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THE
Theological and Miscellaneous
WORKS

OF
JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL. D. F.R.S. &c.

WITH
NOTES,
BY THE EDITOR.



VOLUME XVI.

Containing

Discourses

RELATING TO

THE EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION,
FOUR DISCOURSES,

INTENDED TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED AT PHILADELPHIA,

AND

SINGLE DISCOURSES.

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OF THE SIXTEENTH VOLUME.

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RELATING TO THE

EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION,

DELIVERED

IN THE CHURCH OF THE UNIVERSALISTS,

AT

PHILADELPHIA, 1796, 1797.

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DISCOURSES

RELATING TO THE

EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION,

DELIVERED IN

The Church of the Universalists,

AT PHILADELPHIA,

1796, 1797.

AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF MANY OF THE HEARERS,

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.

1 *Peter* iii. 15.

[*Philadelphia*, 1796, 1797.]



TO

JOHN ADAMS,

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.*

DEAR SIR,

THE happiness I have had, of your acquaintance and correspondence ever since your embassy to England,† our common friendship for Dr. Price,‡ the ardent friend of liberty and of America, your steady attachment to the cause of Christianity, the favourable attention you gave to the following Discourses, when they were delivered, and the wish you expressed that they might be published,§ induced me to take the liberty to dedicate them to you.

Statesmen who have the firmness of mind to profess themselves *Christians*, and who have a just sense of the importance of Christianity, are not numerous; and those of them who adopt a *rational Christianity*, the evidences and doc-

* To which office he had been elected in 1789, on the first *Presidency* of Washington. The latter "declining to be considered as a candidate for the third election," Mr. Adams, in 1797, was chosen *President*, and Mr. Jefferson *Vice-President*. In 1801, Mr. Jefferson was elected *President*, in preference to Mr. Adams, whose administration (see Vol. IX. p. 5, *Note* †) was become very unpopular. That gentleman commenced his public life at Boston, in 1770, as a Barrister. In 1776, he strenuously supported the Declaration of Independence. In 1788, with Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jay, he signed at Paris, the *Definitive Treaty of Peace*, between Great Britain and the United States, when Mr. David Hartley was the British Commissioner. See *New An. Reg.* IV. p. (114;) Dr. Holmes's *American Annals*, 1808, II. pp. 246, 293, 378, 393, 404, 405, 410, 419.

† In 1787. Mr. Adams, during this embassy, published his "Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States."

‡ On whose ministry, at the Gravel-Pit Meeting, Hackney, Mr. Adams, while Ambassador, frequently attended.

§ "These discourses—attracted much attention, and created an interest in the subject which, there is reason to believe, has produced lasting effects." The "Lectures were attended by very crowded audiences, including most of the members of the Congress of the United States, at that time assembled at Philadelphia, and of the executive officers of the Government." Mr. Priestley's *Continuation*, 8vo. p. 190; 12mo. p. 171.

Philadelphia appears to have been a central station of the *Universalists*, in whose church these *Discourses* were delivered. Dr. Holmes says, that, in 1787, "a Universal Church was founded at Boston;" and that, in 1791, "the Universal Churches in the United States agreed on their articles of faith, at Philadelphia." *American Annals*, II. pp. 387, 395.

There appears to have been a new meeting-house erected for this religious society, about the time of the delivery of these *Discourses*. Mr. Wansley says, "Dr. Priestley preached a sermon, on the opening of the Universalist Church, at which almost every member of Congress attended." *Excursion to the United States*, Ed. 2, 1798, p. 203.

trines of which will bear to be submitted to the test of reason, in this age, in which, while many are carried away by the prevailing tide of infidelity, others oppose it by an enthusiasm which disclaims the aid of reason, are still fewer, and are, therefore, entitled to the greater esteem of those who entertain the same sentiments.

We shall, no doubt, ourselves be ranked with enthusiasts, by those unbelievers (and by far the greater part of them are of this class) who have become so without any just knowledge of the subject, or investigation of the evidence of revelation. But the contempt of such persons, whatever rank they may hold in the political or the learned world, is itself contemptible. Every serious inquirer after truth will respect other serious inquirers, though their opinions should differ ever so much. But the censures of *men*, whether well or ill-informed, will appear of little moment to those who look to the decision of the impartial Judge of all. And, mindful of his solemn warning, we must not be *ashamed of him*, or of his cause, in any circumstances, however unfavourable, lest he should be ashamed of us at a time when his favour will be of infinitely greater moment to us than any thing else.

You and I, Sir, are advancing to a period of life in which these views naturally open, more and more, upon us. We find this world receding, and another fast approaching, and we feel the importance of having something to look to, when the present scene of things shall be closed. And whatever we value for ourselves, it behoves us to recommend to others. You will, therefore, rejoice if an exhibition of the Evidences of Revealed Religion, such as is contained in these Discourses, should produce any effect.

It is happy that, in this country, religion has no connexion with civil power, a circumstance which gives the cause of truth all the advantage that its best friends can desire.* But religion is of as much use to statesmen as to any individuals whatever. Christian principles will best enable men to devote their time, their talents, their lives, and, what is often a greater sacrifice still, their characters, to the public good; and in public life this will often be, in a great measure, necessary.

Let a man attain to eminence of any kind, and by whatever means, even the most honourable, he will be exposed to envy and jealousy, and, of course, he must expect to

* See Vol. VIII. pp. 5, 6; Vol. IX. p. 5; Vol. X. p. 523.

meet with calumny and abuse. It was the lot of our Saviour himself, and it is a part of the wise order of Providence that it should always be so. For, besides that it is of the greatest importance to the community, that every person in a public station should have the strongest motive for the greatest circumspection, unmixed praise is what no human mind can bear without injury. An undue elation, which would soon be found to be as hurtful to himself as unpleasant to others, would be the necessary consequence of it. And what principles can enable a man to consult the real good of his fellow-citizens, without being diverted from his generous purpose by a regard to their opinion concerning him, like those of the Christian who can be satisfied with the approbation of his own mind, (which, of course, draws after it that of his Maker,) and who, though not insensible to due praise, can despise calumny, and, steadily overlooking every thing that is intermediate, patiently wait for the day of final retribution? As these principles enabled the apostles to *rejoice in tribulation* and persecution of every kind, so the virtuous statesman will not complain of that abuse which operates so favourably both with respect to his own mind, and the interests of his country. They are Christian principles that best enable a man to bear this necessary and excellent discipline, and form the truly disinterested and magnanimous patriot.

I cannot conclude this address, without expressing the satisfaction I feel in the government which has afforded me an asylum from the persecution which obliged me to leave England,* persuaded that its principles, being fundamentally good, instead of tending, like the old governments of Europe, to greater abuse, it will tend to continual melioration. Still, however, my utmost wish is to live as a stranger among you, with liberty to attend, without interruption, to my favourite pursuits; wishing well to my native country, as I do to all the world, and hoping that its interests, and those of this country, will be inseparable, and, consequently, that peace between them will be perpetual.

I am, with the greatest esteem,

Dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Philadelphia, May, 1796.

* See a later, and less favourable opinion of Mr. Adams's administration, Vol. IX. p. 5.

P R E F A C E.

THE Discourses contained in this volume may be considered as supplemental to those which I delivered in England relating to the same subject, just before I left that country,* and which have been re-printed in this. Being requested to preach in this city, I thought I could not make choice of any subjects more unexceptionable, or more useful, than of such as relate to *the Evidences of Revealed Religion*, in an age abounding with unbelievers, many of whom have become so merely for want of better information. Being unwilling to go over the same ground that I had been upon before, I have made these Discourses interfere as little as possible with the former. Some of the same observations will, no doubt, be found in both; but they are not many, and of such particular importance, that they cannot be too much impressed on the minds of Christians.

As I had no intention of publishing these Discourses, at least at this time, I did not note the authorities I have made use of in them, as there could not have been any propriety or use in reciting them from the pulpit; and being at a distance from my library, I cannot add them now. But they are such as, I am confident, no person at all acquainted with the subjects, will call in question. They were by no means originally collected by myself. The far greater part of them have been frequently quoted, and their accuracy never disputed. I had little to do besides collecting, arranging, and applying them, in a manner somewhat more adapted to my present purpose. The greater part of them will be found in Leland's *Necessity of Revelation*,† Young's *Discourses on Revelation the Cure of Superstition*,‡ and the *Letters of some Jews to Voltaire*,§ all which works I would recommend to

* See Vol. XV. pp. 191—362.

† See Vol. II. p. 65.

‡ There can be no doubt that the Author here designed the following work: "An Historical Illustration on Idolatrous Corruptions in Religion from the beginning of the World; and on the Methods taken by Divine Providence in reforming them," 1734, 2 Vols. 8vo. by *Arthur Young*, a clergyman of the Church of England. I have had frequent occasion (in Vols. II. XI.) to quote this work, which abounds in references to the earliest authorities.

§ Translated from the French. *Dublin*, 1777. See Vol. II. p. 69; *Monthly Review*, 1778, LXX. p. 177. Of the original, which first appeared in 1769, the 6th edition, enlarged and corrected from the author's MSS., was published à *Paris*, An. XIII.

the attentive perusal of my readers. The doctrines of the Heathen philosophers were almost all copied *verbatim* from Brucker's *History of Philosophy*, abridged by Dr. Enfield, a truly valuable, accurate, and well digested work. The account of the Grecian oracles, and various of their superstitions, will be found in Potter's *Antiquities of Greece*, a common but most excellent work.

