth a  
plain intimation, that he was some way or  
other concerned, and might either be the first  
that saw his grandfather's nakedness, and ac-  
quainted his father with it, or might be with  
his father when he saw it, and joined with him  
in making a mock of it. But as *Ham* was  
*Canaan's* father, from whom better might have  
been expected, considering his age, and the duti-  
ful regard he owed to his father *Noah*, with  
whom he had been saved from the deluge, he  
alone is expressly mentioned in this short narra-  
tion; though the curse pronounced upon *Ca-  
naan* leads us to think, that he was some way  
partaker of his father's crime. And supposing  
this to be so, and that he was *Ham's* favourite  
son, and like him in his dispositions, the curse  
pronounced upon him was really intended  
against both. If we met with the same account  
in any wise and credible historian, this is the

construction we should have been apt to put upon it, that both *Canaan* and his father were concerned in the affair. And it is no very unusual thing in Scripture, and in other histories too, to omit some circumstances in a short narration, which are plainly implied, and which the reader is left to collect. Indeed, if what some expositors suppose be admitted, it is not only implied in the text that *Canaan* was an accomplice, but is expressly signified in those words *ver. 24.* that *Noah knew what his younger son had done unto him.* Where by *younger son* they understand his grandson; for a grandson according to the *Hebrew* idiom may be properly called a son; and they think *Ham* was not the youngest of *Noah's* sons, but the middlemost, according to the order in which he is always placed, *Shem, Ham, and Japheth:* So *Theodoret,* and *Drusius* after some of the *Hebrew* writers, with whom agrees bishop *Patrick.* But whatever becomes of this conjecture, and though we should suppose *Ham* to be here intended by *the younger son,* which he might really be though mentioned between *Shem* and *Japheth,* since the order of their birth and age is not designed to be signified by it; for *Japheth* was the eldest, *Gen. x. 21.* Yet still the strain of the story seems to imply, that *Canaan* had a guilty part in it, who alone of all *Ham's* sons is expressly mentioned upon this occasion.

But *Secondly,* Let us suppose that *Canaan* was innocent, and no way accessory to this particular

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lar instance of *Ham's* impiety and wickedness, the prophetic curse and prediction may notwithstanding this be fairly accounted for. It must be said in that case, that the curse was not properly pronounced upon *Canaan* for *Ham's* crime, but that upon occasion of *Ham's* wickedness *Noah* foretold the miseries and calamities, that should befall his posterity, and particularly his descendants by *Canaan*. And supposing *Noah* to have been then enabled by a prophetic spirit to foresee that from *Ham* would proceed a profligate and impious race, like him in wickedness, and whose crimes would at length bring down the vengeance of heaven upon them, and subject them to the basest servitude, and punishment, his mentioning it on this occasion, and pointing to that branch of his posterity on whom this curse should particularly fall, had a manifest propriety in it. This could not but greatly humble *Ham*, and had a tendency to cause him to reflect on his own wickedness, and affect him with sorrow and remorse on the account of it, if any thing could do it. For who that has the bowels of the human nature, would not be greatly affected at the thought, that his posterity should be infamous and abandoned, and among the most wretched of the human race? And though *Canaan* alone be mentioned in this short account, it doth not follow that no other of *Ham's* posterity fell under the curse. *Noah* might have named others of *Ham's* sons or descendants, though *Moses* only takes notice of what related

to *Canaan*, because this was what more especially concerned the people of *Israel* to know.

This leads me to observe,

*Thirdly*, That as to the insinuation, that this prophecy or prediction was feigned to justify the cruelties exercised by *Joshua* upon the *Canaanites*\*, it is the author's own groundless suspicion without producing any proof of it. Supposing it to have been a real prophecy originally delivered by *Noah*, the tradition of which had been preserved in the family of *Shem*, and which was transmitted by *Abraham*, who might have had it from *Shem* himself, to his descendants, it is easily accounted for that *Moses* should take care to commit it to writing. Nor will it be denied, that one end he might have in view in recording it was to encourage and animate the *Israelites*, as he knew the time was at hand for the accomplishment of that prediction, and that the *Israelites* were to be the instruments of it. Such a true prophecy known to have proceeded originally from *Noah*, was much more likely to answer *Moses's* end, than if it had been a mere fiction of his own, which had never been heard of before. And that *Moses* did not feign this prophecy may be justly concluded, because if it had been invented by himself purely to bring an odium upon *Canaan* and his descend-

\* Lord *Bolingbroke* in other parts of his works frequently insists upon these cruelties, as a demonstration that the *Mosaic* constitution could not be of divine original. See this fully examined, *View of the Deistical Writers*, Vol. II.

ants, the story would probably have been contrived otherwise than it is. It would have been pretended, not that *Ham*, but that *Canaan* had been guilty of that impiety and irreverence towards *Noah* the second father of mankind, and repairer of the world, and who was had in great veneration. Thus would *Moses* have laid it, if the whole had been his own fiction. He would not have contented himself with leaving the reader to collect from the story that *Canaan* was some way faulty, but would have taken care to have made it more directly answer his purpose by expressly charging the crime upon *Canaan* himself. But as it was a real prophecy of *Noah*, *Moses* gave it as he had received it, without altering the original story, or adding new circumstances.

This leads me to a fourth observation upon this remarkable passage, *viz.*

That if rightly understood, instead of furnishing a just objection against the authority of Scripture, it rather confirmeth it, and should increase our veneration for it. For we have here a most remarkable prophecy, which extended to events at the distance of many ages, and hath been wonderfully fulfilled in all it's parts. It is manifest, that what is here foretold concerning *Canaan*, *Shem*, and *Japheth* relateth to them not merely considered in their own persons, but to their offspring, in whom it was chiefly to receive it's accomplishment: as the blessings pronounced by *Isaac* upon *Jacob* and *Esau*, and

afterwards by *Jacob* upon his twelve sons, though applied to them by name were principally to be understood of their descendants. Taking it in this view the prophecy here pronounced by *Noah* is of a great extent. The blessing which should attend *Shem* is foretold, and it is intimated that God would be in a special manner his God, and would pour forth so many blessings upon his posterity, as would lay a foundation for praises and thanksgivings; so that whosoever observed it should have reason to say, *Blessed be the Lord God of Shem*. And this was signally fulfilled; since among his posterity the knowledge and worship of the true God was preserved, when the rest of the world was deeply immersed in idolatry; and from his seed the great Messiah sprung. It was also foretold, that *God should enlarge Japheth*. And accordingly his posterity wonderfully increased, and spread through a great part of the world. *Bochart* and others observed, that not only all *Europe*, but the lesser *Asia*, *Iberia*, *Albania*, part of *Armenia*, *Media*, and the vast regions in the northern parts of *Asia*, and probably *America*, were peopled by his descendants. It is also foretold that he should *dwell in the tents of Shem*, which was accomplished both by his posterity's possessing part of the countries in which the *Shemites* inhabited, and especially by their being admitted to a participation of the same spiritual privileges, and received into the true church. So that this may be regarded as

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an illustrious prophecy of the conversion of the *Gentiles*, many ages before it happened. As to that part of *Noah's* prophecy which relateth to *Canaan*, this hath also received a remarkable completion. *Noah* was enabled to foretel the curse and punishment which a long time after befel the *Canaanites* for their execrable wickedness and impurity. For that the true and proper ground of the punishment which was inflicted upon them was their own wickedness, is evident from many express declarations of Scripture; particularly *Levit. xviii. 24, 25, 27, 28. Deut. ix. 5.* This wickedness of their's God perfectly foresaw, and determined on the account of it to inflict exemplary punishment upon them; though he would not suffer the threatned punishment and curse to take place, till their *iniquities were full, i. e.* till they were arrived at the height. And when this was the case, it tended to render the crime more remarkable, that it had been foretold so long before. And it was wisely ordered, that this prophecy should be recorded by *Moses*, that when it came to be visibly accomplished in *Canaan's* posterity, the hand of providence in it might be more distinctly observed. It is far therefore from being true, that *Noah* pronounced this in a *passion or drunken fit*, as his Lordship seems willing to represent it. It was not properly an imprecation, but a prophecy, and might be fitly rendered, *curst shall Canaan be.* It was a prediction of what should befel *Han's* descendants by *Canaan*, who re-

sembled *Ham*; their ancestor, in wickedness and impurity.

Lord *Bolingbroke* hath several little cavils, which are designed to invalidate the credit of this prophecy. One is, that *Canaan* was a servant of servants not to his *brethren*, as is foretold ver. 25. but to his *uncles*, viz. *Shem* and *Japheth*. But this objection seems to betray an utter ignorance of the *Hebrew* idiom, according to which the word *brethren* is of a large extent, and taketh in not only brothers strictly so called, but even distant relations, of which many instances might be given. And it must be farther considered, that the prophecy was not properly designed to signify that *Canaan*, in person, should be servant of servants to his uncles *Shem* and *Japheth*, but that his posterity should be servants to theirs, who might, by reason of the original relation between them, be called their *brethren*.

It is farther urged, that *Canaan* became a *servant of servants* unto *Shem* indeed, but not to *Japheth*, though this is foretold ver. 27. But this cavil is no better founded than the former. For the *Canaanites* became servants to the posterity of *Japheth* as well as of *Shem*. The most powerful and famous of *Canaan's* descendants, the *Tyrians* and *Carthaginians*, after having made a great figure in the world, were destroyed, or reduced to the most miserable servitude; the former by the *Greeks* under *Alexander* the Great, the latter by the *Romans*.

. Another



Another objection, which he insinuates, is, that *Shem's* posterity were *servants of servants for above fourscore years* to the *Egyptians*, who were the descendants of *Mizraim*, another of *Ham's* sons. But there is no pretence for urging this as a breach of the prediction, since no express mention is made there of any of *Ham's* sons, but *Canaan*, concerning whom it is foretold, that he should be servant of servants unto *Shem* and *Japheth*, which was remarkably fulfilled. Or, if we suppose, as many great divines have done, that the curse was designed to extend to others of *Ham's* posterity, as well as the *Canaanites*, though not particularly mentioned in this short account, because *Moses's* design led him only to take express notice of that part of the curse which related to the *Canaanites*, who were more than ordinarily corrupt, and upon whom the curse took place in the fullest manner; even on this view of it the prophecy may be fully justified. *Ham's* descendants have had a brand upon them, and been generally among the most abject and wretched of the human race. It is true, that the *Israelites*, who were a branch of *Shem's* posterity, were for a time held in the bitterest bondage by the *Egyptians*, who proceeded from them. This was permitted for very valuable ends, and ended in a glorious deliverance of the latter from the tyranny and oppression of the former. To which it may be added, that notwithstanding the *Egyptians* were for a long  
time

time a flourishing people, and had great power and dominion, yet they also became remarkably subjected to the posterity of *Shem* and *Japheth*, and so have continued for a great number of ages. They have been subjected successively to the *Persians*, *Grecians*, *Romans*, *Saracens*, *Mamalukes*, *Turks*, so as to verify that remarkable prophecy of *Ezekiel*, that Egypt should be *the basest of kingdoms*, neither should it *exalt itself any more among the nations*. Ezek. xxix. 15.

Thus it appears, that this boasted objection, upon which so mighty a stress has been laid, as if it were alone sufficient to overthrow the authority of Holy Writ, turneth out rather to the confirmation of it.

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S E C T I O N II.

*His Lordship's attempt against the Gospel History, and the Divine Authority of the Christian Religion considered.*

HAVING examined what the late Lord *Bolingbroke* hath urged against the authority and credibility of the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, let us next consider the attempt he makes against the authority of the *New*. He had indeed, whilst he expressed a great contempt of the *Jewish* Scriptures, affected to speak with a favourable regard to Christianity. But he afterwards throws off the disguise, and makes it plainly appear, that he hath as little veneration and esteem for the one as for the other. It is no great sign of his respect for Christianity, that at the same time that he does all he can to destroy the credit of the *Jewish* history, and to shew, that it is not at all to be depended upon, he declares—"that the foundation of the Christian  
" system is laid partly in those histories, and in  
" the prophecies joined to them, or inserted in  
" them \*"—But, not content with this general insinuation, he afterwards proceedeth, in his fifth Letter, to a more direct attack upon the Christian revelation †. He insisteth upon it, that the

\* Vol. I. p. 91, 92.

† Ibid. from p. 174. to 185.

facts,

facts, upon which the authority of the Christian religion is founded, have not been proved as all historical facts, to which credit should be given, ought to be proved. He declares to the noble Lord to whom he writes, that — “ this is a  
 “ matter of great moment ; and that therefore  
 “ he makes no excuse for the zeal which obliges  
 “ him to dwell a little on it \*.” — And after having endeavoured to shew, that — “ there re-  
 “ mains at this time no standard at all of Chri-  
 “ stianity,” — either in the text of Scripture, or in tradition, he argues, that — “ by conse-  
 “ quence either this religion was not originally  
 “ of divine institution ; or else God has not pro-  
 “ vided effectually for preserving the genuine  
 “ purity of it, and the gates of hell have  
 “ actually prevailed, in contradiction to his  
 “ promise, against the church. He must be  
 “ worse than an Atheist that affirms the last ;  
 “ and therefore the best effect of this reasoning  
 “ that can be hoped for is, that men should fall  
 “ into Theism, and subscribe to the first.” —  
 And accordingly he roundly declares, that —  
 “ Christianity may lean on the civil and ecclesi-  
 “ astical power, and be supported by the forcible  
 “ influence of education : but the proper force  
 “ of religion, that force which subdues the  
 “ mind, and awes the conscience by conviction,  
 “ will be wanting \*. — He adds, — “ Since I  
 “ have said so much on the subject in my zeal

\* *Vel. I* p. 176.† *Ib.* p. 180, 181, 182.

“ for Christianity, I will add this further. The  
“ resurrection of letters was a fatal period: the  
“ Christian system has been attacked, and wound-  
“ ed too, very severely since that time \*.” —

And again, speaking of those of the clergy who  
act for spiritual, not temporal ends, and are de-  
sirous that men should believe and practise the  
doctrines of Christianity, he saith, that — “ they  
“ will feel and own the weight of the con-  
“ siderations he offers; and will agree, that  
“ however the people have been, or may be,  
“ amused, yet Christianity has been in decay  
“ ever since the resurrection of letters †.” —

This is an odd proof of his pretended *zeal for  
Christianity*, to insinuate, that all good and honest  
divines will agree with him, that Christianity  
has been losing ground ever since the revival of  
learning and knowlege; as if it could not bear  
the light, and only subsisted by darkness and  
ignorance. It will help farther to shew his  
design in this, if we compare it with what he  
saith in his sixth Letter ‡; where he mentions  
the resurrection of letters, after the art of print-  
ing had been invented, as one of the principal  
causes that contributed to the diminution of the  
papal authority and usurpations. And he ob-  
serves, that — “ as soon as the means of ac-  
“ quiring and spreading information grew com-  
“ mon, it is no wonder that a system was un-  
“ ravelled, which could not have been woven

\* Vol. I. p. 182. † Ib. p. 185. ‡ Ib. p. 206, 207.