The *Second Part* of Mr. Paine's *Age of Reason* being published in this city during the delivery of these Discourses, I thought proper to animadvert upon such parts of it as appeared to me most deserving of notice. I had once thought of replying to this part of the work more at large,

1805, in 3 vols. 8vo. under the following title: "Lettres de quelques Juifs Portugais, Allemands et Polonois, à M. de Voltaire." Prefixed to this edition is "Notice sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de M. L'Abbé Guénéé," the learned Christian who personated, on this occasion, certain disciples of Moses.

Antony Guénéé, who was born at *Etampes*, Nov. 23, 1717, of poor parents, owed chiefly to himself his early education. Having studied at Paris, he became a member of that university, and in 1741, succeeded *Rollin* as Professor of Rhetoric in the college of *Plessis*. After twenty years he retired on a pension, designing to devote himself almost exclusively to theological studies. He now diligently cultivated *Greek* and *Hebrew*; but found the knowledge of several modern languages requisite to his pursuits. He therefore travelled into Italy, Germany, and England. Considering that religion had been in no place more sharply assailed or more powerfully defended than in that country, he determined not only to read the best English works in defence of Revelation, but to translate some of them.

On his return to *Plessis*, M. Guénéé published Lord Lyttleton's *Observations*, of which he has sufficiently declared his opinion, by entitling the translation "La Religion Chrétienne démontrée par la Conversion et l'Apostolat de Saint Paul." He afterwards published translations of *West on the Resurrection of Jesus*, and of *Sherlock's Trial of the Witnesses*. The *Letters* appear to have been his next publications. *Voltaire* discovered the author, and in his correspondence with *D'Alembert*, Dec. 8, 1776, thus admits his talents, shewing at the same time that he had felt his severity: "Le Secrétaire Juif, nommé Guénéé, n'est pas sans esprit et sans connoissances; mais il est malin comme un singe. Il mord jusqu'au sang, en faisant semblant de baiser la main."

M. Guénéé was drawn from his retirement, at the instance of his friend Abbé *Marie*, to be joined with him in the education of the two sons of Count *D'Artois*, now *Monsieur*; the youngest of whom, the Duke de *Berri*, has just closed, from a cruel assassination, a life more worthy of a courtly education than of such a preceptor. At Paris, M. Guénéé read to the Academy of *Inscriptions* and *Belles-Lettres*, of which he was a member, four *Memoirs* on the fertility of *Judea*. In one of these he thus solves the difficulty from the present state of that country, often proposed, and especially by *Voltaire*; "Dieu, qui s'étoit engagé de donner aux Hébreux un pays fertile, ne leur avoit pas promis qu'il le seroit toujours, même lors qu'ils auroient cessé d'en être les maîtres ou les cultivateurs." These *Memoirs* appear in the latter volumes of the transactions of the Academy.

The storm of the *Revolution* is represented by his biographer as having peculiarly affected M. Guénéé, by depriving him of his pupils, whom his age would not allow him to follow into exile. He retired to *Fontainebleau*, where he placidly expired the 27th of November, 1803, aged 86. His mind and person are thus agreeably described: "Modeste, simple et affable, il faisoit aimer en lui le savant, le Chrétien et l'homme vertueux. Sa belle âme étoit peinte sur son visage; et la vieillesse, loin d'en altérer les traits caractéristiques, leur prêtoit un nouveau charme, par l'impression plus frappante de cette bonté qui inspire à-la-fois de l'intérêt et du respect." See *Notice sur la Vie*, pp. 6—16.

as I did to the First Part; but I afterwards thought that assertions so extravagant and ill-founded as Mr. Paine's generally are, may be safely left to have their full effect, as it can only be upon the minds of persons so extremely ignorant and prejudiced, that no refutation would be attended to by them, so that it would only be throwing *pearls before swine*.

So great is Mr. Paine's ignorance with respect to subjects of this nature, that he maintains, that the book of *Job* has "all the circumstantial evidences of being an original book of the Gentiles,"* principally because he finds in it the mention of *Orion*, *Arcturus*, and the *Pleiades*, which are Greek words; when these terms occur only in translations, those in the original being quite different. Surely he had access to some unbelievers, who could have informed him better.

Without deigning to reply to any thing that had been advanced against the First Part of his work, Mr. Paine in this proceeds with an air of insolent triumph, as if all the advocates of Revelation lay prostrate at his feet, whereas they are only looking down upon him, and feel no emotions but those of pity for himself and his deluded followers, *the blind led by the blind*.

There are, however, unbelievers more ignorant than Mr. Paine. M. *Volney*, *Laquinio*, and others in *France*, say that there never was such a person as Jesus Christ, and therefore, though they may have heard that there are such books as those of the *New Testament*, I conclude that they cannot have read them. Surely such ignorance as this does not mark the *Age of Reason*.

I have more than once observed, that the disbelief of revelation makes the belief of the being of God of no practical use, and that it has, in *France*, led to speculative Atheism. In a tract published at *Paris* in 1793, intitled *A Letter to a Sensible Woman*, is the following paragraph:

"Theism is an opinion respectable for the genius and the virtues of men who have embraced it," (referring in a note to *Socrates* and *Rousseau*,) "no less than for the advantage which this first step towards reason, on abandoning the prejudices of infancy, has been of to mankind. But, after all, it is but a first step, and no persons would stop there, if they would frankly give way to the impulse they have received. No person remains in this intermediate system but through

* *Age of Reason*, Pt. ii. p. 55.

want of reflection, timidity, passion, or obstinacy. Time, experience, and an impartial examination of our ideas, will undeceive us. *Voltaire*, who was long the apostle of Theism, professed to doubt towards the close of his life, and repented that he had been too confident. Many others have experienced the same.”*

If, then, any person be in a state of mind in which he is shocked at the idea of absolute *Atheism*, let him pause before he abandon *revelation*, and give way to what this writer calls *the first impulse*. But on no account let any obstruction be laid in the way of free inquiry. With the apostle, (1 *Thess.* v. 21,) let us *prove all things; and hold fast* only that which shall appear to be *good*.

I might have given a curious counterpart to the *hypotheses* of the ancient philosophers in those of the most distinguished of the modern unbelievers. For many of their opinions concerning the origin of the universe, its subsequent revolutions, and other subjects connected with religion and morals, are not less wild, incoherent, and absurd; as every theory must be that excludes the belief of a God, and a superintending providence. This undertaking, however, has been executed with equal truth and ability in a French work, entitled *Les Helviennes, ou Lettres Provinciales Philosophiques*, in five volumes, 12mo. 1784. They are called *Provincial Letters* in imitation of those of that title by the famous *Pascal*, in which he exposed the absurdities of the principles of the Jesuits, a work of genuine humour,† to which this is, in many respects, not inferior. It is therefore adapted to afford equal entertainment and instruction.

From this excellent work it will be evident that the rejection of revealed religion will be attended with all that dissoluteness of morals for which the ancient Heathens were remarkable, there being no vice for which some of the most eminent of modern philosophical unbelievers have not been advocates; and therefore that, in an advanced state of society, human reason has never proved a sufficient barrier against vice. It will also be evident, that a propensity to the unrestrained indulgence of all the passions has been the principal cause of the prevailing disposition to throw off the salutary restraints of religion.

Not only are the great Christian virtues of humility, the forgiveness of injuries, and the loving of enemies, excluded

* *Letter*, p. 25. (P.)

† See Vol. V. p. 358.

from the class of virtues, and a spirit of pride and revenge encouraged; not only is all virtue reduced to mere self-love, the great end of human life represented to be the pursuit of pleasure in the lowest sense of the word, and suicide recommended when this object is no longer attainable; but the very barrier between men and brutes has been thrown down by many eminent unbelievers.

All the ancient legislators, even among the Heathens, considered the laws of *marriage* as the first step towards civilization, and the conjugal and parental relations as, what no doubt they are, the chief source of the sweets of social life. But many modern unbelievers openly plead not only for an unbounded liberty of divorce, but a community of women, and make very light of the vices most contrary to nature. What is this but reducing men even lower than the state of brutes? And what can we expect from the natural operation of these principles, but the prevalence of those vices which the apostle in his second epistle to Timothy enumerates as a symptom of the approach of *the last times*, which are elsewhere described as exceedingly calamitous, *2 Tim.* iii. 1, 2: "This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves," &c. The apostle *Peter* also says, (*2 Ep.* iii. 3, 4,) "Knowing this—that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" &c. Reflecting on these things, we may well say with the evangelists, after they had related our Saviour's predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the various signs of its approach, "Let him that readeth, understand." (*Mat.* xxiv. 15; *Mark* xiii. 14.)

Unbelievers often complain of the difference of opinion among Christians, but their own opinions, even on the subject of Christianity, are as various. The celebrated M. D' Alembert in his *Letters to the late King of Prussia*, says, "It appears evident to me, as it does to your Majesty, that Christianity in its origin was nothing but pure Deism, that Jesus Christ, the author of it, was only a kind of philosopher, the enemy of superstition, of persecution, and of priests; who preached benevolence and justice, and reduced the whole law to the love of our neighbour, and the worship of God in spirit and in truth, and that afterwards, St. Paul, then the fathers of the church, and lastly the councils, unhappily supported by the sovereigns, changed this religion. I therefore think it would be doing great service to

mankind to reduce Christianity to its primitive state, confining it to preaching to the people the doctrine of a God, rewarding virtue and punishing vice, who abhors superstition, detests intolerance, and who requires of men no other worship than that of loving and assisting one another.”*

The scheme of reducing Christianity to its primitive state, is, no doubt, excellent, and this writer's idea of that state is not far from the truth. But his assertion that Jesus Christ taught *pure Deism*, is altogether unfounded. If there be any truth in his history, he taught the doctrine of a *resurrection*, and supported it by miracles, and Paul was far from making any addition to the doctrine of his Master. He had too many enemies among Christians to have had that in his power. How Christianity was corrupted afterwards is well known, and I have shewn the progress of it in my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. [Vol. V.]