“ with success in any age, but those of gross  
 “ ignorance, and credulous superstition.”— We  
 may see by this what a compliment he designs  
 to Christianity, when he represents it as having  
 received a fatal blow at the resurrection of  
 letters, and as having been in decay ever since.  
 He plainly puts it on a level with the papal  
 authority and usurpation, and supposes the same  
 of Christianity that he does of popery, that it  
 was a system which could only have been woven  
 in the ages of ignorance and superstition, which  
 owed its reception and prevalency to times of  
 darkness, and has been decaying ever since the  
 means of acquiring and spreading information  
 grew common.

This may suffice to shew the respect that the  
 writer of these Letters bears to Christianity.  
 Before I enter on a distinct examination of what  
 he hath offered, I would observe, that he en-  
 deavoureth to prepare his way by declaiming, for  
 several pages together, against the priests, divines,  
 and ecclesiastical historians, on the account of  
 that spirit of lying that hath prevailed among  
 them in all ages\*. But he himself well ob-  
 serves and proves, in opposition to an historical  
 Pyrrhonism, that though there have been abun-  
 dance of lyes and false history put upon the  
 world, this ought not to diminish the credit of  
 the true. And therefore the frauds and falsehoods  
 of many that have professed a zeal for Christi-

\* Vol. I. p. 125. et seq.

anity, ought to be no prejudice against the authority of the New Testament, or the credibility of the facts on which it is supported, provided it can be shewn, that these facts come to us with a sufficient degree of evidence to make it reasonable for us to receive them as true.

If, as he asserts—"numberless fables have been invented to support Judaism and Christianity; and for this purpose false history as well as false miracles have been employed;"—it is certain, that no persons have taken greater pains, or been more successful in their attempts to detect and expose such frauds, and false history, than Christian divines and critics; many of whom have exercised themselves this way with great judgment and impartiality, as being sensible, that Christianity needeth no such supports; and that such frauds dishonour the cause they are intended to serve. If we examine the New Testament, we shall find no encouragement there given to such methods. A remarkable simplicity, and impartial regard to truth, every-where appear. And to lye for the glory of God, or to *do evil that good may come of it*, is there most expressly condemned. It was when men began to fall from the true original spirit of Christianity, and, not content with the simplicity of religion as Christ and his Apostles left it, attempted to bring in innovations, additions, alterations in the Christian doctrine and worship; it was then that fraud and imposture, or a foolish credulity, began to prevail, and grew more and more, the farther

farther they removed from the first and purest ages. And it is capable of a clear proof, that it was principally in favour of those corrupt additions, and abuses of Christianity, that false history and false miracles have been artfully contrived, and zealously propagated. And why should it be turned to the disadvantage of the gospel history or miracles, that history has been corrupted and falsified in favour of doctrines or practices, *e.g.* the *invocation of saints, purgatory, the worship of images, relics, &c.* which Christianity has not countenanced or authorized? To which it may be added, that it is plainly foretold in the New Testament, that there should be a great APOSTASY from the purity of religion, and that the corruption should be introduced, and carried on, by *signs, and lying wonders*. And if this hath actually been the case, instead of furnishing a proper objection against true original Christianity, it affordeth a manifest proof of the perfect foreknowledge of its divine Author.

He seems to lay a great stress upon it, that—  
 “ the church has had this advantage over her  
 “ adversaries—that the works of those who  
 “ have written against her have been destroyed;  
 “ and whatever she advanced to justify herself,  
 “ and to defame her adversaries, is preserved in  
 “ her annals, and the writings of her doctors\*.  
 “ —And he takes particular notice of *Gregory*  
 “ the Great’s proclaiming war to all heathen

\* Vol. I. p. 127, 128.

“ learning,



“ learning, in order to promote Christian v-  
“ rity\*.” But it is certain, that the humour of  
destroying the heathen writings never generally  
obtained in the Christian church. On the con-  
trary, it was principally owing to Christians,  
that so many of those writings have been trans-  
mitted to us. The *Mahometans*, and some of  
the barbarous nations, destroyed *libraries*, and  
monuments of learning, where-ever they came.  
But it is a matter of fact not to be contested,  
that great numbers of heathen writings and  
monuments have been preserved; by Christians  
they have been preserved; and from thence the  
learned have been able to give an ample account  
of their *religion, rites, laws, and history*. And  
this is so far from being a disadvantage to Chri-  
stianity, that great use hath been made of the  
heathen learning to serve and promote the Chri-  
stian cause. The emperor JULIAN was so sen-  
sible of this, that he formed a design of mo-  
delling the schools so, that the Christians should  
not be acquainted with the heathen writers. As  
to the books that have been written against  
Christianity †, it is possible that the ill judged  
zeal

\* Vol. I. p. 131.

† The heathen writings against Christianity seem not to have  
been much esteemed among the pagans themselves; and this may  
be one reason why they were not very carefully preserved. There  
is a remarkable passage of *Chryostom*, to this purpose, who in a  
discourse addressed to the heathens observes, That the philoso-  
phers, and famous rhetoricians, who wrote against Christianity,  
had only rendered themselves ridiculous: that they had not been  
able to persuade any one among so many people, either wise or

zeal of some Christians may have occasioned the loss of some of them: but I am apt to think it was owing, in most instances, to the same causes and accidents, to which we must attribute the loss of so many antient monuments, and admired writings, not only of the heathens, but of eminent fathers, and antient writers of the Christian church. Many celebrated apologies for Christianity, and books in defence of religion, have been lost; when, on the contrary, the works even of *Lucretius*, a system of *Epicurism*, the life of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, and others of the like sort, have come down to our times.

These insinuations do not properly come up to the main point. But in his fifth Letter, under pretence of giving advice to divines, and shewing, that it is incumbent upon them to apply themselves to the study of history, he sets himself more directly to attack the authority of the Christian religion, and to subvert, as far as in him lieth, the foundations on which the proof of its divine original depends. And the course of his reasoning is plainly this: that Christianity is wholly founded upon facts; and that those facts do not come to us with a sufficient degree of evidence to be relied on: they have not been

simple, man or woman, that the books written by them were had in such contempt, hat they disappeared almost as soon as they were published; and that if any of them were preserved, it was among Christians that one might find them. *Cbryf. Tom. II. p. 539. Edit. Bened.*

proved as matters of fact ought to be proved. He declares, that—" it has been long matter  
" of astonishment to him, that Christian divines,  
" those of them that can be called so without  
" a sneer, could take so much silly pains to  
" establish mystery on metaphysics, revelation  
" on philosophy, and matters of fact on abstract  
" reasoning. A religion founded on the authority  
" of a divine mission, confirmed by prophecies  
" and miracles, appeals to facts: and the facts  
" must be proved, as all other facts that pass  
" for authentic, are proved. If they are thus  
" proved, the religion will prevail without the  
" assistance of so much profound reasoning: if  
" they are not thus proved, the authority of it  
" will sink in the world, even with this assist-  
" ance\*."—He therefore blames the divines  
for using improper proofs in their disputes with  
Theists. He asks—" What do they mean to  
" din improper proofs in ears that are open  
" to proper proofs?—Thus it is that he cha-  
racterizes the Deists; and afterwards he de-  
scribes them as persons—" of minds candid,  
" but not implicit; willing to be informed, but  
" curious to examine\*." But how different is  
the account he giveth even of the most learned  
Christians! He affirms, that—" they have not  
" been hitherto impartial enough, or sagacious  
" enough, to take an accurate examination of  
" the Jewish and Christian system, or have not

\* Vol. I. p. 175.

† Ibid. p. 179.

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“ been honest enough to communicate it\*.”—  
 This is a very severe and confident censure. There have been many persons, not only among divines, but among the laity, of distinguished eminence for probity and virtue, as well as for learning and judgment, and who, to speak modestly, were in these respects no way inferior to the late Lord *Bolingbroke*, that have professed to examine, with all the attention they were capable of, and with an earnest desire of knowing the truth, the evidences of the Jewish and Christian system: but because, as the result of their inquiries, they were confirmed in the belief of the divine original of the Jewish and Christian revelation, therefore, in his judgment, not one of them was honest or sagacious enough to make an accurate examination: and I apprehend they have no other way of obtaining the character of sagacity or impartiality from writers of this cast, but by renouncing Christianity. If they do this, they shall be allowed to be sagacious and impartial inquirers; but otherwise, they must be content to have their judgment or honesty called in question. But if we may judge, by the writings of the Deists that have hitherto appeared, not excepting those of his lordship, they have not given very favourable indications, either of an uncommon sagacity, or of a candid and impartial inquiry.

He tells the noble lord to whom he writes,—  
 “ You will find reason perhaps to think as I do,

\* Vol. I. p. 181.

“ that it is high time the clergy in all Christian  
“ communions should join their forces, and  
“ establish those historical facts, which are the  
“ foundations of the whole system, on clear  
“ and unquestionable historical authority, such  
“ as they require in all cases of moment from  
“ others, and reject candidly what cannot be  
“ thus established \*.”——

Christian divines have frequently done what his lordship blames them for not doing. The facts on which the Christian system is founded, relate principally to what is recorded in the writings of the New Testament concerning the *holy life*, and excellent *character*, of our blessed *Saviour*, his admirable *discourses*, the many illustrious *miracles* he performed during the course of his personal ministry in proof of his divine mission, his *resurrection* from the dead, and consequent *exaltation*, the extraordinary *effusion of the Holy Ghost* upon his disciples, and the miraculous attestations that were given to his Apostles, and the first publishers of the Christian revelation. The question is, what reason have we to think that those facts were really done? His lordship requires, that these facts should be proved, as all other facts that pass for authentic are proved; and that divines should establish the credit of those facts on clear and unquestionable historical authority, such as they require in all cases of moment from others. The Christian

\* Vol. I. p. 183.

divines are willing to join issue on this point. The best, the properest way of proving the truth of antient facts is undoubtedly by authentic accounts published in the age in which the facts were done, and transmitted with sufficient marks of credibility to our own times. And several things are to be considered, in order to our judging whether, and how far, those accounts may be depended on.—If the facts there related were of a public nature, done for the most part in *open* view, and for which an appeal is made to numbers of witnesses:—if the accounts of those facts were given by persons that were perfectly well acquainted with the facts, and who, having had full opportunity to know them, were themselves absolutely persuaded of the truth and reality of those facts:—if they appear from their whole character to have been persons of great probity, and undesigned simplicity, and who could have no wordly interest to serve by feigning or disguising those facts; and if their prejudices had not any tendency to bias them in favour of those facts, but the contrary:—if the writings themselves have all the characters of genuine simplicity, and an impartial regard to truth, that can be reasonably desired:—and if they can be clearly traced from the age in which they were written, and the facts were said to be done, through the succeeding ages, to our own times:—and finally, if it is undeniably evident, that there were surprising effects produced in the very age in which the facts were said to be done,

done, and which cannot otherwise be accounted for, than by allowing the truth of those facts, and the effects of which continue to this day:— where these several circumstances concur, they lay a just foundation for receiving the accounts given of facts as true.—According to the justest rules of criticism, such accounts of facts may be depended on: and many facts are generally received and believed, that fall greatly short of this evidence.

Now it is capable of being proved, it has been often proved with great clearness and strength, that all these circumstances concur in relation to the important facts on which the Christian system is founded. The facts themselves were, for the most part, done in open view, and of which there were many witnesses. Christ's whole personal ministry was a very public thing. The scene of it was not laid in a dark obscure corner, nor was it carried on merely in a private way. His admirable discourses were, for the most part, delivered, and his miracles wrought, in places of the most public concourse, before great multitudes of people, and even before his enemies themselves, and those who were most strongly prejudiced against him. Many of his wonderful works are represented as having been done at *Jerusalem*, at the time of their solemn festivals, when there was a vast concourse of people from all parts. The same may be said of the remarkable circumstances which attended his crucifixion, the earthquake, the splitting of the

rock, the extraordinary preternatural darkness that covered the whole land for the space of three hours, &c. which things happened at the time of the Jewish passover; and could not have been imposed upon the people of that age, if they had not been known to be incontestably true. And the relating such things was, in effect, appealing to thousands of witnesses. And though Jesus did not appear publicly after his resurrection to all the people; yet, besides that he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, to his Apostles and others, who best knew him, and were therefore most capable of judging that it was he himself, and not another; and was seen even by five hundred at once, who all concurred in their testimony; besides this, the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples on the day of *Pentecost*, which was the most illustrious confirmation of his resurrection and ascension, is represented to have been of the most public nature, in the presence of vast multitudes then gathered together at *Jerusalem* from all parts of the world. To which it may be added, that many of the miracles that were wrought in the name, and by the power, of a risen Jesus, and which were so many additional proofs of his resurrection, were also done in open view, before great numbers of people. The accounts of these facts were written and published in the very age in which the facts were done, and the laws and doctrines delivered which are there recorded, and by persons who  
appear



appear to have been perfectly acquainted with the things they relate, and fully persuaded of the truth of them. And many of the facts were of such a nature, and so circumstanced, that they could not be deceived in them, allowing them to have had their senses, which I think it is but reasonable to suppose.

The writers of these accounts appear to have been persons of plain sense, and of great probity and simplicity, and to have had a sincere regard to truth. They write without art, without passion, or any of that heat which enthusiasm is wont to inspire. They take no pains to prepossess or captivate the reader; but content themselves with a plain simple narration of facts, without ornament, amplification, or disguise. They relate, with a calm simplicity, and in a manner that hath not the least sign of an overheated imagination, Christ's wonderful actions, and excellent discourses, without interposing any reflections of their own. With the same coolness they relate the bitter censures, the scoffs and reproaches, that were cast upon him by his adversaries, and the grievous and ignominious sufferings he endured, without expressing their indignation against the authors of them. And it is observable, that they do not represent him, as one might be apt to expect they would have done, as triumphing over those sufferings with an exulting bravery, but rather as manifesting great tenderness of heart and sensibility under  
them,

them, though mixed with a remarkable constancy and resignation.

It is a farther proof of that impartial regard to truth, which is observable in the writers of those accounts, that, though some of them were Apostles themselves, and others their special friends and intimates, yet they relate, without disguise, things which seem to bear hard upon their characters. They relate not only the lowness and meanness of their condition and circumstances, but their ignorance, their dulness of apprehension, the weakness of their faith, the power of their prejudices, their vain ambition, and contentions among themselves who should be the greatest, the reproofs they received from their Lord, their cowardly forsaking him in his last sufferings, and particularly the shameful fall of *Peter*, one of the chief of them, and his denial of his Lord and master, with the aggravating circumstances that attended it. They have not attempted to conceal any of these things, which they might easily have done, or to excuse or disguise them; than which nothing could better shew their impartiality, and love of truth.