Since the writing of this Preface, I have been favoured with a sight of the Third Volume of *Asiatic Researches*,† a work which promises to throw great light on the mythology and early history of several ancient nations; and one passage in it, containing a quotation from an ancient Hindoo writer, perhaps nearly as old as Moses, is so curious in itself, and such a confirmation of one part of his history, that I am persuaded my readers will be pleased with the communication of it. The work is entitled *Padma-purán*, and the translation of it is by Sir William Jones.‡ Though

* *Œuvres Posthumes*, [de *Fred. III.*,] *Tom. XIV.* p. 105. (*P.*) *D'Alembert* probably referred to the following passage in a letter from *Frederick*, which I find in another collection :

“ Nos religions d'aujourd'hui ressemblent aussi peu à celle du Christ qu'à celle des Iroquois. Jésus étoit Juif et nous brûlons les Juifs; Jésus prêchoit la patience, et nous persécutons; Jésus prêchoit une bonne morale, et nous ne la pratiquons pas. Jésus n'a point établi de dogmes, et les conciles y ont bien pourvu. Enfin, un Chrétien du troisième siècle n'est plus ressemblant à un Chrétien du premier. Jésus étoit proprement un Essénien; il étoit imbu de la morale des Esséniens, qui tient beaucoup de celle de Zénon. Sa religion étoit un pur Déisme, et voyez comme nous l'avons brodée. Cela étant, si je défends la religion du Christ, je défends celle de tous les Philosophes, et je vous sacrifie tous les dogmes qui ne sont pas de lui.

“ Des prêtres ayant remarqué quel pouvoir leur crédit idéal leur donnoit sur l'esprit des peuples, ils ont fait servir la religion d'instrument à leur ambition; mais si leur politique a défiguré une chose qui, dans son institution, n'étoit pas mauvaise, cela ne prouve autre chose, sinon que la religion Chrétienne a eu le sort de toutes les choses humaines, qui se pervertissent par des abus. Quand on veut donc se récrier contre cette religion, il faut désigner les temps dont on parle et distinguer les abus de l'institution.” *Du Roi*, 18 Octobre, 1770. *Œuvres de D'Alembert*, à Paris, An. XIII. 1805, XVII. pp. 196, 197.

† “ Or Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal [1783], for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature of Asia.”

‡ President of the Society; in his *Remarks on Essay XIII.* “On Egypt and other Countries, by Lieutenant Francis Wilford.” *Asiat. Res.* 1792, *Calcutta*, III. pp. 463—468.

the narrative is in substance the same with that of Moses, they differ in so many circumstances, that it is evident the writers did not copy from one another.

“ 1. To SATYAVARMAN, that sovereign of the *whole* earth, were born three sons; the eldest SHARMA; then C'HARMA;* and *thirdly*, JYAPETI by name. 2. They were all men of good morals, excellent in virtue, and *virtuous* deeds, skilled in the use of weapons to strike with, or to be thrown; brave men, eager for victory in battle. 3. But SATYAVARMAN being continually delighted with devout meditation, and seeing his sons fit for *dominion*, laid upon them the burden of government.

“ 4. Whilst he remained honouring and satisfying the Gods, and priests, and kine: One day, by the act of destiny, the king, having drank mead, 5. Became senseless, and lay asleep naked: then was he seen by C'HARMA, and by him were his two brothers called. 6. To whom he said: What now has befallen? In what state is this our sire? By those two was he hidden with clothes, and called to his senses again and again.

“ 7. Having recovered his intellect, and perfectly knowing what had passed, he cursed C'HARMA, saying: Thou shalt be the servant of servants; 8. And since thou wast a laugher in their presence, from laughter thou shalt acquire a name. Then he gave to SHARMA the wide domain on the south of the snowy mountain, 9. And to JYAPETI he gave all on the north of the snowy mountain; but He, by the power of religious contemplation, attained supreme bliss.” †

Sir William Jones had before advanced a conjecture that the Afghans might be of Hebrew extraction, and part of the ten tribes that were carried into captivity by the Assyrians. In his *Anniversary Discourse*, ‡ prefixed to this volume, he says, “ There is very solid ground for believing that the *Afghans* descended from the *Jews*; because they sometimes, in confidence, avow that unpopular origin, which in general they sedulously conceal, and which other *Muselmans* positively assert; because *Hazaret*, which appears to be the *Asereth* of ESDRAS, is one of their territories; and, principally because their language is evidently a dialect of the scriptural *Chaldaick*.” §

Lastly, after reciting the unfavourable character given of

* Lieutenant Wilford observes, that “ C'HARMA and SHARMA are, in the vulgar dialects, pronounced *C'ham*, and *Sham*.” (P.) *Ibid.* p. 312.

† *Ibid.* pp. 465, 466.

‡ “ Delivered 24th February, 1791.”

§ *Ibid.* p. 6. (P.) See Vol. XV. p. 287, Note.

the Jews by their enemies, and acceding to it, for which I am far from seeing sufficient reason, he says, "They had the peculiar merit, among all races of men under heaven, of preserving a rational and pure system of devotion, in the midst of wild polytheism, inhuman or obscene rites, and a dark labyrinth of errors, produced by ignorance, and supported by interested fraud. Theological inquiries," he adds, "are no part of my present subject; but I cannot refrain from adding, that the collection of tracts which we call from their excellence, *the Scriptures*, contain, independently of a divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass from all other books that were ever composed in any age, or in any idiom. The two parts of which the Scriptures consist, are connected by a chain of compositions" (meaning the prophetic books) "which bear no resemblance in form or style to any that can be produced from the stores of *Grecian, Indian, Persian*, or even *Arabian* learning: the antiquity of those compositions no man doubts; and the unstrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication, is a solid ground of belief, that they were genuine productions, and consequently inspired."*

When I compare the decided opinion of such a man as Sir William Jones, in which all men of learning will concur, with the confident assertions of Mr. Paine, who says that the books of scripture are but modern compositions, I think of a man either really blind, or wilfully shutting his eyes, and declaring that *there is nothing to be seen*.

* *Asiatic Researches*, III. p. 15. Under these impressions, Sir W. Jones, in the conclusion of his *Dissertation*, 1784, *On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India*, thus proposes to attempt "the general extension" of *Christianity* "in Hindustan:"

"We may assure ourselves that neither *Muselmans* nor *Hindus* will ever be converted by any mission from the Church of *Rome*, or from any other church; [see Vol. IV. p. 501, *Note* ;] and the only human mode, perhaps, of making so great a revolution will be to translate into *Sanscrit* and *Persian* such chapters of the prophets, particularly of *Isaiah*, as are indisputably evangelical; together with one of the Gospels, and a plain prefatory discourse, containing full evidence of the very distant ages in which the predictions themselves, and the history of the divine person predicted, were severally made public; and then quietly to disperse the work among the well-educated natives; with whom if in due time it failed of producing very salutary fruit by its natural influence, we could only lament at more than ever the strength of prejudice and the weakness of unassisted reason." *Dissertations*, 1792, I. p. 64.

A
VIEW

OF

THE EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION.

DISCOURSE I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION.

PROVERBS i. 7 :

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; but fools hate knowledge and instruction.

By the fear of God we may very well understand religion in general, and there can be no doubt but that by religion, Solomon meant such principles of it as he held to be the best founded, or the revelation by Moses. And as I propose, in a series of Discourses, to give a view of the Evidences of Revealed Religion, I shall in this, shew that the subject is of *importance*, that the knowledge we receive by means of it, is of real value, tending to exalt the character, and add to the happiness of man. Indeed, if this be not the use of religion, it would not be worth our while to make any inquiry into its evidences ; because on that supposition, true or false, it would be an useless and insignificant thing. The question is the more deserving of an attentive consideration, as many, I imagine most, unbelievers maintain, that religion is not merely an useless, but a hurtful thing, debasing the mind of man, and adding to the miseries of his existence, so that it is rendering him an essential service to free his mind from it.

Now, what is it that the friends of religion say is so beneficial, and its adversaries so mischievous, to man ? The principles of religion are acknowledged to consist in the belief of the being, the perfections and providence of God here, and of a future state of retribution hereafter. The man who believes these things is said to have religion, and the man who disbelieves them, who thinks that there is no God, no providence, or no future state, whatever he be in other

respects, whether he be virtuous or vicious, cannot be said to have any *religion*, properly so called. Let us, then, consider the nature of these principles, and what effect they *must* have on those who seriously believe them. That principles or opinions, of some kind or other, have real influence on the general character, and on the conduct and happiness of human life, cannot be denied. Man is a thinking being. All his actions proceed from some thought or design, and his actions and conduct are certainly of importance, issuing in a better or worse state of his circumstances. If the maxims he acts upon, and the objects of his pursuit be just, and if his measures be well laid, he improves his condition; whereas, if his maxims of conduct be false and fallacious, if the objects of his pursuit be unworthy of him, or his conduct be ill-directed, he must, in consequence, expect to suffer.

It also cannot be denied, that what is called *virtue*, or the right government of the passions, adds to the dignity of man, and to the happiness both of individuals and of society; and religion certainly comes in aid of virtue. The man who follows the dictates of passion and present inclination, without reflecting on the tendency and issue of his conduct, is sure to involve himself in difficulties. The unrestrained indulgence of the natural appetites, both shortens life, by introducing diseases and premature death, and makes a short life miserable; whereas, moderation and discretion is the source of the truest and most lasting enjoyment. Manhood, conducted by mere passion and inclination, without foresight of consequences, is only a protracted childhood; and what father is there who thinks it wise to indulge a *child* in all its varying humours? It would soon destroy itself. And equally destructive and ruinous would be the conduct of a man who should make no more use of his reason, but prefer his present gratification to future good, which is the general description of vice.

Could the most intemperate of men have a clear foresight of all the disorders and wretchedness that will be the sure, or very probable consequence of his conduct, with respect to his health and life, and also of the poverty and contempt which generally attend that mode of life, whatever might be his fondness for any species of sensual indulgence, he would certainly restrain himself. Also, how greedy soever any person might be of riches, could he foresee all the anxiety and risk attending a course of fraudulent practices, and the little enjoyment men have of dishonest gain, he would

be content to be less rich and more happy. The ambition of *Alexander*, of *Cæsar*, or of *Charles* the Twelfth, of Sweden, would have been restrained, if they could have seen the whole progress and termination of their schemes.

1. Now, religion both extends the foresight of man, and puts him under the direction of a Being whose foresight is greater than that of any man. When a man loses his natural parent and guide, religion supplies him with another, superior in all respects to the former. By religion he puts himself under the direction of the Supreme Being, his true parent and best friend, on whose wisdom he may always rely, and in whose guidance he is sure to find happiness. Any rule of life and conduct, drawn up by men like ourselves, may be erroneous, being founded on imperfect views of things. The best parent may err in the management of his favourite child, whose welfare he has most at heart. But the great Being who made man can never err. The observance of his precepts must lead to happiness; and the full persuasion of this, which religion cannot fail to give us, puts an end to all doubt and uncertainty about what we ought to do, superseding our own judgment, and silencing all the evasions of passion and prejudice. And this alone is a circumstance of unspeakable advantage.

A person bent upon any particular gratification, however criminal, will make a thousand apologies for the innocence, and perhaps the public utility, of it, which his own reason, biassed, of course, by inclination, might never be able to see the fallacy of; which, however, the authority of an acknowledged master will silence at once. What has not the ingenuity of libertines pleaded in favour not only of fornication, but even of adultery; and by what specious names have those gross offences against the order, the decency, and peace of society been not only covered from ignominy, but even recommended, as indications of a man's spirit, as a source of real pleasure to some, and only an imaginary injury to others! How many persons have actually made their boast of actions of other kinds for which they deserved to be banished from all civilized society! How has murder itself, in the form of a *duel*, and in some countries in that of private assassination, been more than justified, from false notions of honour, the supposed dignity of revenge, and the meanness of submitting to insults and wrongs!

We see that men who have no belief in religion actually commit these crimes, and, indeed, any other, without

remorse. But this can never be the case where there is a principle of religion, where it is really believed that the authority of the Supreme Being has interposed, and expressly, as by a voice from heaven, absolutely forbidden the practices above-mentioned, how ingeniously soever apologized for; saying to man, *Thou shalt not commit murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, &c. &c.*

2. Many persons, influenced by regard to their reputation, will refrain, with sufficient care, from such actions as they know would dishonour them in the opinion of their fellow-creatures; but without a sense of religion they would feel little or no remorse in committing any crime with respect to which they had no suspicion of being detected and exposed. Religion is a guard against even secret vices. The belief that nothing is concealed from the eye of God, that he sees what man cannot see, discerning even the thoughts and inclinations of the heart, will make a man as careful not to offend in private as in public. When the eye of man is not upon him, he well knows there is an eye that always sees him, and that, though he might escape the censure of man, he has no means of escaping the righteous judgment of God.

Not only public censure, but other punishments, often fail to be inflicted on the guilty in this world. A man, therefore, who has no belief in another, may be tempted to risk a great deal with a reasonable prospect of impunity. For, of the many crimes that are committed in human society, only a few are actually punished. But this avails nothing to a believer in religion and a future state. He knows that there is a day coming in which God will judge the world in righteousness, and that no vice, though undetected and unpunished here, will escape animadversion and punishment hereafter.

Many offenders escape punishment in this world by means of their power, as well as their address. The rich and the great have, in too many cases, little to fear from the most flagrant violations of justice with respect to the poor, who are without money and without friends; and the kings and tyrants of the earth, to gratify their revenge, their lust of power, or mere caprice, ravage whole nations, and introduce an incalculable mass of misery among their fellow-creatures, without the most distant apprehensions of suffering in their own persons in consequence of it. But all this ends with the present scene. In the future, the greatest

monarchs will appear on a footing with the meanest of rational beings. No wealth or power will be of any avail then, and the knowledge of this may well be supposed to restrain men from those violences and oppressions of which they now are the authors. Thus is religion a powerful auxiliary of virtue, and thereby contributes to the good order and peace of society, as well as to the regulation of the private passions, and the happiness of individuals.

3. Religion is of no less use with respect to the troubles of life, than the duties of it. That, with a great preponderance of happiness, (which sufficiently proves the goodness of God,) there is a considerable mixture of misery in the world, is what no person who is at all acquainted with it, will deny. We need not adopt the melancholy despairing language of *Job*, [xiv. 1.] and say, "*Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble,*" or that he "*is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward*" [Ch. v. 7]; for this gives an idea of a preponderance of misery, as the proper and intended lot of man. But certainly there is in the world, sickness as well as health, pain as well as pleasure, and, on many accounts, grief as well as joy. Industry is not always successful, marriages are not always happy, children are not always a blessing to their parents; and other connexions in life, which are generally sources of pleasures, are not always so. There are also many evils against which no human prudence can guard us, as famine, from inclement seasons, and pestilential disorders, which we are as yet unable to investigate, or prevent. All countries are more or less subject to hurricanes, tempests, and earthquakes; and the happiest and longest life must terminate in death. It is in vain to say, with the *Stoics*, that what we suffer by these means are no evils, or that we do not feel them.

But when Nature abandons us to grief and despair, Religion steps in to our consolation, assuring us, that nothing can befall us, or others, without the will and appointment of God, our heavenly Father, and that whatever he wills is always wisest and best, whether, at the time, we can see it to be so or not. As the *Psalmist* says, [Ps. xcvi. 2,] *though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."* Religion assures us that, if by means of the evils of life, God chastises us, it is with the affection of a parent, and always for our good. We can then say, with the apostle, [Rom. viii. 28,] that "*all things (will be made to) work*

together for good to them that love God," that, in this case, *life or death*, things *prosperous*, or things *adverse*, are equally *ours*, and will terminate in our advantage. With this persuasion we may bear all the evils of life, numerous and heavy as they sometimes are, not only with patience and resignation, but even with satisfaction and pleasure, *rejoicing*, as the apostles did, in all kinds of *tribulation*.

4. But religion is found to be of the greatest value at the close of life, opening to us a better prospect than that on which we then shut our eyes. Without religion all that the greatest philosopher can pretend to is, that he has had enough of life, and that he obeys the call of nature without reluctance. But even this, if he has really enjoyed life, is more than he can say with truth. If he has enjoyed life, it must be sweet to him, and consequently, he cannot but wish to prolong or resume it. A good man may, in one sense, have had enough of life, and, from the fatigues and uniformity of it, be as it were weary of it; but it is only such weariness as is felt at the close of an active, well-spent day, when we wish for rest, but with the hope of rising with renewed vigour and activity, and with the prospect of greater enjoyment in the morning. That morning to a Christian is the resurrection to a new and better life. Of this, nature gives us no hope; but religion the greatest certainty.

According to the principles of religion, this world is only the infancy of our being. This life is only a school, in which we are training up for a better and immortal life, and all the events and discipline of it are calculated to prepare us for entering with advantage upon it; so that a good man, with the faith and hope of a Christian, can bid adieu to this world not only with tranquillity, but with satisfaction and triumph; singing the triumphant song, [*1 Cor. xv. 55,*] "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

When Christians lose their friends and relations by death, they do not grieve as the Heathen who have no hope; but commit them with confidence to the hands of their merciful Creator, whose views in calling them into being were not confined to this present life. He believes that this his separation from his virtuous friends is but for a time, and a short time, and he has no doubt of meeting them again, and in more favourable circumstances for enjoying their society, than ever. There the affectionate parent will meet his beloved children, and children their parents, not worn down by affliction, disease, or hard labour, incapable of enjoyment,

which is often the case in this world ; but with all their faculties in full vigour, and superior to whatever they were before ; every thing valuable and amiable in them improved, and their imperfections done away ; so that their society, which we shall never lose again, will be more desirable than ever. Compared with this solid ground of consolation under the troubles of life and the fears of death, what has mere reason or philosophy to offer ?

5. And it is a particular recommendation of religion, that both its teachings and consolations require no acuteness of intellect. They are level to the understandings of all men. As to the precepts of religion, they are thus summed up by the prophet :

And what doth Jehovah require of thee,
But to do justice and to love mercy,
And to be humble in walking with thy God ?*

In this short compass are comprised all the great duties of religion, and surely nothing can be more intelligible!

As to the consolations of religion, they are addressed to the common feelings and principles of human nature, such as men act upon every day. It is the expectation of distant good, as a balance to present evil. Religion does not require men to give up their ease, their fortunes, or their lives, for nothing ; but for a sufficient recompence. “Thou shalt be recompensed,” said our Saviour, [*Luke* xiv. 14,] “at the resurrection of the just.” All that is requisite is a stretch of thought, and a comprehension of mind, which shall enable men to contemplate a thing certainly future, as if it was present ; and by this means give it its proper value, in comparison with things present, which, in consequence of being so, are possessed of an undue advantage over them. But what things that are future lose in this respect, is balanced by their real magnitude and importance. “The things which are seen,” says the apostle, (2 *Cor.* iv. 18,) “are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal.” It is, therefore, the more easy, by a firm faith and a steady contemplation, to give them their just degree of estimation ; and to feel and act properly with respect to them ; as thousands and millions have actually done, who have cheerfully abandoned every thing in life, and life itself, when the retaining of them was incompatible with their great prospects beyond the grave.