It farther strengthens the credit of their relations, when it is considered, that they had no temptation to disguise or falsify the great facts recorded in the Gospels, in order to serve any worldly interest, or to humour and confirm any darling prejudices. On the contrary, it appeareth, that they were themselves brought, by the irresistible evidence of the facts they relate, to embrace

brace a religion, which was not only contrary to their worldly interests, and exposed them to all manner of reproaches, persecutions, and sufferings, but which was also contrary to their former most favourite notions, and rooted prejudices. For what could be more contrary to the notions and prejudices, which then universally possessed the minds of the Jews, both of the learned and of the vulgar, than the doctrine of a crucified Messiah, who was to erect a kingdom, not of this world, but of a spiritual nature, in the benefits and privileges of which the Gentiles were to be joint sharers with the Jews? And, finally, they gave the highest proof of their being themselves persuaded of the truth of those facts, by their persisting in their testimony with an unshaken constancy, in opposition to all the powers and terrors of this world. To this it may be added, that the writings themselves have all the characters of genuine purity, simplicity, and uncorrupted integrity, that any writings can have; nor is there any thing in them that gives the least ground of suspicion of their having been written in any later age, or that favours of the spirit of this world, of ambition, avarice, or sensuality. And these writings have been transmitted to us with an unquestionable evidence, greater than can be produced for any other writings in the world. We can clearly trace them through all the intermediate ages up to that immediately succeeding the Apostles, and have the most convincing proof of their having  
been

been still extant, and still received and acknowledged among Christians. There are great numbers of books, now in our hands, that were written and published in the several ages between that time and this, in which there are continual references to the Gospels, and other sacred books of the New Testament. And by the numerous quotations from them, and large portions transcribed out of them in every age, it is incontestably manifest, that the accounts of the facts, discourses, doctrines, &c. which now appear in them, are the same that were to be found in them in the first ages. Innumerable copies of them were soon spread abroad in different nations: they have been translated into various languages: many commentaries have been written upon them by different authors, who have inserted the sacred text in their writings: they have been constantly applied to on many occasions, by persons of different sects, parties, inclinations, and interests. These are things which no man can be so hardy as to deny. And by this kind of evidence, the greatest and the most convincing which the nature of the thing can possibly admit of, we are assured, that the evangelical records, which are now in our hands, have been transmitted safe to us, and are the same that were originally published in the apostolical age; and that a general corruption of them, or a substitution of other accounts instead of them, if any had attempted it, would have been an impossible thing.

Taking

Taking all these considerations together, it appeareth, that never were there any accounts of facts that better deserved to be depended on. And what mightily confirmeth the credit of those writings, and of the facts there related, is, that it cannot be contested, that great numbers, both of Jews and heathens, upon the credit of those facts, forsaking the religion of their ancestors, were brought to receive the religion of Jesus in the first age, when they had the best opportunity of inquiring into the truth and certainty of those facts: and this in opposition to their most inveterate prejudices, and when, by embracing it, they exposed themselves to all manner of evils and sufferings. The spreading of the Christian religion, as the case was circumstanced, furnisheth a very strong proof of the truth of the facts on which it was founded, and cannot otherwise be accounted for.

Our author asserts,---that, “ if the facts can  
“ be proved, the Christian religion will prevail,  
“ without the assistance of profound reasoning:  
“ but, if the facts cannot be proved, the autho-  
“ rity of it will sink in the world, even with  
“ this assistance \*”—I think it may be fairly  
argued from this, that if the extraordinary facts  
had not been true, on the evidence of which  
alone Christianity is founded, it must have sunk  
at the very beginning, and could never have been  
established in the world at all; considering the

\* Vol. I. p. 175.

nature of this religion, and the difficulties and oppositions it had to encounter with. It was manifestly contrary to the prevailing prejudices both of Jews and Gentiles: it tended entirely to subvert the whole system of the pagan superstition and idolatry, which was wrought into their civil constitution, and upon which the prosperity of the *Roman* empire, and the establishment of their state, were thought to depend. It also tended to set aside the peculiar polity of the Jews, upon which they so highly valued themselves, and to subvert all the pleasing hopes and expectations of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, with which they were so infinitely delighted. It obliged men to receive one that had been ignominiously condemned and crucified, as their Redeemer and their Lord, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world. It proposed no temporal advantages to its votaries, to bribe men to embrace it; gave no indulgence to their corrupt lusts, nor had any thing in it to soothe and gratify their vicious appetites and inclinations. At the same time it had all the powers of the world engaged against it: yet it soon triumphed over all opposition, though propagated by the seemingly meanest instruments; and made an astonishing progress through a great part of the *Roman* empire, then the most knowing and civilized part of the earth. This is a strong additional confirmation of the truth of those accounts which are contained in the Gospel records; since there could not be, as the case

was circumstanced, any possible inducement to Jews or Gentiles to embrace Christianity, but a thorough conviction of its divine original, and of the truth of those extraordinary facts by which it was attested.

And if the first propagators of this religion had offered no other proof but their own words in support of it, and in confirmation of the divine authority of a crucified Jesus, it cannot, with any consistency, be supposed, that a scheme of religion, so destitute of all worldly advantages, and so opposite to mens prejudices, as well as vices, and which subjected those that made profession of it to such bitter reproaches and persecutions, could possibly have prevailed in the world.

If, at the time when Christianity made its first appearance in the world, it had been embraced by the *Roman* emperor, as it afterwards was by *Constantine the Great*, if it had been countenanced by the higher powers, there might have been some pretence for ascribing the progress it made to the encouragement it met with from the great and powerful. The author of these Letters, speaking of the miracles said to be wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *Paris*, observes,—  
“ That, if the first minister had been a Jansenist,  
“ all *France* had kept his festival, and those  
“ silly impostures would have been transmitted,  
“ in all the solemn pomp of history, from the  
“ knaves of this age to the fools of the next\*.”—

\* Vol. I p. 125, 126.

But this very instance, in which the Deists have triumphed so much, may be turned against them, since it affordeth a plain proof, how difficult it is to maintain the credit of miraculous facts, when they are discountenanced by the civil power. The miracles supposed to be wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *Paris* were quashed, and a stop put to the course of the miraculous operations, and the falshood of some of them plainly detected, notwithstanding there was a numerous, a powerful, and artful body of men engaged in reputation and interest to support the credit of them. It may therefore be justly concluded, that if the extraordinary facts, on which Christianity was founded, had been false, the credit of them must soon have sunk, and that religion with it, when all the reigning powers of the world, Jewish and Heathen joined their force and influence to suppress it\*.

In what hath been said above, to shew the credit that is due to the accounts given of the facts by which Christianity is established, it is supposed, that these accounts were written by Christ's own disciples, or their most intimate companions, and in the first age, the age in which the facts were done, *i. e.* by persons perfectly well acquainted with those facts. But this is what our author seems unwilling to allow. In his fifth Letter, after having observed, that—

\* The difficulties Christianity had to encounter with, are elegantly represented by Mr. *West*, in his admirable treatise on the Resurrection.



“ false history has been employed to propagate  
“ Christianity formerly, and that the same abuse  
“ of history is still continued”—He instances  
in Mr. *Abbadie's* saying, that—“ the Gospel  
“ of St. *Matthew* is cited by *Clemens* bishop of  
“ *Rome*, a disciple of the Apostles; that *Bar-*  
“ *nabas* cites it in his Epistle; that *Ignatius* and  
“ *Polycarp* receive it; and that the same fathers  
“ give testimony for St. *Mark*—He adds, that  
—“ the bishop of *London*, in his third Pastoral  
“ Letter, speaks to the same effect.”—And  
then he proceeds—“ I presume the fact ad-  
“ vanced by the minister and the bishop, is a  
“ mistake. If the fathers of the first century do  
“ mention some passages that are agreeable to  
“ what we read in our Evangelists, will it fol-  
“ low, that these fathers had the same Gospels  
“ before them? To say so, is a manifest abuse  
“ of history, and quite inexcusable in writers  
“ that knew, or might have known, that these  
“ fathers made use of other Gospels, wherein  
“ such passages might be contained, or they  
“ might be preserved in unwritten tradition.  
“ Besides which, I would almost venture to af-  
“ firm, that the fathers of the first century do  
“ not expressly name the Gospels we have of  
“ *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* \*”—His  
design is plainly to signify, that there is no  
proof, that the Gospels, the books of the Evan-  
gelists which we now have in our hands, were  
written in the first age of Christianity.

\* Vol. I. p. 177, 178.

As this is a matter of importance, I shall offer some observations upon it.

And, first, It is to be observed, that though but few of the writings of the fathers of the first century are come down to us, and those generally very short; yet it cannot be denied, that in all these writings the facts recorded in the Gospels, especially relating to our Lord's passion and resurrection, and the scheme of religion there taught, are all along supposed, and referred to, as of undoubted truth and certainty, and of divine original: so that those writings of the apostolical fathers bear testimony materially to the Gospels, and to the facts there related, and come in aid of those accounts. It is also manifest, that there are several particular passages quoted in these writings, which seem plainly to refer to passages that are now found in the Evangelists; and these passages are mentioned in a manner which shews, that they regarded them as of divine authority. Nor is it a valid objection against this, that they do not cite the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, by name: for it is not their custom, in mentioning passages of Scripture, to name the particular books out of which these passages are extracted; they content themselves with producing the passages, or giving the sense of them. Thus they generally do with regard to testimonies produced from the sacred books of the Old Testament: and yet no one will deny, that they had those books in their hands, and acknowledged their divine authority.

*Barnabas,*

*Barnabas*, in his Epistle, has some plain references to passages that are to be found in St. *Matthew's* Gospel. And, with regard to one of them, he introduceth it with saying, *It is written*; which was a form of quotation usual among the Jews in citing their Sacred Books; and seems plainly to shew, that he referred to written accounts of the actions and discourses of our Saviour.

*Clement*, in his Epistle, mentions several remarkable passages in our Lord's discourses, recorded by the Evangelists, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*; he calls them, *the words of the Lord Jesus, which he spake*; and represents them as of the highest authority, and deserving the greatest regard.

*Ignatius* hath several passages, which either are plain references, or manifest allusions, to passages that are to be found in St. *Matthew's* Gospel, and to several other books of the New Testament. He tells those to whom he writes, that they—"ought to hearken to the Prophets, " but especially to the Gospel, in which the pas- " sion has been manifested to us, and the resur- " rection perfected \*."—Where, as by *the Prophets* are undoubtedly to be understood the prophetic writings, so by *the Gospel* seem plainly to be understood the writings of the Evangelists, collected into one book called the Gospel. And in other passages he speaks to the same purpose †,

\* Ep. ad Smyrn. S. 7. † Ep. ad Philadelph. S. 5, and 9.

and in a manner which shews, that this book of the Gospel was of the most sacred authority among Christians.

*Polycarp*, in his Epistle, though very short, hath many passages that plainly refer or allude to texts of the New Testament. And, quoting some passages which are expressly found in the Evangelists, he introduces them thus, *The Lord hath said*. He expresses his confidence, that the *Philippians*, to whom he writes, were *well exercised in the Holy Scriptures*. And it is manifest from what he there adds, that by the Holy Scriptures he particularly intends the sacred writings of the New Testament: which shews, that they were had in the greatest veneration by the Christians of that age.

He that would see a more distinct account of these things, may consult the learned Dr. *Lardner's* accurate collection of passages from the apostolical fathers, in his *Credibility of the Gospel-history*, Part II. Vol. I.

It appeareth from this brief account, that the apostolical fathers have taken as much notice of the evangelical writings, as could be reasonably expected, or as they had occasion to do. And therefore I see not why Mr. *Abbadie* should be charged with an abuse of history, for representing the fathers of the first century, as having cited the books of the Evangelists; since though they do not expressly quote them by name, yet they quote passages as of sacred authority, which are to be found in these books: and therefore it  
may

may be reasonably supposed, that they refer to those books, which, as I shall presently shew, were then extant, and the authority of which was then acknowledged.

But it is urged, that if the fathers of the first century do mention some passages that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangelists, it does not follow, that they had the same Gospels before them; because——“those fathers made use of other Gospels, wherein such passages might be contained, or they might be preserved in unwritten tradition.”——But this way of stating the case does not afford the least presumption, that the books of our Evangelists were not then extant. It is only supposed, that there might be other accounts in that age, in which the same things might be contained; and that the actions and discourses of our Lord were well known among the Christians of the first age, both by written accounts, and by tradition received from the preaching of the Apostles. And this certainly confirmeth, instead of invalidating, the accounts given in the Gospels; and supposeth the facts there recorded to have been of well-known credit and authority. But he ought not to mention it as a thing that is and must be acknowledged by all the learned, that those fathers of the first century made use of other Gospels besides those of the Evangelists. It cannot be proved, that they ever refer to any other Gospels. The only passage in all the apostolical fathers, which seems to look that way, is one in *Ignatius*;

which some suppose was taken out of the Gospel of the *Hebrews*, which itself was really St. *Matthew's* Gospel, with some interpolations and additions; and yet that passage may be fairly interpreted, as referring to the words of our Saviour, recorded by St. *Luke*, Ch. xxiv. 39\*.

It may be gathered indeed from the introduction to St. *Luke's* Gospel, that many, in that first age, had undertaken to write an account of the history of our Saviour's life, miracles, discourses, &c. but it does not appear, that those writings were generally received among Christians as authentic; probably because they were not done with sufficient exactness, and had a mixture of things false or uncertain. And therefore it is not likely, that the passages, referred to by the fathers of the first century, were taken from those writings: it is far more probable, that they were taken from the books of the Evangelists, where we still find them, and which were then extant, and their authority acknowledged among Christians.

That the Gospels which we have now in our hands were undoubtedly extant in the apostolical age, and regarded as authentic, admitteth of a clear proof, if it be considered, that in the age immediately succeeding we find them universally received and acknowledged in the Christian church. There are several books come down to our times, which were written by authors who unquestionably lived in the second

\* See *Lardner's Credibility*, &c. Part II. Vol. I. p. 184, 185, 186.

century, in which these Gospels are frequently, and by name, referred to as of divine authority; and many express quotations drawn from them, by which it is manifest, that they were then received with great veneration in the Christian churches. And it appeareth, from the first Apology of *Justin Martyr*, published about an hundred years after the death of our Saviour, that it was then the ordinary practice to read the *memoirs of the Apostles*, and the *writings of the Prophets*, in the religious assemblies of Christians. And that, by the *memoirs of the Apostles*, he means the books of the Evangelists, is evident from several passages in his writings; and particularly from a passage in this very Apology, where, having mentioned the *memoirs composed by the Apostles*, he adds, *which are called Gospels*: and there are frequent citations from all of them in his writings; which plainly shew, that he looked upon those books as authentic histories of Jesus Christ. The same may be observed concerning other writers in that century. And since it is manifest, that the four Gospels were generally received, and had in the highest esteem and veneration, among Christians in the second century, even in the former part of it (for that Apology was written about the year 139 or 140.); this plainly sheweth, that the Gospels must have been written and published in the apostolical age itself. And it was, because they were known to have been written by the Apostles, or their companions and intimates; and that the accounts

there given were authentic, and absolutely to be depended upon; that these writings were so early and generally received. *Eusebius*, speaking of *Quadratus*, and other eminent persons, who—"held the first rank in the succession of the Apostles,"—informs us,—“that they, travelling abroad, performed the work of Evangelists, being ambitious to preach Christ, and deliver the Scripture of the divine Gospels\*.”—The persons he speaketh of flourished in the reign of *Trajan*, in the beginning of the second century, and had undoubtedly lived a good part of their time in the first; and their carrying the books of the Gospels with them where they preached, and delivering them to their converts, sheweth, that those Gospels were then well known to be genuine, and had in great esteem. And indeed if they had not been written in the apostolical age, and then known to be genuine, it cannot be conceived, that so soon after, even in the next age, they could have been so generally dispersed, and staidly read in the Christian assemblies, and regarded as of equal authority with the writings of the antient prophets, which had been for some ages read in the synagogues on the Sabbath-days. And though a great clamour hath been raised concerning some spurious Gospels, which appeared in the primitive times, there is nothing capable of a clearer proof, than that the four Gospels, and those only, were ge-

\* *Euseb. Eccles. hist. lib. iii. cap. 37.*



nerally received as of divine authority in the Christian church, in the ages nearest the Apostles; and have continued so ever since, and have been all along regarded with the profoundest veneration.