* *Micah* vi. 8, *Newcome*. See Vol. XV. p. 275, Note *.

6. It is by habituating the mind to contemplate great and distant objects, that religion enlarges and ennobles the minds of men, advancing them farther beyond the state of children, who are only affected by things immediately present to them, and from the great bulk of mankind, who do indeed look before them, but not far. They can sow and plant one year, in hope of a return in the next, and they can expend their money in the purchase of goods, with a view to sell them to advantage in a future and distant market. Also, when they labour under any disorder, they can take disgusting medicines in the hope of a cure. But this is far short of looking to a world beyond the grave; laying up treasure in heaven; making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness here, in order to be received into everlasting habitations hereafter. This is done by the help of religion; which by this means makes a man a superior kind of being to what he was before.

If *great thoughts*, as Lord Bacon says, *make great minds*, how much superior must be that man who is habitually employed in the contemplation of God, of a providence, and a future state; who sees the hand of God in every thing, and receives all the dispensations of Providence with a contented and thankful heart; whose faith is not shaken by all the distress and calamity of which he is a witness, and all that himself, his friends, his country, or the world, may suffer; and who, when he comes to die, can look back with satisfaction, and forward with hope and joy; to the man who is either wholly ignorant of these great principles, or an unbeliever in them, whose views are bounded by what he sees in this life, and who can only say, [1 Cor. xv. 32,] "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"! To such persons life is indeed of little value. And it is no wonder that, under any particular pressure of trouble or disappointment, they throw it up, and put an end to their lives in despair.

7. Though I have represented the religious man as acting on plain and intelligible principles, and as overlooking present evils for the sake of future good, it by no means follows that he will be an interested character, and never love virtue for its own sake. It is by a rational self-interest that the most disinterested characters are formed. This admits of an easy illustration from what we know concerning the love of money. The greatest miser does not begin with the love of money as an ultimate object, or for its own sake, but only for the sake of the advantages it can procure him. And yet we see that it is possible, in a course of time, for men to

come to love money, and to employ all their powers, and all their time, in the acquisition of it, without giving the least attention to the use of it, and, indeed, without ever making any proper use of it at all; their ideas never going beyond the mere accumulation of it. Let any thing be pursued, though as a means, and in a course of time, it will come to be an end.

In like manner, let a man from any principle, habituate himself to respect the authority of God, to do good to others, and practise virtue in general, though, at first, with no other view than to his reward in a future state, and in time he will live virtuously, without giving any attention to his ultimate interest in it; and in this progress he will necessarily become as disinterestedly virtuous as it is possible, in the nature of things, for a man to be. He may begin with the mere *fear* of God, or a dread of his displeasure, but at length he will be actuated by the purest *love*, and an entire devotedness to his will, as such. He may begin with doing kind offices to others from any motive sufficient to produce the external action, but at length he will come with the apostle, [1 *Peter* i. 22,] *to love with a pure heart fervently*, taking the greatest pleasure in doing kind offices, without any idea, or expectation, of a return. He may at first abstain from sensual indulgence from a persuasion of what he may ultimately suffer in consequence of it, but in time he will have greater satisfaction in moderation than he ever had in excess, and he will readily and cheerfully do whatever he apprehends to be *right*, without asking *why*. The dictates of conscience will be with him a supreme rule of action.

This is that truly great and sublime character to which religion, and religion alone, can raise a man. Without the principles of religion, without *the fear of God*, which *Solomon* justly calls *the beginning of wisdom*, he wants the first necessary step in this progress. There must be a belief in the being and providence of God, and in a life of retribution to come, to give a man that comprehensive view of things, which alone can lead him to overlook temporary gratifications, and give him that due command of his passions which is essential to rational life. He must first look beyond the things that are seen, and temporal, to things unseen and eternal, or he might never see sufficient reason for the practice of those virtues which do not bring an immediate recompence. He would never respect the authority of God, unless he had a belief in his being and providence. All his works would be done *to be seen of men*; and if the only

reward of virtue was in another world, which he believed to have no existence, he would have no sufficient reason to exercise it at all.

But having this *faith*, the foundation of right conduct, the superstructure is easily raised upon it. Possessed of this first principle, a seed is sown, which cannot fail in time to produce the noble and full-grown plant, the excellent character above described. If the mind be thoroughly impressed with the fear of God, the two great principles which comprise the whole of the moral law, the love of God, and of our neighbour, will in due time appear, and produce all *the fruits of righteousness* without the least view to any reward whatever; and on this account, will be entitled to, and will assuredly find, the greatest. This is to be most truly godlike, and the necessary consequence of being *like God*, of being *perfect*, (or approaching as near to it as may be,) as *God is perfect*, which our Saviour requires and encourages us to be, [*Matt. v. 48.*] must be accompanied with a degree of happiness approaching the divine.

Such being the obvious use and substantial value of religion, with respect to the conduct of life, the troubles we are exposed to in it, and at the hour of death, and to form the most exalted of human characters, it certainly behoves us to examine the evidence of it, and to do this not superficially, but with the greatest attention, as a question in the decision of which we are all most deeply interested. I may add, that a virtuous and good man cannot but wish that the principles of religion may appear to be well-founded, because it is his interest that they should be so; and if there be this bias on our minds in this inquiry, it is a reasonable and honourable bias, such as no person need be ashamed to avow.

At the same time, the greater is the object proposed to us, the more scrupulous we shall naturally be in our inquiries concerning it. When the apostles were first informed of the resurrection of their beloved Master, it is said by the historian, [*Luke xxiv. 41.*] that *they did not believe through joy*; and it was not without the most irresistible evidence, that of their senses, that they were at length satisfied with respect to it. Let us act the same part, and not receive a pleasing tale merely because it is pleasing to us, but strictly examine the evidence of it; and this is what I propose to lay before you with the greatest plainness, without concealing any difficulties that appear to me to be worthy of much notice. Christ and the apostles always appealed to the

understanding of their hearers, and it can only be a spurious kind of *religion* that disclaims the use of *reason*, that faculty by which alone we are capable of religion, and by which alone we are able to distinguish true religion from false, and that which is genuine, from the foreign and heterogeneous matter that has been added to it.

DISCOURSE II.

OF THE

SUPERIOR VALUE OF REVEALED RELIGION.

MICAH vi. 8 :

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?

PROPOSING to deliver a series of Discourses on the Evidences of Revealed Religion, I have begun with shewing the real value of *religion in general*, consisting in a belief of the being and providence of God, and of a future state of retribution. Taking it, therefore, for granted, that this faith is of real value to men, both as individuals and as members of society, I shall now endeavour to shew that the plan of *communicating* this knowledge, by occasional interpositions of the Supreme Being, is, in several respects, preferable to that which unbelievers boast of as superior to it, viz. the gradual acquisition of it by the mere use of reason.

But I would previously observe that, provided the great *end* be gained, viz. the improvement of the human character by the attainment of such knowledge, and the forming of such habits as will qualify men to be most happy in themselves and dispose them to communicate the most happiness to others, (which is the great object with God, the common parent of us all,) the *means* are of no farther value. That scheme or system, whatever it be, which best promotes this great end, is, for that reason, the best ; and if the two schemes be equally adapted to gain the same end, they are exactly of equal value.

Religion itself is only a means or instrument to make men virtuous, and thereby happy, in such a manner as rational beings are alone capable of being made happy ;

and the different kinds, forms, rites, or exercises of religion are of no value but as they tend to make men religious, inspiring them with the fear of God, and a disposition conscientiously to observe whatever he is supposed to require of them. This great truth, which we ought ever to bear in mind, is clearly expressed in my text: "What doth the Lord require of thee; but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" That is, to entertain just sentiments, and observe a right conduct with respect to God and man; and every thing that God has *shewed* us, whether by the light of nature, or by occasional interpositions, has no other object than this. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good," what tends to make him virtuous and happy.

Let no person, therefore, value himself on his religion as such, be the principles of it ever so true, his knowledge of it ever so exact, and his faith in it ever so firm. He is thereby only possessed of a means to a certain end, and if that end be not attained, he is so far from being a gainer by being possessed of the means, that he is highly culpable for having such an instrument, and making no proper use of it. *For better*, as the apostle says, (2 Peter ii. 21,) *would it be, never to have known the way of righteousness, than, after having known it, to depart from it*, that is, by living a vicious life. Also, according to our Saviour's most solemn declarations, whatever may have been a man's relation to himself, even though he may have worked miracles in his name, if he be *a worker of iniquity*, he will, at the last day, disclaim all knowledge of him, and order him to depart from him.

As the improvement of the human character in virtuous principles and habits is the end of all religion, we must judge of the preferableness of *natural* or *revealed* religion, by the superior tendency to effect this great end. But, indeed, so little of *religion*, properly so called, have men ever derived from the light of nature, and so little are those who reject revelation really influenced by any religious principle, that the true state of the question, in fact, is, whether it be better for man to have the religion that is taught in the Scriptures, or none at all. They who reject revelation may not absolutely, and in words, reject the belief of a God and of a providence; (though we see in the example of the French philosophers, and many others, that this is generally the case;) they are not influenced by that belief. Nor can we wonder at this, when they certainly have not, in fact,

any expectation of a future state, which, as I shall shew, was never taught to any useful purpose but by revelation.

Religion implies the belief of the being and providence of God, and such a respect for the will of God as will effectually controul a man's natural inclinations, and direct his conduct, restraining him from irregularities to which he is naturally prone, and exciting him to actions to which he is naturally averse. But as men in general are governed either by strong, natural appetites, or a view to their interest, it cannot be expected that *virtue alone*, without any hope of future reward or punishment, can have such charms for them, that they will abandon their pleasure, their ease, or their advantage, for the pure love of it. Supposing that men might arrive at a knowledge of the will of God, with respect to their conduct in life, they would not feel any sufficient *obligation* to conform to it, without the great sanction of future rewards and punishments. Mere authority, as that of a parent, or of a magistrate, is little or nothing without the power of rewarding and punishing. Nothing, therefore, but a firm belief in a future state of retribution can be expected to restrain men from giving into those indulgences to which they have a strong propensity.

1. With respect to every article of religion, the light of nature is far from being sufficiently clear and distinct, so as to be inferred with certainty by the most intelligent of men. With respect to what is most essential to human happiness, the wisest of men do not appear to have been, in fact, superior to the bulk, having in a variety of respects, laid down the most erroneous rules for the conduct of men. Plain as the most important maxims of mortality are, there is not one of them, but what the most enlightened not only of the ancient philosophers, but of modern unbelievers, have controverted. What we call *conscience*, and which we might expect to be a better guide, in this respect, than even *reason*, is by no means the same uniform principle in all men. It is formed by various associations of ideas, depending on the circumstances of our education, so that things which absolutely shock some persons, are not felt as at all improper by others. There is, therefore, something wanted superior to the dictates of reason, or natural conscience, and this can only be *revealed religion*, or the authority of our Maker, which must be obeyed without reasoning. Men will, no doubt, dispute even about the will of God, when it is most clearly revealed, as they do

concerning the most express laws that are ever made by men; but if this be done with respect to the articulate voice of God, it will be done to a much greater extent, and with much more plausibility, to the inarticulate voice of nature, which every person will interpret as he is previously inclined.

If, when men are hurried on by passion, or swayed by interest, they will transgress such positive and acknowledged commands, as *thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal*, &c., as we see that, in fact, they do, it will not, however, be without reluctance and remorse; and therefore, transgressions will be less frequent, and less flagrant, and repentance and amendment may be more reasonably expected to follow. But, where no such positive command is acknowledged to exist, and the voice of nature alone is to be consulted about the proper conduct of life, most men will mistake their own inclination for the voice of nature, and consequently sin without reluctance or remorse. Of this it would be easy to give instances in the clearest of all cases, but this would take up too much of our time, and something of this was mentioned in my last Discourse.

2. Still less would men, by the mere light of nature, have ever attained to any satisfactory conclusion with respect to the ultimate design of the Author of nature in the formation of man. I mean the prolongation of his existence beyond the grave. On this most interesting of all questions nature is altogether silent. Judging from appearances, as the brutes die, so does man; and all his faculties and powers die with him. That at death any thing escapes, unaffected by this catastrophe, is a mere arbitrary supposition, unsupported by any appearance, or probability of any kind.

That the belief which the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans* had of a future life, imperfect, and of little value, as it was, was originally derived from revelation, but exceedingly corrupted by tradition, is pretty evident from this circumstance, that when they began to *speculate* on the subject, and examine the *reasons* they could produce for it, all serious belief in the doctrine soon vanished.* With the *Platonists*, who made the most of this doctrine, it was only a curious speculation, of no real use in the conduct of life, such as it is with *Jews* and *Christians*. Indeed, the *reasons* which the *Platonists* gave for this doctrine, and which *Plato* puts into the mouth of *Socrates*, are such as could not possibly have any

* See Vol. II. pp. 74, 75.

weight with thinking men.* That on which he lays the greatest stress, is the doctrine of *pre-existence*, that the souls of men were originally without bodies, and afterwards confined in them as in a prison, and, that death is the breaking of this prison. But where is the evidence of men having pre-existed? This doctrine of pre-existence we find most fully established in *Egypt* and the *East*, whence *Plato* and other *Greeks* derived it. With modern unbelievers it certainly has no weight.†

It is well known that the first philosophers among the *Greeks* did not pretend to discover any thing by their own reasoning. They only taught what they had learned of others, who had received the tenets that had been transmitted to them from early times, and that what they taught was delivered to their pupils on their sole *authority*, as what was not to be contradicted. This was the established custom of the *Pythagorean* school. Reasoning came into their schools afterwards, and with it the wildest theories on all subjects, as I shall shew in its proper place, and a total scepticism with respect to the doctrine of a future state of retribution, as a motive to virtue.

Supposing that it were possible, by the mere light of nature, to arrive at the belief of a future state, yet judging from present appearances, it could not be the future state announced in the Scriptures, a state in which virtue will find an ample recompence, and vice its just punishment, but only such a life as *this*, and in all other respects resembling the present; which is the belief of the *North-American Indians*,‡ and most other barbarous nations. If, because we dislike any thing in the present system, we entertain an idea that the inconvenience complained of will be removed in a future state, where is the evidence that, under the same powers, or principles, of nature, whatever they are, things *will* be ordered in a better manner? Is it possible to infer from what we see, (and we have nothing else by which to guide our conjectures,) that

* "He is much like a man who has some way or other picked up a truth, but can give no account of it, but casts abroad to find out something to justify his opinion, in the best manner he can, without advancing any thing to the purpose." *Campbell in Leland, C.R., II. p. 330, Note.*

† The doctrine of *Pre-existence* has been held by a few Christians. See *Glanvill's Lux Orientalis*, 1682; *Berrow*, in Vol. III. p. 392, *Note*; Soame Jenyns's *Disquisitions*, 1782, No. III., *On a Pre-existent State.*

‡ "When good men die, they say their souls go to *Kichtan*, where they meet their friends, have splendid entertainments, and enjoy all manner of pleasures; when wicked men die, they go to *Kichtan Habitation* too, and knock at the door, but they have no answer from him but *Quachet*, that is, *walk away*, and so they wander about in restless discontent and horror for ever." *Near's History of N. England*, 1747, Ed. 2, pp. 34, 35.

those evils which the Author of nature has thought proper, for whatever reason, to introduce, or to permit, here, will not be continued there also? If we say, that it is not agreeable to *justice* that good and bad men should be treated as they are here, where is the evidence, from any present appearances, that the Author of nature *intended* that they should ever be treated otherwise? Left to the light of nature, we could only reason from what we know, and this would lead us to expect that, if there be any life after death, it will be similar to the present. It is only from the express assurance of the Author of nature, communicated by revelation, that we believe the future state will be better than the present, that in it the righteous will be fully rewarded, and the wicked punished. It is evident, therefore, that when we abandon revelation, we give up all *religion* properly so called, all that can have any salutary influence on the hearts and lives of men.

3. With respect to *men*, there is certainly a great advantage in precepts and commands, promises and threatenings, being delivered in *words*, proceeding as from a real person, it being by this means that instructions are delivered with the greatest distinctness. It may, indeed, be said, and with truth, that nature speaks to men, and that nature teaches, and nature threatens, but besides that the information is more indistinctly communicated, it is in a manner less apt to make an impression, and command respect. It is, therefore, of great advantage that the attention of men be directed to something beyond mere nature, viz. to the Author and Lord of nature, and that he be considered not as an allegorical personage, but a real intelligent Being, capable of communicating his will, in words, and such signs as men are daily accustomed to, and apt to be impressed by.

Besides, all men feel an unavoidable propensity to *address* themselves to the Being on whom they depend; and without some mode of intercourse with him, they would soon lose sight of him, as a child would of his father, if he never saw him, and had no access to him. Without an idea of God, different from what we could collect from the contemplation of nature, there would be no such thing as *prayer*. Indeed, unbelievers in revelation ridicule the idea of prayer as unnatural and absurd, though all nations, without exception, have had recourse to it; which is a clear proof that it is natural, as every thing that is universal must be.

Authority is best supported by a mixture of *affection*, but there cannot be any thing of *this* except towards a being re-

sembling other beings which have been the object of our affection, and which have engaged our confidence. And in revelation, but by no means in nature, the Supreme Being appears to us in the familiar character of a parent, a person with whom we can have communication, who may be conceived to be always present with us, who encourages us to address ourselves to him, who always hears us, and sometimes answers us. By this means God easily becomes the object of real affection and attachment. Here we find a solid foundation for *love* and *fear*, which are the chief motives for men's actions. With believers in revelation, this sometimes degenerates into an absurd enthusiasm, by which the Divine Being becomes the object of a fond and improper affection.

We may say that it is beneath the Supreme Being, and unworthy of him, to have this familiar intercourse with men; but it is of great importance to our virtue and happiness; and to a being of perfect benevolence, and who knows the frame that he has given us, nothing will appear beneath him that is so well adapted to answer his benevolent purpose respecting us. Nor, indeed, would the most absolute prince, if he really wished to appear as the father and the friend of his people, think any thing beneath him that tended to promote the happiness of his subjects.

It is said by modern unbelievers, that the expectation of such a being as the great Author of nature condescending to act this humble part is unreasonable, and that miracles of all kinds, the only evidence of it, are necessarily incredible. I answer, that the assertion betrays a great unacquaintedness with human nature, and the history of man; for it has been the belief of all nations, and all ages, that the highest beings of whom they had any idea have acted this very part. Socrates himself expressed an earnest wish for a divine instructor. This expectation and belief is, therefore, by no means unnatural, and there must be something in human nature that leads to it.