To this it ought to be added, that the heathen writers, who lived nearest those times, never pretended to deny, that the books of the Evangelists received among Christians were written by Christ's own disciples. *Celsus* lived in the second century. He speaks of Jesus the author of the Christian religion, as having lived *πρὸ πάντων ὀλίγων ἐτῶν*, a very few years before. He mentions many things recorded in our Evangelists, relating to the *birth, life, miracles, sufferings, and resurrection*, of Jesus Christ; and tells the Christians—"These things we have produced out of your own writings."—He all along supposeth them to have been written by Christ's own disciples, that lived and conversed with him, though he does all he can to ridicule and expose them\*. To this it may be added, that the emperor *Julian*, who flourished about the middle of the fourth century, and who was both of great acuteness, and very well disposed to take all advantages against Christianity, and had, no doubt, an opportunity of reading whatsoever books had been written against the Christians before his time, never pretends to contest the Gospels being written by

\* *Orig. contra Cels. lib. ii. p. 67, 69, 70.*

Christ's own disciples, and those whose names they bear, *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*; whom he expressly mentions as the writers of those books\*; though, no doubt, he would have been very well pleased, if he could have met with any proof or presumption that could make it probable, that the books of the Evangelists, so generally received among Christians, were written, not by Christ's own immediate disciples, or their companions, or in the apostolical age, but were compiled afterwards, and falsely ascribed to the Apostles. To which it may be added, that none of the *Jews*, in any of their writings against Christianity, though they often mention the books of the Evangelists, have ever pretended, that those books were not written by those to whom they are attributed; but by others, in after-times, under their names: nor do they ever mention any charge or suspicion of this kind, as having been brought against those books by their ancestors.

Thus we find, by the acknowledgement of friends and enemies, who lived nearest to those times, that the accounts contained in the books of the Evangelists were written in the apostolical age; the age in which those facts are said to have been done, which are there recorded. There are plain references to them, and passages produced out of them, in the few writings that remain of the first century. And in the age

\* *Cyrl. Alex. contra Julian. lib. x. p. 327. Edit. Spanheim.*

immediately succeeding, we have full proof, that they were universally received in the Christian church, as of divine authority; and read as such in the Christian assemblies; and were ascribed to Christ's own immediate attendants, or their intimate companions, *Matthew, Mark, Luke,* and *John,* by name. This hath been universally admitted ever since in all ages: and these books have been transmitted down to our times with such an uninterrupted and continued evidence, as cannot be produced for any other books whatsoever. He would be accounted a very unreasonable man, that should deny, or even question it, whether the books of *Livy, Sallust, Tacitus,* were written by those whose names they bear. But the Deists, and his lordship, among the rest, most unreasonably reject that historical testimony and evidence in behalf of the Scriptures, which they would account to be sufficient with regard to any other books in the world.

It gives a mighty force to all this, that, upon a careful examining and considering the books themselves, they bear the plain marks and characters of the first, the apostolical age; and not one mark of a later date. Though three of the Evangelists make particular mention of our Saviour's predictions concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem,* and the temple; yet there is not any intimation given in any one book of the New Testament, of that destruction as having been actually accomplished, which yet was in forty years

years after our Lord's crucifixion. And it could scarce have been avoided, but that some or other of them must have taken notice of it, considering the many occasions there were for mentioning it, if these books had been generally written after that event. It appeareth, from the beginning of *St. Luke's Gospel*, compared with the introduction to the *Acts of the Apostles*, that he wrote his Gospel before he wrote the *Acts*. And yet this latter was evidently written in the apostolical age, and some time before the death of *St. Paul*. For it is plain, from the accounts given in that book, that the writer of it was a companion of *St. Paul* in his labours and travels, and particularly was with him in his voyage to *Rome*; with an account of which, and of his preaching there two years in his own hired house, the book ends. It taketh no notice of his after-labours and travels, and of his martyrdom at *Rome*; which it would undoubtedly have done, as well as of the martyrdom of *St. James*, if it had been written after those events happened. And it is a great proof of the high veneration the first Christians had for those writings, and how careful they were not to insert any accounts into them, which were not originally there, that none of them ever pretended to make supplemental additions to that book, either with regard to *St. Paul* himself, or any other of the Apostles. And as we may justly conclude, that *St. Luke's Gospel* was published in the apostolical age itself, whilst many of the  
Apostles

Apostles were yet living; so it hath been generally agreed, that St. *Matthew's* Gospel was published before that of St. *Luke*; and that the Gospel of St. *John* was written last of all. And yet this last, as is manifest from the book itself, was written by one of Christ's own disciples, *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. And it appeareth to have been principally designed to record several things, which were not distinctly taken notice of by the other evangelical writers. Accordingly we find, that though the facts are there plainly supposed, which are related by the other Evangelists; yet those miracles and discourses of our Lord are chiefly insisted upon, which either were omitted by them, or but slightly mentioned. Indeed whosoever impartially considereth the writings of the New Testament, will easily observe in them many peculiar characters, which plainly point to the time in which they were written. And there is all the reason in the world to think, that if these books had been written in any succeeding age, they would have been in several respects different from what they now are. The Christian religion here appeareth in its primitive simplicity, without any of the mixtures of following ages. The idea that is given of the Christian church, in the writings of the New Testament, is such as is proper to the first age; and from which there were some variations, even from that which immediately followed. The discourses of our blessed Lord, as recorded by the Evangelists, are of such a nature, so full  
of

of divine wisdom, and admirable sentiments, as would manifestly appear, if there were room in this place to enter on a particular consideration of them. They are delivered with so much gravity and authority, and yet, for the most part, in such a particular way, that they carry the evident proofs of their own genuineness. The character given of our Saviour, in the books of the Evangelists, seems plainly to have been drawn from the life. And it may be justly affirmed, that it was not in the power of such writers, destitute, as they appear to be, of all art and ornament, to have feigned such a character: a character, in which is wonderfully united a divine dignity becoming the Son of God, and an amiable humility and condescension becoming the Saviour of men; an admirable wisdom in conjunction with the greatest candor and simplicity of heart; an ardent zeal for the glory of God, and the most extensive charity and benevolence towards mankind; an impartial freedom and severity in reproving faults, and great tenderness in bearing with mens weaknesses and infirmities; an unparalleled purity and sanctity of manners, without any thing sour or unfociable, or a supercilious contempt of others; the most exemplary patience and fortitude under the greatest sufferings, joined with a remarkable tenderness and sensibility of spirit. To this may be added the beauty of his maxims, the solidity of his reflections, the just and sublime notions of religion, which he every-where inculcateth, far  
supe-

superior to any thing that was taught by the most celebrated doctors of the *Jerwish* nation. The morals he is represented as having taught are the most pure and refined, and yet without running into any superstitious extremes, such as were the affected strictnesses of the *Pharisees* and *Essenes*, or the false refinements of some Christians in the following ages. The motives there proposed are the most powerful and efficacious that can be presented to the human mind, drawn from all the charms of the divine love and goodness; from the engaging offers of grace and mercy made to the truly penitent, which yet are so ordered as not to give the least encouragement to the obstinately wicked and disobedient; from the promises of divine aids to assist our sincere endeavours in the performance of our duty; from the important solemnities of the future judgment, and the eternal retributions of the world to come, the inexpressible glory and felicity prepared for good men, and the dreadful punishments that shall be inflicted upon the wicked. In a word, so perfect is the idea of religion contained in those writings, that all attempts to add to it in succeeding ages, or raise it to an higher degree of perfection, have really fallen short of its original excellence, and tended to tarnish its primitive beauty and glory.

Taking all these considerations together, they form a very strong and convincing proof of the truth and authenticity of the Gospel-records; and that, whether we consider the method of

4 conveyance,

conveyance, whereby they have been transmitted to us, and which we can trace up with a continued evidence to the first age, or the internal characters of original truth and purity, and genuine integrity, which appear in the writings themselves.

To take off the force of the evidence, brought for the facts on which Christianity is established, it hath been urged, that these facts are only attested by Christians. The author of these Letters observes, that the church has the advantage over her adversaries; that the books that were written against her have been destroyed, whilst whatever tends to justify her has been preserved in her annals — And that — “ he must be very  
 “ implicit indeed, who receives for true the hi-  
 “ story of any nation or religion, and much more  
 “ that of any sect or party, without having the  
 “ means of confronting it with some other hi-  
 “ story\*.” He here seems to suppose it as a thing certain, that there had been historical evidence against Christianity; but that the church had suppressed it †. But this is a precarious sup-

\* Vol. I. p. 128. 132.

† Lord *Bolingbroke* seems to have laid a great stress upon this thought, for he elsewhere observes, that “ if time had brought  
 “ to us all the proof for Christianity and against it, we should  
 “ have been puzzled by contradictory proofs.” See his Works, Vol. IV. p. 270. where he presumes upon it as a thing certain, though he does not attempt to produce the least evidence for it, that there was formerly proof against Christianity, which, if it had come down to us, would have destroyed the evidence brought for it, or, at least, have very much weakened the force of that evidence, and kept the mind in suspense.



position, without any thing to support it. The account of the facts on which Christianity is founded, were published, as hath been shewn, by persons who pretended to be perfectly well acquainted with those facts, and in the age in which they were done, and who speak of them as things publicly known, and of undoubted certainty. The proper way therefore for the enemies of Christianity to have taken, would have been, to have published, if they were able, contrary authentic accounts, in that very age, for disproving those facts; which it would have been easy to have done, if they had been false: for, in that case, thousands must have known them to be so; since many of the facts are represented as having been done in public view, and in the presence of great multitudes. But that no such contrary historical evidence was then produced or published, we may confidently affirm; not only because there is no account of any such evidence, but because, if the facts on which Christianity is established, had been authentically disproved, even in the age in which they were said to have been done; and if there had been good historical evidence produced on the other side, by which it appeared, that those facts were false; the Christian religion, considering the other disadvantages that attended it, and that it was principally supported by those facts, must have sunk at once. How is it conceivable, that in that case it would have flourished more and more; and that vast numbers, and many of them persons of

considerable sense and learning, would have continued to embrace it, in the face of the greatest difficulties and discouragements? How comes it, that none of the *Apologies for Christianity* that were published very early, and presented to the *Roman Emperors*, some of which are still extant, take any notice of such contrary historical evidence, or endeavour to confute it, but still speak of those facts as incontestably true and certain? The first heathen author that appears to have written a formal book against the Christian religion, is *Celsus*. And what he advanced to this purpose we learn from his own words, preserved by *Origen*, in his excellent answer to him. He endeavoureth, as far as he can, to turn the Gospel-accounts to ridicule; but he never referreth to any authentic history, or book of credit and authority, which had been published, to shew that the facts, recorded by the Evangelists, and believed by the Christians, were false. He pretendeth indeed, that——“ he could tell many  
 “ other things, relating to Jesus, truer than those  
 “ things that were written of him by his own  
 “ disciples; but that he willingly passed them  
 “ by\*.”—— And we may be sure, that if he had been able to produce any contrary historical evidence, which he thought was of weight sufficient to invalidate the evangelical records, a man of his virulence and acuteness would not have failed to produce it; and his not having

\* *Orig. contra Celj. lib. ii. p. 67. Edit. Spencer.*

done so, plainly sheweth, that he knew of none such; though, if there had been any such, he must have known it. Nor do I find, that *Julian*, when he wrote against Christianity, pretended to produce any contrary historical evidence for disproving the facts recorded in the Gospels: if he had, something of it would have appeared in *Cyril's* answer, in which there are many fragments of his book preserved. I think therefore the pretence of there having been contrary evidence to disprove the facts recorded in the Gospel, which evidence was afterwards suppressed by the Christians, is absolutely vain and groundless. And to refuse our assent to the Gospel-history, for want of having an opportunity to confront it with contrary historical evidence, when we have no reason to think there ever was such evidence, would be the most unreasonable conduct in the world.

But still it is urged, that the accounts of those facts, in order to their obtaining full credit from any impartial person, ought to be confirmed by the testimony of those who were not themselves Christians; since Christians may be excepted against as prejudiced persons; and that, if there be no such testimony, it administers just ground of suspicion. As a great stress has been frequently laid upon this, I shall consider it distinctly.

To expect, that professed enemies, who reviled and persecuted the Christians, should acknowledge the truth of the main facts on which

Christianity is founded, is an absurdity and contradiction. And if any testimonies to this purpose were now to be found in their writings, it would undoubtedly be alleged by those gentlemen, who now complain of the want of such testimonies, that those passages were foisted in by Christians, and ought to be rejected as supposititious. But yet we have the testimony of adversaries concerning many facts relating to Christianity, as far as can be expected from adversaries. It cannot be expected, that *Jews* or Heathens, continuing such, should acknowledge Christ's divine mission; that he was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world: but none of them ever pretended to deny, that there was such a person as *Jesus Christ*, who was the author of the Christian religion, and appeared in *Judea* in the reign of *Tiberius*. *Tacitus's* testimony, as well as that of *Celsus*, is very express to this purpose\*. And some of the heathens went so far as to speak very honourably of him. So did the emperor *Alexander Severus*, who would have built a temple to him, if some of the pagans about him had not made strong remonstrances against it, as *Lampridius* informs us in his life †. And even *Porphyry* himself, whose words *Eusebius* hath preserved, speaks of him as a pious man, whose soul was taken into heaven ‡. It would be unreasonable to expect,

\* *Tacit. Annal. lib. xv. Euseb. tom. I. Edit. Var. lib. iii. p. 134.*

† *Cap. xxix. xliii. Hist. Aug. Euseb. Demonstrat. Evangel.*

that the enemies of Christianity should acknowledge the accounts given of Christ by the Evangelists to be true and authentic, and absolutely to be depended upon; for then they must have turned Christians. But yet they never denied, what some of our modern unbelievers seem unwilling to acknowledge, that Christ's own disciples, who had lived and conversed with him, had written accounts of his life, and actions, and discourses, which were received by Christians as true and authentic. The testimony of *Celsus*, as was observed before, is very full to this purpose. It cannot be expected, that *Jews* and heathens should acknowledge Christ's miracles to have been really wrought by a divine power. But they do not deny, that he did, or seemed to do, wonderful works. And the way they take to account for them amounteth to an acknowledgement of the facts. Some ascribed them to magical arts, as *Celsus*, who saith, that on the account of the strange things he performed, *Jesus* claimed to be regarded as a God\*. Others, as *Hierocles*, opposed to them the wonders pretended to have been wrought by *Apollonius Tyaneus*. The *Jews* ascribed the works he performed to the virtue of the ineffable Name, which he stole out of the temple. And the emperor *Julian* expressly acknowledgeth some of his miraculous works, particularly his healing the lame and the blind, and casting out devils, at the same time

\* *Orig. contra Cel. lib. i. p. 7. 22. 30.*

that he affects to speak of them in a very slight and diminishing manner\*. As to Christ's having suffered under *Pontius Pilate*, the heathens and *Jews* were so far from denying it, that they endeavoured to turn it to the reproach of Christians, that they believed in, and worshiped, one that had been crucified. It cannot be expected indeed, that they should own, that he really rose again from the dead on the third day. as he himself had foretold; but they acknowledge, that his disciples declared, that he did so; and professed to have seen him, and conversed with him, after his resurrection. This appeareth from the testimony of *Celsus*, at the same time that he endeavours to ridicule the account given, by the Evangelists, of Christ's Resurrection †. The *Jews*, by pretending that the disciples stole away the body of Jesus, whilst the soldiers that were appointed to guard it slept, plainly acknowledged, that the body did not remain in the sepulchre where it had been laid after his crucifixion; and that therefore he might have risen from the dead, for any thing they could prove to the contrary. The early and remarkable diffusion of Christianity, notwithstanding all the difficulties it had to encounter with, and the persecutions to which the professors of it were exposed, is a very important fact, and which, as the case was circumstanced, tends very much to confirm the truth

\* See his words in *Cyriac contra Julian*. lib. vi. p. 121, Edit. *Spanheim*.

† *Orig.* contra *Cels.* lib. ii. p. 94, 96, 97. lib. vii. p. 355.

of the Gospel-accounts. And this is very fully attested by heathen writers, though it cannot be expected, that they would ascribe this propagation of Christianity to its proper causes, the force of truth, and a divine power accompanying it.

*Tacitus*, in a passage where he expresseth himself in a manner that shews he was strongly prejudiced against Christianity, informs us, that there was a *great multitude* of Christians at *Rome* in *Nero's* time, which was in little more than thirty years after the death of our Saviour; and gives an account of the terrible torments and sufferings to which they were exposed\*. *Julian*, speaking of the Evangelist *John*, whom he represents as one of Christ's own disciples, saith, that in his time a great multitude, in most of the cities of *Greece* and *Italy*, were seized with that disease; for so he calls Christianity; and that *John*, observing this, was encouraged to assert, that Christ was God, which none of the other Apostles had done †. And we learn from the younger *Pliny*, that in the reign of *Trajan*, i. e. about seventy years after our Lord's crucifixion, the Christian faith had made such a progress in several parts of the *Roman* empire, that the temples of the gods were almost desolate; their solemn sacred rites long neglected; and that there were very few that would buy the sacrifices ‡. It cannot be expected, that

\* *Tacit.* Annal. lib. xv. lib. x. p. 327.

† See the passage in *Cæsar*,

‡ *Plin.* lib. x. Ep. 97. ad *Trajan*.

heathens, continuing such, should acknowledge, that the Christians were right in their notions of religion; but the last-mentioned celebrated heathen gives a noble testimony to the innocence of their lives and manners, and that they bound themselves by the most sacred engagements to the practice of righteousness and virtue, and not to allow themselves in vice and wickedness, falsehood and impurity. Even *Celsus*, than whom Christianity never had a bitterer enemy, owns, that there were among Christians *many temperate, modest, and understanding persons*\*: and *Julian* recommends to his heathen pontiff *Arsacius* the example of the Christians, for their kindness and humanity to strangers; and not only to those of their own religion, but to the heathens; and for their appearing sanctity of life; and this he supposes to be the chief cause why Christianity had made such a progress †. If none but Christian writers had celebrated the constancy of the antient martyrs, some would have been ready to have suspected, that they feigned this to do them honour, or, at least, greatly heightened it: but it appeareth from the undoubted testimonies of the above-mentioned *Pliny*, of *Arrian*, who flourished under the reign of *Hadrian*, and of the emperor *Marcus Antoninus*, that the antient Christians were very remarkable for their fortitude, and contempt of torments and death, and for their inflexible firm-

\* *Orig. contra Cels. lib. i. p. 22.*

† *Julian. ep. xlix. ad*

*Arsac.*



ness and constancy to their religion under the greatest sufferings\*.

Though therefore it were absurd to expect, that the enemies of Christianity, continuing such, should directly attest the truth and certainty of the main facts on which the Christian religion is founded; yet we have several testimonies from them, that contribute not a little to the confirmation of those facts. Besides which, what ought to have great weight with us, we have the testimony of persons who were once *Jews* or heathens, and strongly prejudiced against the Christian system, who yet, upon the convincing evidence they had of those facts, were themselves brought over to the religion of Jesus †. Of such persons there were great numbers even in the first age, the age in which the facts were done, and in which they had the best opportunity of inquiring into the truth and certainty of them. But there could not be a more remarkable instance of this kind than the Apostle *Paul*. Never was there any man more strongly prejudiced against Christianity than he: which had carried him so far, that he was very active in persecuting the professors of it, and thought that in doing so he had done God good service. He was at the same time a person of great parts and acuteness, and who had a learned education; yet he was brought over to the Christian faith

\* *Plin. ubi supra. Arrian. Epi&E. lib. iv. cap. 7. Marcus Anton. lib. xi. 3.*

† See *Addison's* treatise of the Christian religion. Sect. iii. iv.

by

by a divine power and evidence, which he was not able to resist; and thenceforth did more than any other of the Apostles to propagate the religion of Jesus; though thereby he not only forfeited all his hopes of worldly interest and advancement, but exposed himself to a succession of the most grievous reproaches, persecutions, and sufferings; all which he bore with an invincible constancy, and even with a divine exultation and joy. In his admirable Epistles, which were undeniably written in the first age of Christianity, and than which no writings can bear more uncontested marks of genuine purity and integrity, there are continual references to the principal facts recorded in the Gospels, as of undoubted truth and certainty. And it manifestly appeareth, that great miracles were then wrought in the name of Jesus; and that extraordinary gifts were poured forth upon the disciples. And why should not his testimony in favour of Christianity be of the greatest force? Must it be disregarded, because of his turning Christian; *i. e.* because he was so convinced of those facts by the strongest evidence, that it over-ruled all his prejudices, and brought him over to Christianity, in opposition to all his former notions, inclinations, and interests? Whereas it is this very thing that giveth his testimony a peculiar force\*. And if he had not turned Christian, his testimony in favour of Christianity, if he had given any, would not

\* See this clearly and solidly argued in Sir George Littleton's excellent Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul.  
have

have had so great weight, as being insufficient for his own conviction; or it would have been rejected as a forgery, under pretence that he could not say and believe such things without embracing the Christian faith.

This very pretence has been made use of to set aside the remarkable testimony of *Josephus*. And indeed, if that testimony be genuine (and a great deal has been strongly urged to prove it so, at least for the substance of it), it must be acknowledged, that he was far from being an enemy to Christianity, though he was perhaps too much a courtier openly to profess it.

There is another argument, which the ingenious author of these Letters proposeth, and upon which he layeth no small stress, as if it were a demonstration against the divine authority of the Christian religion. He observes, that—  
“ The writers of the *Romish* religion have at-  
“ tempted to shew, that the text of the holy  
“ writ is on many accounts insufficient to be the  
“ sole criterion of orthodoxy; and he apprehends they have shewn it: and the writers  
“ of the reformed religion have erected their  
“ batteries against tradition: and that they  
“ have jointly laid their axes to the root of  
“ Christianity: that men will be apt to reason  
“ upon what they have advanced, that there  
“ remains at this time no standard at all of Christianity: and that, by consequence, either this  
“ religion was not originally of divine institution, or else God has not provided effectually  
“ for  
for

“ for preserving the genuine purity of it ; and the  
 “ gates of hell have actually prevailed, in con-  
 “ tradiction to his promise, against the church.  
 “ He must be worse than an Atheist that affirms  
 “ the last ; and therefore the best effect of this  
 “ reasoning that can be hoped for is, that men  
 “ should fall into Theism, and subscribe to the  
 “ first ;”—*viz.* that the Christian religion was  
 not originally of divine institution \*. He seems  
 to think this dilemma unanswerable ; and, in  
 order to this, he pronounceth on the side of the  
*Romish* church, that their writers have shewn,  
 that the sacred text is—“ insufficient to be the  
 “ sole criterion of orthodoxy ;”—or, as he  
 afterwards expresseth it, that—“ it hath not that  
 “ authenticity, clearness, and precision, which  
 “ are necessary to establish it as a divine and a  
 “ certain rule of faith and practice.”—Why  
 his lordship giveth the preference to the *Romish*  
 divines in this controversy, is very evident. It is  
 because it best answereth the design he hath in  
 view ; which manifestly is, to subvert the credit  
 and authority of the Christian religion, and leave  
 it nothing to depend upon but the *force of edu-  
 cation*, and *the civil and ecclesiastical power*.

It cannot be denied, that some writers of the  
*Romish* church, whilst they have endeavoured to  
 shew, that the Scripture is insufficient to be a  
 complete rule of faith and practice, have said as  
 much to expose the sacred text, as if they were

\* Vol. I. p. 179, 180, 181.

in league with the infidels against it, though they, as well as we, profess to own its divine original. The enemies of Christianity have not failed to take advantage of this. And indeed there cannot be a greater absurdity than to suppose, that God should inspire men to reveal his will to mankind, and to instruct them in the way of salvation, and order it so, that they should commit that revelation to writing, for the use and benefit of his church; and yet that it should be insufficient to answer the end, or to guide those that in the sincerity of their hearts, and with the attention which becometh them in an affair of such infinite importance, apply themselves to the understanding and practising of it.

What his lordship here offers, and it contains the sum of what has been advanced by the *Romish* writers on this subject, is this—"I am sure, that experience, from the first promulgation of Christianity to this hour, shews abundantly with how much ease and success, the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay, the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, may be founded on the same text, and plausibly defended by the same authority\*."—This way of arguing beareth a near affinity to that which lieth at the foundation of all scepticism; *viz.* that there is no certain criterion of truth, or right reason, because reason is pretended for the most contradictory opinions: and

\* Vol. I. p. 179.

that it is impossible to be certain of any thing, because of the differences among mankind about every thing: that there are no certain principles at all, even in natural religion or morality; since there are none, not even those relating to the existence and perfections of God, a Providence, a future state, the natural differences of good and evil, but what have been controverted, and that by persons who have pretended to learning, to wisdom and philosophy. But the absurdity of this way of arguing is very evident. The principle is fallacious, that whatever hath been controverted is uncertain. As well might it be said, that whatever is capable of being abused is not good or useful. It doth not follow, that the Scriptures are not sufficiently clear and determinate to be a rule of faith and practice in all that is essential or necessary to salvation, because there have been men in every age that have interpreted them in different senses. The plainest passages in any writings whatsoever may be perverted; nor is mens differing about the meaning of the sacred text any argument against its certainty or perspicuity. Laws may be of great use, though they do not absolutely exclude chicanery and evasion. That can never be a good argument to prove, that the Scriptures are not a rule to be depended upon, which would equally prove, that no revelation that God could give could possibly be a rule of faith and practice, or of any use to guide men to truth and happiness. If God should make a revelation of his will for  
instructing

instructing mankind in what it most nearly concerneth them to know, and for directing them in the way of salvation; the possibility of which cannot be denied by any Theist; and should for this purpose appoint a code to be published, containing doctrines and laws; it may be justly questioned, whether it could possibly be made so clear and explicit, as that all men in all ages should agree in their sense of it. This could hardly be expected, except God should miraculously interpose with an irresistible influence to cause them all to think the same way, and give them all the same precise ideas of things, the same measures of natural abilities, and exactly the same means and opportunities for acquired improvement, the same sagacity, the same leisure, the same diligence; and except he should exert his divine power in an extraordinary manner for subduing or removing all their prejudices, and over-ruling their different passions, humours, inclinations, and interests; and should place them all exactly in the same situation and circumstances. And this would be by no means consistent with the wisdom of the divine government, or with the nature of man, and his freedom as a moral agent, and with the methods and orders of Providence. Nor is there any necessity for so extraordinary a procedure. For it would be absurd to the last degree to pretend, that the Scripture can be of no use to any man, except all men were to agree about it; or that

it is not sufficiently clear to answer the end, if there be any persons that pervert or abuse it.

Yet, after all the clamour that has been raised about differences among Christians as to the sense of Scripture, there are many things of great importance, about which there hath been in all ages a very general agreement among professed Christians: They are agreed, that there is one God, who made heaven and earth, and all things which are therein : that he preserveth all things by the word of his Power, and governeth all things by his Providence : that he is infinitely powerful, wise, and good, and is to be loved, feared, adored, obeyed, above all: that as there is one God, so there is one Mediator between God and man, *Jesus Christ the righteous*, whom he in his infinite love and mercy sent into the world to save and to redeem us: that he came to instruct us by his doctrine, and bring a clear revelation of the divine will, and to set before us a bright and most perfect example for our imitation : that he submitted to the most grievous sufferings, and to death itself, for our sakes, that he might obtain eternal redemption for us: that he rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and is now crowned with glory and honour, and ever liveth to make intercession for us: that through him, and in his name, we are to offer up our prayers, and hope for the acceptance of our persons and services : that in him there is a new covenant established, and published to the world, in which there is a free and uni-



verfal offer of pardon and mercy to all the truly penitent, and a moft exprefs promise of eternal life, as the reward of our fincere, though imperfect, obedience : that it is not enough to have a bare speculative faith, but we muft be formed into an holy and godlike temper ; and, in order to be prepared for that future happinefs, muft live foberly, righteoufly, and godly, in this prefent world : that there fhall be a refurrection both of the juft and the unjuft, and a future judgment, when Chrift fhall judge the world in the Father's name, and give to every man according to his deeds ; that the wicked fhall be doomed to the moft grievous punifhments, and the righteous fhall be unfpeakably happy to all eternity. Thefe are things of great confequence, and which have been generally acknowledged by Chriftians in all ages. And if there have been feveral things advanced by thofe that call themfelves Chriftians, which are not well confiftent with thefe generally acknowledged principles ; if there have been controverfies among them about points of confiderable importance, as well as many contentions about things of little or no moment, this is no argument againft the divine authority or ufefulness of the facred writings. Thofe that *wrest the Scriptures* muft be accountable to him that gave them, for that perverfion and abufe ; as men muft be accountable for the abufe of their reafon : but this is far from proving that therefore the Scriptures answer no

valuable purpose, and could not be of a divine original. Still it is true, that whosoever will, with a teachable and attentive mind, and an upright intention to know and do the will of God, apply himself to read and consider the holy Scriptures, in an humble dependence on God's gracious assistances, will find vast advantage for instructing him in the knowlege of religion, and engaging him to the practice of it, and for guiding him in the way of salvation.

It appears then, that the foundation, on which this formidable dilemma is built, will not bear. There is at this time a *standard for Christianity*; even the doctrines and laws of our Saviour and his Apostles, as contained in the holy Scriptures. It must be and is acknowledged by all that profess themselves Christians, that whatever is revealed in those sacred books is true and certain, and whatever can be shewn to be contrary to what is there revealed is false. The *Romanists* as well as Protestants own the divinity and authenticity of the sacred text, though for particular views they would join unwritten traditions with it; and are for giving the church alone the authority to interpret the Scriptures. The reason of their conduct is evident. It is not because they look upon the sacred text to be so obscure and ambiguous, that it cannot be understood by the people; but because they think the people, if left to themselves, will understand it so far as to see the inconsistency there is between true primitive

mitive Christianity as laid down in the New Testament, and the Papal system, and because their corrupt additions to Christianity cannot be proved by Scripture-authority.