If we look to the last, and therefore what we may suppose to be the most improved state of Heathen philosophy, that of the later *Platonists*, or *Eclectics*, to which the emperor *Julian* (whose superior good sense is so much the boast of modern unbelievers) attached himself, we shall find them in this very respect the most superstitious, the most enthusiastic, and the most credulous of men. Far from supposing that men had no intercourse with the Supreme Being; they expected to unite themselves to him by contemplation and

corporeal mortification. "The piety of *Proclus*," (one of the most celebrated of them,) "is highly extolled by his biographer (*Marinus*).—He spent whole days and nights in repeating prayers and hymns, that he might prepare himself for immediate intercourse with the gods. He observed with great solemnity the new moons, and all public festivals, and on these occasions, pretended, or fancied, that he conversed with superior beings, and was able, by his sacrifices, prayers and hymns, to expel diseases, to command rain, to stop an earthquake, and to perform other similar wonders."* Whether, therefore, we look to the vulgar, or the philosophers among the ancients, we shall find the idea of divine communications and of miracles, to have been natural to man. These philosophers did not deny the miracles of Christ, but maintained that he wrought them "by the same magical or theurgic powers, as they were termed, which they themselves possessed."†

4. They who give so decided a preference to the light of nature, the appearances of which are uniform, to that of revelation, which supposes an occasional departure from the usual course of nature, betray their ignorance of the nature of man, by whom all *uniform appearances* are apt to be disregarded, but who never fail to be struck by what is *unusual*. Does not every human being see the regular rising and setting of the sun, the periodical returns of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest; but how few ever think of the wisdom or benevolence of these appointments! They content themselves with observing *effects*, and directing their conduct by them, without ever reflecting on the *cause*. But whenever any thing *unusual* happens, when comets are seen, or eclipses of the sun or moon take place, their attention is forcibly arrested; and, after reflecting on the cause of the extraordinary appearances, they may be induced to give some attention to those that are constant. I shall illustrate this by a case which I have put on a former occasion.‡

Let a person unacquainted with clocks, watches, and other machines, be introduced into a room containing many of them, all in regular motion. He sees no maker of these machines, and knows nothing of their internal structure; and as he sees them all to move with perfect regularity, he may say, on the principles of the atheistical system, that they are *automata*, or self-moving machines; and so long as all these machines continue in regular motion, and he knows

* Enfield's *Hist. of Phil.* 1791, (B. iii. Ch. ii. Sect. iv.) II. p. 83. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 92. (P.) ‡ Vol. XV. pp. 345, 346,

nothing of the making of them, or the winding of them up, this theory may appear plausible.

But let us suppose that, coming into this room again and again, and, always attending to the machines, he shall find one of them much out of order, and that at length its motion shall entirely cease; but, that after continuing in this state some time, he shall again find it in perfect order, moving as regularly as ever. Will he not then conclude that some person, whom he has not seen, but probably the maker of the machines, had been in the room in his absence? The restoration of motion to the disordered machine would impress his mind with the idea of a *maker* of them, in a much more forcible manner than his observing the regular construction, and uniform motion of them. It must convince him of the existence of some person capable of *regulating*, and, therefore, probably of *making* these machines, whether he should ever see this person or not.

Thus do miracles prove the existence of a God, in a shorter and more satisfactory manner than the observation of the uninterrupted course of nature. If there be a Being who can *controul* the course of nature, there must be one who originally *established* it, in whatever difficulty we may still be left with respect to his nature, and the manner of his existence.

Why men should be struck with unusual appearances, it is not my business to explain, though it would not be difficult to do it; the fact of their *being so*, is sufficient to my purpose; and, therefore, a person acquainted with human nature, and this property of it, would not neglect to avail himself of it, when he wished to engage the attention of men, for the purpose of their instruction and improvement. Why, then, should we think it unnatural or improper in the Divine Being, who, as the maker of men, best knows what they are, and in what way to apply to them? Let no one, then, say that occasional interpositions, or miraculous appearances, are an unnatural or improper mode of instructing mankind, when it is, in a manner, necessary to draw their attention to a superior Being, as a foundation for their intercourse with him.

5. No less are they mistaken who imagine that the *evidences* of revealed religion have more of difficulty in them than those of natural religion, by which we mean the arguments from nature, for the being, perfections, and providence of God. On the contrary, far greater difficulties occur with respect to *these*, than with respect to the others, and all that

can be said is, that great difficulties must give way to greater. Far am I from supposing that the evidence for the being of a God is not *demonstrative*, since marks of design, with which the world abounds, necessarily imply a designing or intelligent cause. But notwithstanding this, we can never fully satisfy ourselves with respect to the objection of the *Atheist*, that if the universe require a cause, this cause must require another; and if the Author of nature, or the being we call *God*, exist without a cause, so may the universe itself.

All that we can say in answer to this is, that whatever difficulty we may labour under with respect to this subject, which will always be above our comprehension, the actual existence of a visible world, and of marks of design in it, cannot be denied, and, therefore, whether we be able to proceed any farther or not, we *must* acknowledge a designing cause; otherwise we might say that a house had no architect, or a child no father. If the eye of a man require no designing cause, neither would a telescope, which is an instrument of a similar nature, evidently adapted to answer a similar purpose. And at this supposition, every mind would revolt.

More and greater difficulties occur when we proceed to the consideration of the unity, the omnipresence, the constant agency, and, what is of more consequence still, the *benevolence* of the Supreme Being, on the principles of the light of nature. So forcibly were the minds of men, in the early ages, impressed with a view of the *evils* which abound in the world, and so inconsistent did they conceive them to be with the designs of a benevolent Author, that they supposed there was an original *principle of evil*, independent of that of good. And they who supposed there was a multiplicity of deities, (to which they were led by the extent and variety they observed in the works of nature,) imagined some of them to be of a benevolent, and others of a malevolent disposition. That the Author of nature is one, that he is simply, invariably, and infinitely good, and that all the evils we see and experience, are calculated to promote good, are great and sublime truths, which we derive from revelation only, though, on a strict examination, they appear not to be inconsistent with the appearances in nature.

On the other hand, the evidences of revelation are level to every capacity. That it is the Author of nature who interposes, must be evident from every interruption of the usual course of it; for no other than he who established the

laws of nature can controul them ; and though there may be some difficulty in distinguishing some preternatural appearances from such as are merely unusual, this cannot be the case with respect to numberless others. If it was a fact that the *Israelites* walked through the *Red Sea* and the river *Jordan* ; if all the first-born of the *Egyptians*, and the first-born only, of man and beast, died in one night, and that announced before-hand ; if an articulate voice was actually heard to pronounce the ten commandments from Mount *Sinai*, so as to be heard by two millions of people, there could be no doubt of a Divine interposition in any of the cases. And the same may be said of numberless other facts in the Scripture history. If the *facts* be ascertained, there can be no doubt concerning their *cause*.

Now, all facts may be ascertained by sufficient testimony, or that of a competent number of credible witnesses, that is, of persons who were in circumstances not to be imposed upon themselves, and who had no apparent motive to impose upon others. This is fully equal to the evidence of a man's own senses. Nay, there are many persons who would distrust their own eyes and ears, rather than those of other persons, who, they thought, were better judges than themselves.

Though single persons may be imposed upon in a variety of ways, or may take it into their heads, for reasons which it is not in the power of any man to investigate, to impose upon others, this can never be said to be the case with respect to thousands who believe, or attest, things evidently contrary to their interest and previous inclinations. That great numbers of persons, and others in succession to them, all of whom had sufficient opportunity to investigate any particular fact, which required no other evidence than that of the senses, and who were interested in the investigation, their fortunes or their lives depending upon it, should persist in their attestation of it, would be a greater miracle, more contrary to what we know of human nature, than any fact contained in the Scripture history.

As to the evidence of a future state, what are all the arguments derived from the light of nature compared to that which is furnished by the gospel, which is therefore justly said, (2 *Tim.* i. 10,) to *bring life and immortality to light* ? There we see a person commissioned by God, teaching the doctrine with the greatest plainness and emphasis, enforcing it by miracles, among which was the raising of several persons from a state of death to life, and,

what was infinitely more, submitting to die himself in the most public and indisputable manner, and rising to life again at a fixed time. Had mankind in general been asked what evidence would satisfy them, they could not have demanded more. *revealed over natural*

Whether, therefore, we consider the precepts of religion, that is, the rules of a virtuous and happy life, the authority requisite to enforce the observance of them, the motives by which they are enforced, or the evidence of their truth, revealed religion has unspeakably the advantage of natural; and therefore so far is the scheme of revelation from being improbable *à priori*, that it must appear such as a wise and good Being, who was acquainted with human nature, and wished to engage the attention of men, and impress their minds with sentiments of reverence of himself, and respect for such laws as were calculated to promote their greatest happiness, would adopt in preference to any other; being the best adapted to gain his end. It was of the greatest importance to mankind to be made acquainted with those moral principles and rules of conduct on which their happiness depended, and which they would never have discovered of themselves; to have their attention drawn to them in the most forcible manner, and to have the most satisfactory evidence of their truth; and this is what we find in revelation, and in revelation only. It is therefore, as the apostle justly calls it, (1 Cor. i. 24,) *the wisdom and the power of God*, though objected to and ridiculed by light and superficial men.

DISCOURSE III.

A VIEW OF HEATHEN WORSHIP.

ROM. i. 18—26:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,

neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts; to dishonour their own bodies between themselves; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections.