I have already taken notice of what he saith concerning the fatal blow that Christianity received by the resurrection of letters. I suppose we are to take his word as a decisive proof of this; for no other proof of it is offered. But it may be affirmed on the contrary, that true primitive Christianity, that is, Christianity as laid down in the New Testament, had then a glorious revival. Many corrupt additions that had been made to it were thrown off. It hath never been better understood, nor its evidences set in a clearer light, than since that time. Some of the most admired names in the republic of letters have thought themselves worthily employed in endeavouring to illustrate the beauties of Scripture, and to clear its difficulties. It were easy to shew, if it were not a thing so well known as to render it needless, that those who have done most for the revival and spreading of learning and knowlege in all its branches, and who were most celebrated for their genius, judgment, various reading, and probity, have been persons that expressed a great admiration for the holy Scriptures, and an hearty zeal for Christianity.

Thus I have considered what the late Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered in these Letters against

the authority of the holy Scripture, and the Christian religion, as far as may be necessary to take off the force of the objections he hath raised against it, and which seem to have nothing in them proportioned to the unusual confidence with which they are advanced. It is hard to see what good end could be proposed by such an attempt. But perhaps it may be thought an advantage, that by —— “ discovering error in  
 “ first principles founded upon facts, and break-  
 “ ing the charm, the enchanted castle, the  
 “ steepy rock, the burning lake, will disappear\*.”  
 —— And there are persons, no doubt, that would be well-pleas'd to see it proved, that Christianity is no better than delusion and enchantment; and particularly that the wicked have nothing to fear from *the burning lake*, some apprehensions of which may probably tend to make them uneasy in their vicious courses. But I should think, that a true lover of virtue, and of mankind, who impartially considers the purity of the Gospel-morals, the excellent tendency of its doctrines and precepts, and the power of its motives for engaging men to the practice of piety and virtue, and deterring them from vice and wickedness, will be apt to look upon it as a very ill employment to endeavour to expose this religion to contempt, and to set bad men free from the wholesome terrors it inspires, and deprive good men

\* See his Letter on the Use of Study and Retirement, Vol. II. p. 221.

of the sublime hopes and sacred joys it yields. But Christianity hath withstood much more formidable attacks; and will, I doubt not, continue to approve itself to those that examine it, and the evidences by which it is established, with minds free from vicious prejudices, and with that sincerity and simplicity of heart, that seriousness and attention, which becomes them in an affair of such vast importance.







## L E T T E R VII.

LETTER  
VII.

*Those professed Christians are inexcusable, who slight public worship and the institutions of religion. The great importance of a careful education of children, and the bad effects of neglecting it. The example of a personage of high character and distinction recommended.*

S I R,

**I** Now send you some few additions to the second volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*.

In p. 661. l. 12. notice is taken of some persons who profess to believe the Gospel, and yet live in an habitual neglect of its public worship, and sacred institutions. After *institutions* put a full stop, and add as follows without breaking the line.—But that such a neglect is becoming general among us, beyond the example of former times, cannot escape the notice of the most superficial observer. There scarce ever was an institution more wisely and beneficially calculated for preserving and promoting the interests of religion and virtue in the world, than that of setting apart one day in a week from worldly businesses and cares, for the solemnities of public worship, and for in-

instructing the Christian people in the knowledge of religion, and exhorting them to the practice of it; and yet, many there are that would take it ill not to be accounted Christians, who seem to affect an open neglect, or even contempt of it. But it is not easy to conceive, what reasonable excuse or pretence can be alleged for such a conduct. Will they, in good earnest, aver, that they look upon it to be a reflection upon their sense, or unworthy of their quality, to pay their public homage to their Maker and Redeemer? And to make open professions of their regard to that religion, which yet they would be thought to believe? Or, have they such an aversion to the exercises of religion, that the spending an hour or two in solemn acts of adoration, in prayer and thanksgiving, and in receiving instructions and admonitions from his holy word, is a weariness which they cannot bear? But what is this, but to avow the great degeneracy of their own minds, and their want of a proper temper and disposition for the noblest exercises, which best deserve the attention of reasonable beings? Or, do they pretend a high regard to moral virtue, as an excuse for neglecting positive institutions? But will any man, of the least reflection, who knoweth the true state of things among us, take upon him to declare, that the growing neglect of the ordinances of religion hath contributed to the promoting the practice of virtue? Or, that mens morals are generally mended, since they be-

came



came more indifferent to those sacred solemnities? Nothing is more evident to any one, who impartially considers the nature of those divine institutions and ordinances, which are appointed in the Gospel, than that a due observance of them according to their original institution, besides its being a public avowal of our religious homage, and of our faith in God, and in our Lord Jesus Christ, hath a manifest tendency to promote our moral improvement, and to exercise and strengthen those good affections and dispositions which naturally lead to a holy and virtuous practice.

And as there are too many professed Christians, who openly neglect the institutions of religion, there are others who seem to flatter themselves that a mere outward attendance on divine ordinances, and the keeping up a form of religion, will be alone sufficient, though they at the same time indulge themselves in a practice contrary to the rules of virtue and morality. But all expedients for reconciling the practice of vice, of dissoluteness, or dishonesty, with the faith and hope of the Gospel, are visibly absurd and vain. The most inconsistent of all characters is a wicked and vicious Christian.

In p. 668. l. 13. from the bottom, after *impure* add as follows, without breaking the line:  
 — The general neglect of the education of children, and of family order and religion, is one of the most unhappy symptoms of the great degeneracy of the present age, and which gives

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us melancholy prospects of the succeeding one. For what can be expected from those who are bred up under parents, that take no care to instil worthy principles into their minds, and in families where they see no signs of religion, or the fear of God? Unnatural parents! who seem to make the real welfare and happiness of their children the least of their concern; or, if they take some care to adorn their bodies, and form their outward behaviour, neglect the culture of their better parts, their minds, or at least take no care to train them up to a just sense of religion and morals, or to a taste for what is truly laudable and excellent! Unhappy children! in whom, for want of proper early instruction and discipline, irregular passions and appetites, and evil habits are daily gathering strength, till at length they are turned out, unfurnished with good principles, or worthy sentiments of things, into a world full of temptations and snares. Is it to be wondered at, if such persons become an easy prey to wicked and impious seducers, and are soon drawn into prophaneness and infidelity, into dissoluteness and debauchery, which, where it prevails, tends to corrupt or to extinguish true probity and public spirit, and every noble and generous affection and sentiment? And in that case, the higher their condition is, and the greater their affluence of fortune, the more pernicious is the contagion of their example; and those who otherwise might have been the ornament

ment and support, become the disgrace and pest of the community.

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On the contrary, how agreeable is it to behold well-regulated families, children bred up in the fear of God, their minds early principled with just notions of things, and good affections, and worthy habits, carefully cherished and improved! Those of the one sex, formed under the influence of religion to a just and delicate sense of purity and virtue, and to that modesty and gentleness of manners and behaviour, which hath been always esteemed one of their loveliest ornaments: Those of the other, trained up by a proper institution and discipline to a rational piety, and the government of their appetites and passions, and to a just and manly sense of what is truly honourable, virtuous, and praiseworthy. And here again the same great example presenteth itself of a most *eminent* PERSONAGE of the highest DIGNITY, who amidst all the *pomps* and *splendors* of a court, hath esteemed it one of her most pleasing employments, to inspect the education of her illustrious offspring, and to this hath applied her princely cares, and personal attendance. And surely it must be the earnest wish of every good mind, that she may have the sincere and noble satisfaction of seeing them grow up under her tender and watchful eye, in every virtue and excellence, which may render them *public ornaments* and  *blessings*, and diffuse a beneficial and extensive influence, of great use in the present age, and the effects of

of which may be transmitted to succeeding generations.

How happy would it be for these nations, if, in conformity to an example so justly admired, the GREAT and NOBLE would look upon the care of their children and families, to be one of the worthiest objects of their attention and concern! This could scarce fail to have a good effect upon those of a lower rank. Then might we hope to see religion and virtue flourish, and a new and hopeful generation springing up among us, the surest earnest of national glory and happiness. For it is a maxim of undoubted truth, as well as of great importance, That a careful education of children will lay the best foundation for well-ordered families, as these will contribute the most of any thing to the peace and good order of the community.

I shall conclude this Address with the admirable words of St. Paul: *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

I HAVE now sent you all the additional observations I proposed, with regard to the first and second volume of the *View of the Deistical Writers*, and which, I hope, may be of some use to render that work more complete.

I have

I have no intention of making any farther additions to it, which is already enlarged far beyond what I originally designed. God grant that what hath been offered, both in the former volume, and in this, may answer the end for which it was intended, the serving the cause of important truth, piety, and virtue, in the world, and especially in these nations, in which such open insults have been offered to religion, and particularly to the holy Gospel of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are, I doubt not, great numbers in these lands, who far from being ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, esteem it their privilege and glory to be among those who make profession of believing and embracing it. But then it is a thing which cannot be too much inculcated, that a mere notional and speculative belief of Christianity will be of small avail; and that the principal care of those who profess it, should be to get their souls brought under the power and influence of its heavenly doctrines, and important motives: that it may not be merely an outward form, but a living principle within them. Among the many unhappy consequences, which have arisen from the disputes that have, with so much indecency and eagerness, been carried on against our holy religion, this is not the least, that it has contributed to carry men's minds too much off from the vital part of religion, and has led them to regard it as a matter of speculation and *dispute*, rather than of *practice*. But this is to  
forget

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forget the very nature and design of it. Christianity is essentially a spiritual and heavenly discipline, full of life and power, all whose *doctrines, precepts, ordinances, motives*, are manifestly intended to form us to a godlike temper, to a holy and virtuous practice. The more firmly it is believed, and seriously considered, and the more deeply it is wrought into the very frame and temper of the soul, the more glorious effects will it produce to the honour of God, to the welfare of mankind, to the peace and good order of society, and to the present and eternal happiness of individuals.

I thought to have here subjoined some reflections, which have occurred to me, in relation to the present state of things among us in these lands, but I chuse to refer them to my next.

*I am Yours, &c.*

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P O S T.



# POSTSCRIPT.

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VII.

**A**FTER great part of this Supplement was finished, and sent to the press, I met with a book which I have read with great pleasure, intitled, *The Criterion; or Miracles examined, with a view to expose the pretensions of Pagans and Papiſts; to compare the miraculous Powers recorded in the New Testament, with thoſe ſaid to ſubſiſt in latter times, and to ſhew the great and material difference between them in point of evidence: From whence it will appear, that the former muſt be true, and the latter may be falſe.* The ſubject is evidently both curious and important, and is treated by the author, who, I hear, is the Rev. Mr. *Douglafs*, in a judicious and maſterly way. It was published at *London* in 1754, and therefore before the publication of the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſſical Writers*. And if I had then ſeen it, I ſhould certainly have thought myſelf obliged to take particular notice of it. The worthy author has made judicious obſervations upon Mr. *Hume's Eſſay on Miracles*, eſpecially that part of it which relateth to the miracles

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miracles ascribed to the *Abbè de Paris*, which he has insisted on for an hundred pages together. And it is no small satisfaction to me, that there is a perfect harmony between what this learned author hath written on this subject, and what I have published in the second volume of the *View*, though neither of us knew of the other's work. He shews, as I have endeavoured to do, that fraud and imposture were plainly detected in several instances: and that where the facts were true, natural causes sufficient to produce the effect may be assigned, without supposing any thing miraculous in the case. This he has particularly shewn, with regard to each of the miracles insisted on by Mr. *de Montgeron*, which he accounts for much in the same way that Mr. *des Voeux* hath more largely done, though he had not seen that gentleman's valuable writings, to which I have frequently referred for a fuller account of those things which I could do little more than hint at. The reader will find in Mr. *Douglafs's* work a full proof of the wonderful force of the imagination, and the mighty influence that strong impressions made upon the mind, and vehement passions raised there, may have in producing surprising changes on the body, and particularly in removing diseases: of which he hath produced several well attested instances, no less extraordinary than those attributed to the *Abbè de Paris*, and which yet cannot reasonably be pretended to be properly miraculous.



As I have thought myself obliged to take notice of that part of this gentleman's book, which hath so near a connection with the work in which I have been engaged; so it is but just to observe, that it is also, with regard to every other part of it, a learned and accurate performance.

What he proposes to shew is, that the evidence for the Gospel facts is as extraordinary as the facts themselves; and that no just suspicion of fraud or falshood appeareth in the accounts; while every thing is the reverse, with regard to the evidence brought for the Pagan or Popish miracles.

He observes, That the extraordinary facts ascribed to a miraculous interposition among the Pagans of old, or the Christians of latter times, are all reducible to these two classes. The accounts are either such as, from the circumstances thereof, appear to be false; or, the facts are such as, by the nature thereof, they do not appear to be miraculous. — As to the first, the general rules he lays down, by which we may try the pretended miracles amongst Pagans and Papists, and which may set forth the grounds on which we suppose them to be false, are these three:— That either they were not published to the world till long after the time when they were said to be performed. — Or, they were not published in the places, where it is pretended the facts were wrought, but were propagated



only at a great distance from the scene of action. — Or, they were suffered to pass without due examination, because they coincided with the favourite opinions and prejudices of those to whom they were reported; or, because the accounts were encouraged and supported by those who alone had the power of detecting the fraud, and could prevent any examination, which might tend to undeceive the world. These observations he applies to the Pagan and Popish miracles; some of the most remarkable of which he distinctly mentions, and shews, that there are none of them that do not labour under one or other of these defects.

After considering those pretended miracles, which, from the circumstances of the accounts given of them, appear to be false, he next proceedeth to those works, which, though they may be true, and ascribed by ignorance, art, or credulity, to supernatural causes, yet are really natural, and may be accounted for, without supposing any miraculous interposition. And here he enters on a large and particular discussion of the miracles attributed to the *Abbè de Paris*, and of some other miracles that have been much boasted of in the Romish Church.

Having fully examined and exposed the Pagan and Popish miracles, he next proceeds to shew, That the objections made against them, and which administer just grounds of suspicion, cannot

cannot be urged against the Gospel miracles. And here he distinctly shews, *First*, That the facts were such that, from the nature of them, they must needs be miraculous, and cannot be accounted for in a natural way, or by any power of imagination, or strong impressions made upon the mind, And, *Secondly*, That those facts are such as, from the circumstances of them, they cannot be false. And to this purpose, he makes it appear, that they were published and appealed to at the time when they were performed; and were coeval with the preaching of Christianity, which was manifestly founded upon them.—They were also published and attested at the places where the scene of them was laid, and on the spot on which they were wrought. — And the circumstances, under which they were first published, give us an assurance, that they underwent a strict examination, and consequently, that they could not have escaped detection, had they been impostures.

Mr. *Douglas's* thinks it not sufficient barely to prove, that the testimony for the Gospel-miracles is stronger than that which supporteth any other pretended miracles; he farther shews, by a variety of considerations, that it is the strongest that can be supposed, or that, from the nature of the thing, could be had. And then he proceeds to observe, that besides the unexceptionable proof from testimony, the

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credibility of the Gospel-miracles is confirmed to us, by collateral evidences of the most striking nature, and which no spurious miracles can boast of : — Such as — the great change that was thereby introduced into the state of religion. — The proofs that God was with the first publishers of Christianity, in other instances besides those of miracles, particularly in assisting them supernaturally in the knowledge of the scheme of religion which they taught, and of which they were not capable of being the authors or inventors, and enabling them to give clear predictions of future events. — And particularly he insisteth upon that most express and circumstantial prediction of the destruction of the city and temple of *Jerusalem*, and the dispersion of the *Jewish* nation, as a demonstration that *Jesus* acted under a supernatural influence. — The last thing he urgeth as a collateral evidence is, That the miracles recorded in Scripture were performed by those who assumed the character of prophets, or teachers sent from God, and their miracles were intended as credentials to establish their claim, to add authority to the messages they delivered, and the laws they taught. — A character which, he shews, both the Pagan and Popish miracles are entirely destitute of.

THIS

THIS is a brief account of the plan of Mr. *Douglafs's* work, which fully answereth the title: and it is with great pleasure I take this opportunity to acknowledge the merit of the learned author, and the service he hath done to the Christian and Protestant cause.

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I am, Sir, &c.





LETTER VIII.

A general representation of the state of things among us. There is a great and growing corruption in these lands, notwithstanding the signal advantages we enjoy. This corruption not justly chargeable upon our religion as Christians and Protestants, but on the neglect or contempt of it. The unaccountable eagerness that has been shewn in spreading the principles of Infidelity, of very ill consequence to the public. The tendency of irreligion and vice to bring misery and ruin upon a people, both in the natural course of things, and by the just judgments of God. Many things in the late and present course of God's dispensations have an alarming appearance. Repentance and reformation, and a strict adherence to the knowlege and practice of Christianity, the properest way of averting the tokens of the divine displeasure, and promoting the national prosperity. The happy state of things which this would introduce.

S I R,

HAVING finished the additions and illustrations I proposed, with regard to the first and second volume of *the View of the Deistical*

cal Writers, I shall now subjoin some reflections, which, though not directly and immediately relating to the subject of those volumes, will, I hope, not be thought altogether unsuitable to the general nature and design of the preceding work.

It was with great satisfaction that I read the order for a *General and Public Fast*, to be religiously observed by all his majesty's subjects in these kingdoms, and which is drawn up with great seriousness and solemnity. It is there acknowledged, that *the manifold sins and wickedness of these kingdoms have most justly deserved heavy and severe punishments from the hand of heaven.* We are called upon to *humble ourselves before almighty God, and in a most devout and solemn manner, to send up our prayers and supplications to the divine Majesty, to avert all those judgments, which we most justly have deserved, to continue his mercies, and perpetuate the enjoyment of the Protestant religion among us, and safety and prosperity to his majesty's kingdoms and Dominions.*

Having so great an authority to bear me out, I shall add some reflections, which have made a deep impression upon my mind, with reference to the present state of things among us.

We have been eminently distinguished above most other nations by happy privileges and advantages. Providence hath blessed us with an abundance of those things, which are usually thought to contribute to the public prosperity

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and happiness. Never had any people a fuller enjoyment of liberty: a profusion of wealth has flowed in upon us by our wide extended commerce. We have had great advantages for improvement in the arts and sciences, and every branch of useful knowledge: especially that which is the most valuable and important of all others, the knowledge of religion in its truth and purity. The light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, freed from the absurdities, the superstitions, and idolatries, with which it hath been incumbered in many other countries professing the Christian Faith, hath long shone among us. The holy Scriptures are not locked up in an unknown tongue, nor confined to the studies of the learned, but are put into the hands of the people: so that all men may have access to that sacred rule of faith and practice, the original standard of the Christian religion. The treasures of knowledge are opened, and the public instructions so frequently and freely dispensed, that it may be said, that *wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets.*

It might be expected that a people so distinguished by advantages for religious and moral improvement, should also be remarkably distinguished by the knowledge and practice of piety, wisdom, and virtue, and by a zeal for our holy religion.—But though it is to be hoped there are many among us, who are unfeignedly thankful for our inestimable privileges, and careful to make a right improvement of them; yet it cannot be denied,

denied, that a great corruption hath spread itself, and seems to be growing among all orders and degrees of men. This is a very disagreeable subject: but the first step to a proper remedy is to be duly sensible of the true state of our own case. Our wealth and plenty hath been abused to an amazing luxury, and our liberty to a boundless licentiousness. Many act as if they had no other way of shewing that they are free, but by casting off all restraints, and setting themselves loose from all the ties of religion and virtue. Atheism hath appeared almost without disguise, or, which in effect comes to the same thing, the disbelief of a *Providence, of God's moral attributes and government, and of a future state.*—The most virulent reproach and contempt hath been cast upon the adorable JESUS, and the methods of our *redemption and salvation* by him. All that part of our duty, which more immediately relateth to the supreme Being, seemeth to be regarded by many as a matter of indifferency. And the slightest observation may convince us, that there is a growing neglect of *public worship*, as if the properest way of shewing our gratitude to God for the glorious privilege we have of worshipping him according to the dictates of our own consciences, were not to render him any public homage, or religious worship at all. That *holy day*, which is by divine appointment, and by that of our own laws, set apart from worldly businesses and cares, for

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the purposes of religion, for receiving public instructions, and for attending on divine worship, hath been treated with great contempt.— And in this too many of those who, by their authority and influence, should set a good example to others, have unhappily led the way. Can there be a greater contempt cast upon it, than to hold GAMING ASSEMBLIES on that day? And when this is done by persons of *rank*, can it be wondered at, that by the lower kind of people it is often the worst employed of any day in the week, and devoted to idleness and vice? And it cannot but give concern to every good mind, that an *Institution*, so admirably calculated for the advancement of religious knowledge, piety, and virtue, and for promoting good order in the community, should be so strangely perverted and abused.

Having mentioned the practice of GAMING, I cannot help observing, that among other unfavourable symptoms of the growing corruption among us, this is not the least, that that practice is of late years become more general, and carried to a greater excess, than has been known before in these kingdoms. The wisest men of all nations have been so sensible both of the pernicious effects of this vice to particular persons and families, and its ill influence on the community, that it would fill a large volume barely to recite the laws which have been made against it, both in former and later ages. Our own laws have fixed a brand upon it, and in effect

effect declared the gain made by it to be dishonourable and infamous: yet is the being instructed in the mysteries of it, become a necessary part of education, whilst the seasoning the tender minds of young persons with principles of religion and just sentiments of things, and forming them to the worthiest practices, is, it is to be feared, in a great measure neglected.

But what affordeth the most melancholy apprehensions is the great corruption and depravity of manners, which is so generally and justly complained of.—The most blasphemous abuse of the name of God, by shocking *oaths* and *imprecations*, and the most corrupt and wilful *perjuries*, *drunkenness* and excesses of riot, but especially by the excessive drinking of *distilled spirituous liquors*, the *health*, *morals*, and *religion* of the laborious and useful part of these kingdoms are well-nigh destroyed;—fired with this infernal poison, they are spirited to perpetrate and execute the most bold, daring and mischievous enterprises, and shaking off all *fear* and *shame* become audaciously impudent in all manner of *vice*, *lewdness*, *immorality* and *prophaneness*, in defiance of all laws human and divine.—But it does not stop here, its malignant influence reaches to the children yet unborn, who come half burnt-up and shrivelled into the world, and who as soon as born, suck in this deadly poison with their mothers or nurses milk, so if this worst of all plagues be suffered to go on, it will make a general havock, especially amongst
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the *soldiers, sailors, and laborious* part of the nation, who are manifestly degenerated from the more manly constitutions of preceding generations*. Besides an amazing dissoluteness, and impurities of all kinds, even those that are most *unnatural*, and which are not fit to be

* See *Distilled Spirituous Liquors the Bane of the Nation*, 8vo. 2d edit. 1736 London. Dr. *Stephen Hales's* friendly admonition to the drinkers of Gin, Brandy, and other spirituous liquors, which are so destrutive of the *industry, morals, health, and lives* of the people. A new edition with additions, and an appendix.—And is in the catalogue of the books distributed by the society for promoting Christian knowledge, London.—This worthy *divine* and excellent *philosopher*, (whose whole life has been usefully employed in promoting the honour of God and the welfare of mankind), in a treatise upon the distilling of sea-water, and the use of ventilators, &c. just published, speaking of *distilled spirituous liquors* says—“How
“ much therefore does it behove all, who have any concern for
“ the honour and dignity of their own kindred species, any indignation at its being thus debased and disgraced, any bowels of pity
“ for the vast multitudes, not less perhaps than a MILLION, that
“ are yearly destroyed all over the world, by the moral as well as
“ *natural*. and therefore worst of all evils, that ever beset
“ unhappy man; to use their utmost endeavours to deliver mankind from this PEST?—But notwithstanding this astonishing
“ ravage and destruction of the human species, yet the unhappy
“ unrelenting nations of the world, seem as unconcerned about it
“ as if only so many *thousand*, nay *millions* of *Caterpillars* or *Locusts*
“ were destroyed thereby. Was there ever a more important
“ occasion to rouse the indignation of mankind? Can we be
“ calm and undisturbed, when this MIGHTY DESTROYER rears
“ up its invenomed head?—The most zealous advocates for
“ *Drams*, even the unhappy besotted *Dramists* themselves, the
“ prolonging of whose lives, and whose real welfare both *here*
“ and *hereafter*, is hereby sincerely intended, cannot find fault
“ with this well-meant remonstrance, in defence of them and of
“ all mankind, against this universal destroyer, from *one* who has
“ long been labouring, and that not without success, in finding
“ means to preserve multitudes of lives, by various means.”

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named amongst Christians.—To which may be added, the horrid crime of SELF-MURDER, not only frequently practised, but pleaded for, a practice deservedly rendered infamous by our laws, as being a murder committed by a man upon his own person, in opposition not only to the most sacred obligations of religion, and the rights of the community, but to the strongest instincts of the human nature, wisely implanted in us by the great Author of our Beings, as a bar to such monstrous practices.—To all which may be added, that barbarous practice of men's murdering one another upon a pretended *point of honour*, as it is called, for the most slight and trivial offences, below the cognizance of our laws: — A crime inexcusable in a civilized country, and which yet generally passes unpunished, and thus leaves the guilt of blood upon the land, crying aloud for vengeance.— It is impossible for a thinking man that has a true zeal for the honour of God and the interests of religion and virtue, and who hath the welfare and happiness of his country really at heart, not to be deeply affected with such a view of things, and solicitous what the consequence may prove.

And now, it is a natural enquiry, what can this be owing to? Whence can it be, that nations so happily privileged, and favoured with so many advantages for the knowledge and practice of religion, should have sunk into such an amazing corruption and degeneracy? Can this
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be consistently charged on religion itself, either the Christian religion or the Protestant, which is the religion of Jesus, as taught in the holy Scriptures, and freed from the abuses and corruptions that have been brought into it? The Deists have pretended the first, the enemies to the reformation the last. The answer to both is in effect the same. Can that be the cause of corruptions among Christians, which if steadily adhered to is the best remedy against those corruptions? Can that occasion an abounding in vice and wickedness, which, if really believed and seriously considered, exhibiteth the most powerful dissuatives from it, that can enter into the human mind? Can the furnishing the people with the means of knowledge, and bringing them to an acquaintance with the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us *wise unto salvation*, and are *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*, can this have any tendency to encourage them in vice and dissoluteness? Such a supposition is contrary to the plainest dictates of common sense. The corruption therefore complained of can never be the natural effect or product of our advantages, and especially of the religion we profess. On the contrary, the best and surest preservative against this growing corruption, and the most effectual way of recovering from it, would be to have a high esteem for those divine oracles, to read and consider them with attention, and lay to heart the excellent

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instructions and directions which are there set before us.

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There is a far more natural account to be given of that corruption of manners, that vice and wickedness which so much aboundeth among us. It is owing not to the knowledge or belief of religion, but to the neglect or contempt of it; to a strange indifferency towards it in some, whilst others use their utmost endeavours to traduce and expose it under the vilifying characters of superstition, priestcraft, or enthusiasm. Great numbers of impious books have swarmed among us, both formerly and of late: some of which are not only levelled against Christianity, but strike at the foundations of all religion, the attributes and providence of God, and a future state of retributions. The manifest tendency of them has been—to banish the fear of the Deity,—to confound the moral differences of things,—to degrade the human nature to a level with the brutes, and thereby extinguish every noble and generous sentiment,—to deprive good men of the blessed hope of immortality, and to free bad men from the fears of future punishments, and the apprehensions of a supreme Governor and Judge.—These principles, and the books that contain them, have been propagated with great eagerness and industry, both in these kingdoms, and in our plantations abroad, and sometimes at a considerable expence. This preposterous kind of zeal for infidelity may, to a considerate observer, seem to
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be an odd phenomenon, of which no rational account can be given. One may, in some degree, account for a man's being hurried away by the violence of his appetites and passions, to do what his own mind disapproves and condemns. But that any man should coolly take pains to set other men loose from all the restraints of religion and conscience, and thereby, as far as in him lies, attempt to dissolve the bands of society and public order, and encourage men to gratify and fulfil their appetites and passions without controul, the natural consequence of which would be to introduce universal confusion, in which he himself may be a great sufferer, is absolutely unaccountable on any principles of good sense or sound policy; so that if we did not see frequent instances of it, we should be apt to think it scarce possible, that any men in their senses should act so strange a part.

One very pernicious consequence of such open attempts against religion is, the spreading prophaneness and dissoluteness of manners among the *lower* kind of people, who easily catch the contagion, when once men of *higher degree*, or at least that pretend to a superior sagacity, have set the example. And who can, without deep concern, observe, that this is very much become the case among us at present? Great numbers of those, who belong to what ought to be the most industrious body of the people, are sunk into irreligion and vice. And, in proportion, as these prevail, they become averse to all honest

honest labour and industry, and prone to the most flagitious crimes, which have the worst effect imaginable on the peace and good order of the community. And it is easy to see what mischief and confusion must thence ensue. A sober and industrious populace is the strength, the riches, the glory of a nation: but when those, that should be the labouring hands, become vicious and dissolute, they are prepared for every kind of wickedness and disorder. As, from their rank and education, they have, for the most part, little regard to the appearances of honour and decency, if, at the same time, they have cast off the ties of religion, and the fear of God, and a regard to the powers of the world to come, and are abandoned to their appetites and passions, what are they not capable of? It is an observation which hath generally held, and is verified by the experience of all ages, that *Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin, i. e. abounding vice and wickedness, is a reproach unto any people, i. e. it bringeth disgrace and misery upon them. Prov. xiii. 10.* When once a neglect of religion and a corruption of manners becometh general, it hath a natural tendency to dissolve and enervate a nation, and to extinguish true public spirit and a manly fortitude. Nor have any people long maintained their liberties, after having lost their probity and virtue.

Thus it is in the natural course of things, and thus it also is by the just judgment of God, and

according to the stated rules of the divine procedure towards nations or large communities. God may indeed, in his great wisdom and goodness, long bear with a degenerate people, and may even continue to pour forth many blessings upon them when they are in a corrupt state, especially if there be a considerable remnant of good men still to be found among them. But when their iniquities are grown up to such a height, and have continued so long, that he doth not see fit to bear with them any longer, the measure of their iniquities is said to be full; the time is come for executing a severe vengeance upon them, and the punishment falls heavier for being so long delayed.

Whosoever duly considereth these things will be apt to think, that, according to the ordinary method of God's providential dealings towards backsliding nations and churches, we have too much reason to apprehend his righteous judgments. The present situation of things hath an alarming appearance, and, if we be not utterly stupid, must tend to awaken us out of our security. Scarce ever was there a time in which it might be more justly said, that *God's judgments are abroad in the earth*. I need not enter into particulars. They are very well known, and fresh in our remembrance. There have been, to use our Saviour's emphatical expressions, *commotions and great earthquakes in divers places,—distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring: men's hearts*

heart's failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that shall come upon the earth.

Luke xxi. 9, 11, 25. Of so vast an extent have the amazing concussions been reaching to many parts of *Europe, Africa, and America*, at a great distance from one another, and in divers places have produced such dreadful effects, even to the subversion of great and populous cities, that it looketh as if God were about some great and remarkable work of judgment, *to punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquities*, as the prophet expresseth it, *Is. xiii. 11*. Surely every man, who believeth that there is a Providence which extendeth its care to mankind, must believe that it hath a special concernment in events of such a nature, which so nearly affect nations and large communities, and on which the lives and fortunes of so many thousands depend. Though second causes are admitted, still it must be considered, that they are all under the direction and superintendency of God's sovereign providence, which so ordereth and overruleth the circumstances of things, and the course of natural causes, as to subservé the ends of his moral administration with regard to his reasonable creatures, and to execute his purposes towards them, whether in a way of judgment or of mercy. And, in every such case, we should fix our views not merely or principally on second causes, but should look above them to the supreme Disposer, and endeavour to comport with the designs of his infinite

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wisdom and righteousness. Calamitous events of a public nature are not to be considered as concerning only the particular persons or people that immediately suffer by them. They have a more extensive view, and are designed and fitted to give instructive lessons to all mankind that hear of them. The natural tendency of all such dispensations is to awaken in the minds of men a holy fear of the divine Majesty, and to give them a most affecting conviction of the vanity and instability of all worldly hopes and dependencies. The prophet *Isaiab*, after having described in a very lively manner the striking impressions that should be made upon the hearts of men because of *the fear of the Lord, and the glory of his Majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth*, very properly adds, *Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Is. xi. 20, 21. Of what avail in such a time of awful visitation, are the arts of human policy, the pomp of courts, or the power of mighty armies, or the riches and grandeur of the most populous and magnificent cities? The plain voice of such dispensations, a voice intelligible to all mankind, is this: *Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.* Ps. xxxiii. 8. *The Lord is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble; and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.* Jer. x. 10. Surely we should be ready to cry

cry out on such occasions, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who would not fear thee, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy. For all nations shall come and worship before thee: for thy judgments are made manifest.* Rev. xv. 3, 4. The great use, which is to be made of such awful dispensations, is well expressed by the prophet Is. xxvi. 9. *When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness; i. e. they ought to do so; and it is the natural tendency of such judgments to engage them to do so.* The calamities inflicted upon others should be regarded by us as solemn warnings and admonitions, which it highly concerneth us to improve. The language of such dispensations to all that hear of them, is the same with that of our Saviour to the Jews, when speaking of those persons on whom the tower of *Siloam* fell, and of those whose blood *Pilate* mingled with their sacrifices, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Luke xiii. 3, 5. How inexcusable shall we therefore be, if, instead of laying these things seriously to heart, we continue careless and unaffected still, and go on in a thoughtless round of gaities and pleasures, like those the prophet mentions, Is. v. 12. *The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.* Against such persons a solemn woe is there denounced.

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And elsewhere, speaking of some who continued to indulge themselves in luxury and riot, and all kinds of sensual mirth, at a time when the circumstances of things called for deep humiliation and repentance, he saith, *It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts.* Is. xxii. 12, 13, 14.

Whosoever carefully observeth the course of the divine dispensations towards us for some time past, will be sensible that we have had many warnings given us. A pestilence amongst the cattle in *England* for many years past, and, though abated, still continues in some parts of this country. But a few years ago the sword of war raged in one part of the united kingdom of *Great Britain*, and was near penetrating to the center of it, and threatened the subversion of that constitution, on which the preservation of our religion, laws, and liberties, in a great measure, dependeth: but, through the great goodness of God, our fears were, after some time, happily dispelled. More lately encroachments have been made upon our possessions and plantations abroad, in which our national safety and prosperity is very nearly interested. And now it is not many weeks since a most dreadful calamity hath befallen a kingdom, so very nearly connected with us in interest and alliance, that the calamity may be regarded as, in a considerable degree, our own. And in fact, we have
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been, and are great sufferers by it. Many lives have been lost of his majesty's subjects belonging to *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, and many more there are, who, by the sudden subversion, have been either totally, or, in a considerable degree, deprived of their worldly substance, and reduced to circumstances of distress. A present stop is put to the course of a most advantageous commerce. The springs of our wealth are obstructed; a great blow is struck at our trade, in which we are so apt to place our confidence: and this at the very time when we seem to be entering upon a war with a mighty nation, a war that threatens to be very hazardous, and which must needs put us to a vast expence, which we are not very well able to bear. That particular judgment, under which some of the neighbouring nations have so severely suffered, and which is one of the most dreadful of all others, hath greatly threatened us. It is but a very few years since that great city, which is the metropolis of these kingdoms, and the center of our wealth and commerce, felt an alarming shock, though, through the great mercy of God, it did little more than threaten and terrify. Since that time, and very lately, there have been several very unusual phœnomena among us, of such a nature as to have an alarming aspect. Extraordinary agitations of the waters both on our coasts and within land, and shocks of an earthquake felt in several parts of *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, and of his majesty's dominions abroad.

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Thus the divine judgments seem to be advancing upon us, and have gradually begun to operate. But such is the mercy and forbearance of God towards us, that he seems loth to inflict upon us the fierceness of his anger, or to pour forth all his wrath. He is pleased to give us previous warnings, to awaken and rouse us out of our security, that, by a timely repentance, and by humbling ourselves under his mighty hand, we may prevent the necessity of inflicting severer punishments. His hand is lifted up, but the awful stroke seemeth to be suspended for a while, as if he were unwilling to proceed to extremities with us. Upon considering these things, that most affecting exhortation comes to my mind, which God condescendeth to make by his prophet *Hosea*, with regard to his people *Israel*, when in a very dangerous backsliding state. *How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee up Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee.* Hos. xi. 8, 9. Yet we find at length, upon their obstinately persisting in their disobedience and ingratitude, and abusing the methods of his indulgence, and even growing more and more corrupted, he saw it necessary to execute his awful judgments upon them,

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even to the utter subverting that kingdom, and subjecting it to a foreign yoke. God forbid that this should be our case. Let us therefore make a right use of the divine forbearance. We have hitherto had reason to *sing of mercy as well as of judgment*. Let us not, by our abuse of his goodness, provoke him to pour forth upon us the full vials of his penal wrath. With an ingenuous sorrow and self-abasement we should acknowledge our aggravated transgressions, our neglect and abuse of the privileges and advantages we have so long enjoyed, the contempt that hath been cast on his glorious Gospel, and the prophaneness and dissoluteness of manners, which hath so much prevailed. On these accounts, let us humble ourselves deeply before God, and implore his mercy, and contribute, as far as in us lieth, to the carrying on a work of national repentance and reformation. It is undoubtedly our duty, in the present conjuncture of affairs, when we seem to be entering upon an hazardous and expensive war, to exert our utmost efforts for assisting and supporting the government, and to apply ourselves to the use of all proper means which human prudence may suggest. But still we must get this fixed upon our minds, that whatever projects may be formed for procuring national advantages, and promoting the public prosperity, all other expedients to make a people flourish without reformation of manners, and without the knowledge and practice of religion, and public virtue, however they may
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seem to have an effect for a while, will, in the
 issue, prove ineffectual and vain.

The most proper way we can take to avert impending judgments, to preserve and maintain our valuable privileges, and promote the public welfare and happiness, is not to express a clamorous zeal for liberty at the same time that we abuse it to an unrestrained licentiousness, than which nothing hath a greater tendency, both through the righteous judgment of God, and in the nature of the thing, to deprive us of our liberties; but it is to endeavour to make a just and wise improvement of our advantages, to maintain a strict regard to *religion, probity, and purity of manners*, and to guard against *vice, libertinism, prophaneness, and debauchery*. This, and this alone, will preserve us a free, a flourishing, and happy people. God grant that this may be the blessing of these nations to the latest posterity; and that we may long enjoy the sight of the glorious Gospel of Christ shining among us in its genuine purity, and the inestimable advantage of a freedom to profess it, and to worship God according to the directions of his word, and the dictates of our own consciences, without being exposed to persecuting rage and violence. Happy nations that we still are! if we be but duly sensible of our happiness! and careful to make a right use of our privileges! What a glorious face of things would soon appear among us, if, as we have the best religion in the world, we took care to govern ourselves

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ourselves by its sacred rules, and to act under the influence of its divine instructions and important motives! Virtue, supported and animated by the glorious hopes of the Gospel, would appear in its genuine sacred charms, and in its lovely beauty and excellence. Love, the true spirit of Christianity, would prevail, and produce a mutual forbearance in lesser differences, at the same time that there would be a happy agreement in matters of the highest importance; there would be a zeal without bigotry, a liberty without licentiousness. The natural consequence of all this would be peace and harmony in larger and lesser societies. Such would be the face of things among us, as far as could be expected in this state of imperfection, if the religion of Jesus were firmly believed, and duly considered, and men would be more generally persuaded to give up themselves to its divine conduct. This would render persons in *high stations* signally useful to the public, and *ornaments* as well as *supports* to their country. And at the same time *sobriety, industry, temperance, and good order*, would spread among the body of the people. Nor would *true bravery* and *fortitude* be wanting. For though *superstition* tendeth to produce *mean* and *unmanly* fears, *true religion*, and a *steady belief* of a *wise and righteous Providence*, hath a tendency to fortify and establish the mind, and to produce a real *courage* and *greatness of soul*, which will enable a man to meet death with a calm intrepidity

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It is a reflection which hath frequently occurred to my mind, especially on occasion of the late dreadful judgments of God, how different, under the apprehension or pressure of an amazing calamity, must be the state of *one* that firmly believeth Christianity, and endeavoureth to govern his practice by its excellent rules, from that of the *Atheist* and *Unbeliever*, or of the man who though he professeth to believe the Christian religion, liveth in a plain contradiction to its sacred obligations. The former, however black and disastrous the face of things may appear to be, which naturally tend to create fears in the human mind, yet is persuaded, that all things are under the direction of infinite wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, and that we live in a world where every thing above, beneath, and on every side of us, is in the hand of God, and under the direction of his Providence; who, as he can arm all the creatures against us, and make them the instruments of his just displeasure; so, if we be careful to please him, and approve ourselves in his sight, can make the whole creation around us to be as it were in a covenant of peace and friendship with us. Or, if a good man be involved in the same outward calamities with others, as must often, without a miracle, be expected in calamities which happen to large communities, still he hath this to support him, that the great Lord of the universe is his father and his friend, and will cause those
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outward evils to turn, in the final issue, to his greatest benefit. Death itself, if this shall befall him, shall prove a real gain to him, and shall introduce him to a better world, and a nobler society. It is justly observed concerning the *man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments, that he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord*, Ps. cxl. 1. 7. Not only may he say, upon good grounds, with the Psalmist, *The Lord is on my side, I will not fear: what can man do unto me?* Ps. cxviii. 6. And again, *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear, though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident*, Ps. xxvii. 2. But he may break forth into that noble strain of triumph, *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea: Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof*, Ps. xli. 1, 2, 3. On the other hand, the wicked and ungodly man, continuing such, hath no proper resource, no solid comfort or support in a day of calamity, when all things seem black and dismal about him. For either he looketh upon them to be the effects of a *wild chance*, or *blind necessity*, which cannot possibly be the object of a rational trust and confidence, and which leaves no room for hope, but in that which nature hath an abhorrence of,

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an utter extinction of being: or, he apprehendeth them to be the just judgments of the wise and righteous Governor of the world, whom he hath offended by his sins. And vain it is to brave it against the wrath of heaven. Not to fear creatures like ourselves, in a just cause, argueth a noble and manly fortitude: but not to fear God, the Almighty Lord of the Universe, is not courage, but madness. The only proper thing which remaineth for such persons to do, and it is what reason, as well as Scripture, directeth to, is to humble themselves deeply under the mighty hand of God, and to flee to his infinite mercy, through Jesus Christ, in a hearty compliance with the most reasonable and gracious terms which he hath appointed, for obtaining an interest in his grace and favour.

Upon the whole, the best thing that can be wished, for the honour of God, for the happiness of mankind, and for the real welfare of our country, is, that a hearty zeal for the knowlege and practice of our holy religion may have a revival among us: and that persons of all orders and conditions may join in contributing to promote its sacred interests. And notwithstanding the corruption too justly complained of, there are many, I am persuaded, among us, and may the number of them daily encrease, who are earnestly desirous to do this. Every man has it in his power to contribute something towards it, at least by endeavouring to *walk in a conversation becoming the Gospel*. But there are some persons who have peculiar advantages for doing honour

honour and service to Christianity. Those especially that are distinguished by their HIGH RANK, their FORTUNE and QUALITY, should make use of the influence this gives them for recommending and promoting true religion and virtue, which will add a lustre to their *titles* and *dignities*, and is one of the best ways they can take to shew their regard to the public happiness. MAGISTRATES should account it their duty and their honour to employ the authority they are invested with, for serving the interests of religion, and discountenancing vice and wickedness; since for this purpose they are appointed, that they *may be for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.* And it is then that their authority will have its proper influence, when it is strengthened by that of their own good example. But above all, they who are honoured with the character of the MINISTERS of the holy Jesus should make it the very business of their lives to spread and promote real vital Christianity, to instruct the people in its important doctrines, and build them up in their most holy faith, and to enforce upon them the excellent duties it enjoins, by all the powerful and most engaging motives which the Gospel sets before us. And that their instructions may have the proper effect, it highly concerneth them to keep themselves free from the *fashionable vices* and *follies* of the age, and to endeavour to be ensamples to their flocks, by a well-tempered zeal, piety, and charity, and the virtues of a holy life. Thus will they not only

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VII. only do the highest service to religion, but procure the greatest honour to themselves, and the most just veneration for their sacred character, which, where it is not disgraced by a conduct unworthy of it, naturally demandeth the esteem and regard of all the true friends to religion and virtue.

For these valuable and excellent purposes, may the God of all grace pour forth his holy Spirit upon all orders and degrees of men in these nations, that, as they bear the honourable name of Christians, they may *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; and, *being filled with the knowlege of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.*

I may be thought perhaps to have insisted too largely upon these things. But I cannot but think, that one of the principal things which ought to be proposed in books written in defence of Christianity, should be not merely to promote the speculative belief of it, but to engage men to that which is the main design of its excellent doctrines, as well as precepts, a holy and a virtuous practice.

I am, dear and worthy Sir,

Dublin, Feb. 6,
1756.

Your most affectionate

And obliged Friend and Servant,

JOHN LELAND.



A N

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T O T H E

View of the Deistical Writers,

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S U P P L E M E N T .

N. B. *The larger figures, I, II, III. are designed to signify the First, Second, and Third Volume: and the smaller, the pages of the Volume referred to.*

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