IN order to give you a just idea of the real value of revelation, it is necessary that I lay before you the state of things with respect to *religion* in the Heathen world, especially in the early ages of mankind, about the time of Moses; that when I come to give you a view of his institutions, the difference may be the more striking. Very few, I am persuaded, of the modern unbelievers have a just knowledge of this subject. If they had, it would, I hope, be impossible for them to treat the religion of the *Hebrews* with so much contempt. Not only the extreme ignorance, but the great depravity of mankind in a state of Heathenism, would not be credible at this day, if there did not exist a superfluity of the most authentic documents of it, so that the facts cannot be denied without the extreme of effrontery. This, however, we find in *Voltaire*, who says that “the religion of the Pagans consisted in nothing but *morality* and festivals; morality, which,” he says, “is common to men of all ages and places; and *festivals* which were no more than times of rejoicing, and could not be of prejudice to mankind.”* The particulars which I shall be obliged to mention, and which could not be unknown to this writer, though they are to many others, will shew how shamefully the truth is disguised in this representation. The religion of the Heathens had nothing to do with morality, and their public festivals were almost without exception, scenes of the greatest riot and debauchery. Believing their gods to be cruel or sensual, there is no vice, how detestable and unnatural soever, that did not find a place in the most solemn acts of their worship.

* *Leland, C. R., I. p. 178.* “La religion des Payens ne consistoit que dans la morale, et dans les fêtes; la morale, qui est commune aux hommes de tous les temps et de tous les lieux; et les fêtes, qui n’étoient que de réjouissances, et ne pouvoient troubler la genre humain.” (*Hist. du Siècle de Louis XIV.*) *Ibid.* Note.

It is not necessary for me to give any account of the manner in which mankind fell into this deplorable state of depravity, it being sufficient to shew that such *was* their state, and that it was evident, from the experience of ages, in which men made the most of their powers of reason, that they were not able to relieve themselves. *Why* the Supreme Being permitted the rise and progress of this species of evil, may be as inscrutable to us, as the permission of any other evil, natural or moral, none of which, it must be acknowledged, could have taken place without his knowledge and permission, and all of which, and this among the rest, we have reason to believe will lead to good, and hereafter appear to have done so. In the mean time it is well worth our while to contemplate the magnitude of the evil, and the goodness of God in the cure of it, in what, no doubt, was the proper time, and in the most proper and effectual manner.

That the great principles of religion, concerning the being and providence of God, and a future state of existence, were communicated by God to the first parents of mankind, is probable from several circumstances. Obscure traces of this knowledge are found in all ancient nations, and the farther we go back into antiquity, the purer we find their religion to be. But in process of time it became more and more corrupted, till, instead of coming in aid of virtue, it was itself a great source of the corruption of morals, as the progress is well described in my text.

The world ever bore sufficient marks of its being the production of an omnipotent and good Being, a lover of virtue, and a hater of vice; but men, contemplating, as we may suppose, the immense variety, and seeming contrariety, of the works of creation, could not believe that the whole was under the direction of *one being*: and, being left to their own imaginations, and judging of other intelligent beings by what they observed in themselves and others, they concluded that there must be a *multiplicity of beings* concerned in the government of the world, and the direction of human affairs, some well and others ill disposed towards them. For it required more knowledge and comprehension of mind than they had attained, to perceive that all the evils with which the world abounds were calculated to promote good. They thought they saw in them the effects of malice and ill-will, at least of caprice, and their conduct naturally corresponded to their ideas.

The mind of man is never satisfied without looking for

the *causes* of events, especially those that take place only occasionally, and, to appearance, irregularly, and still more if they be favourable or unfavourable to themselves, because they hope by this means to be able to avoid the one, and secure the other. And not being able to discover the true causes, they must, of course, acquiescè in what they *imagine* to be the true causes. It appears from all history that, in the most early ages, mankind in general ascribed every thing that affected them to the influences of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, stars, and planets, and to an intelligent principle which they supposed to reside in them. For heat and cold, storms and rain, often coming unexpectedly, they naturally enough imagined that they did not come without design, and that, if these heavenly agents had been so disposed, their influences would have been always favourable. To these objects, therefore, they of course directed all their regards, and their worship.

They also came to suppose that there was an intelligent principle in the earth, and in the several parts of it, as the air, the sea, the rivers, mountains, forests, &c. ; so that they soon became possessed of a great multiplicity of objects of worship, whose favour they thought it of importance to gain, and whose displeasure they wished to deprecate.

Having got the idea of different superior intelligences, whether subordinate to the Supreme Being or not, they soon lost sight of the Supreme Being himself, and gave their whole attention to those inferior beings, whom they supposed to be the immediate authors of the good and evil that befel them. This was on the same natural principle that tenants look to the steward with whom they transact all their business, and not to the proprietor of the land, with whom they have nothing to do.

We have this farther evidence from fact, that this practice was natural. When Christians got the idea of Jesus Christ, of saints and angels being proper objects of worship, they generally fell into the habit of looking no higher, neglecting the worship of God; and had it not been for the prayers addressed to him in the Scriptures and in the ancient liturgies, he would, I doubt not, have been as much overlooked and forgotten, as if no such being had existed.

But on whatever principle this took place, the fact cannot be denied, and the number of gods kept increasing, instead of diminishing by time and reflection. *Orpheus* reckoned only as many gods as there were days in the year, but in the time of *Hesiod*, the *Greeks* had no less than thirty

thousand divinities. The *Romans* in the time of *Varro* had three hundred *Jupiters*, that is, the same god was worshipped under so many different titles, under which he was supposed to possess different powers, and some have reckoned no less than two hundred and eighty thousand gods.*

The *Egyptians*, from whom the *Greeks* originally received their religion, imagined that particular animals were the favourites of particular deities, and communicated their powers to them. At least, they considered their several qualities as symbols of divine power, and at length paid a proper worship to them. *Plutarch*† expressly says, that the greater part of the *Egyptians* worshipped the animals themselves, which, he says, led some to the most extravagant superstition, and precipitated others into Atheism.‡ “Cotta, in *Cicero*,§ observes, that there had been many instances of temples spoiled, and images of the gods taken away—by the *Romans*; but it had never been heard of, that a crocodile, an ibis, or a cat, had been ill-treated by the *Egyptians*,”|| so far did they carry their superstitious respect for them.

Another source of the multiplication of deities was an idea that particular superior beings presided over particular circumstances relating to men, and their affairs, so that they had gods corresponding to many abstract ideas. Thus the *Romans* had temples and altars dedicated to the *fever*, and *ill fortune*, and the *Athenians*, to *contumely* and *impudence*.¶ At length, after deifying all the parts of nature, and many of the qualities and properties of things, they deified particular *men*, and worshipped them after their death.** Nay the *Romans*, in the time of the emperors, carried their adulation so far as to pay divine honours to some of them, and those the very worst of them, while they were alive.

The heavenly bodies being sometimes invisible, the *Heathens* had recourse to some symbols of their power, or some visible object, to which they imagined their powers were in some way or other attached, and to which they could always have recourse. These were at first *pillars*, or only large stones,†† consecrated in certain positions of those heavenly

* See *Tertul. Apol. C. xiv. ad fin*; *Potter's Antiquities of Greece, 1775, Ed. 9, (B. ii. Ch. i.) I. p. 184*; *Young's Idolatrous Corruptions, 1734, II. p. 179.*

† “De *Isid. et Osir.*” *Leland, C. R., I. p. 144.*

‡ *Ibid.*

§ “De *Nat. Deor. Lib. i. Cap. xx.*” *ibid. p. 145.*

|| “Etenim fana multa expoliata, et simulacra deorum de locis sanctissimis ablata vidimus à nostris; at verò nefando quidem auditum est, crocodilum, aut ibin, aut fœlem violatum ab *Egyptiis.*” *Ibid.*

¶ See *Vol. II. p. 80.*

** See *ibid. pp. 78, 79*; *Young, I. pp. 75, 268.*

†† See *Potter, (B. ii. Ch. ii.) I. pp. 190, 191*; *Young, I. pp. 124, 125.*

bodies, which they wanted to represent. Refining upon this, they afterwards made use of the forms of men and animals for that purpose. The forms of some of their deities being altogether unknown, they made use of such figures as they conceived to be proper symbols of their powers. The idols of the Egyptians had the heads of particular animals, as that of a dog on the body, or part of the body of a man. At *Rome* the God *Janus* had two faces,* and the idols of *Indostan* have a great number of arms, &c.† Hence *Varro*, “speaking of the images of the gods, says, ‘they call those gods, which, if they had life and breath, and man should meet them unexpectedly, would pass for monsters.’”‡ He also censures “the cruel and lascivious rites made use of in the worship of several of their deities, especially of *Cybele*; and yet declares, that ‘a wise man will observe all these things, not indeed as acceptable to the gods, but as commanded by the laws.’§ And speaking of that ‘ignoble rabble of gods,’ as he calls them, ‘which the superstition of ages has heaped together,’ he saith, ‘we will so adore them, as to remember that this worship is rather matter of custom, than founded in nature or truth.’”|| So far were the Heathen philosophers, who were sensible of the absurdity and pernicious tendency of this worship, from being disposed to reform it. It was a maxim with them, as with the generality of modern unbelievers, to think with the wise, and act with the vulgar. But had Christ and his apostles acted on this principle, we should now have been worshipping *Thor* and *Woden*, and imbruing their altars with human blood.

The most horrid of all the rites of the Heathen religion was that of *human sacrifices*, which, however, were universal in ancient times, and especially among the *Canaanites*, and in the countries that bordered upon *Palestine*, as, indeed, the history of the *Carthaginians*, who were descended from the *Tyrians*, abundantly proves.

We shall not much wonder at the introduction of this rite, shocking as it is to humanity, when we consider the

* See Lord Herbert's *Rel. Gent.*, (Ch. xii.,) 1705, p. 247.

† See the *Plates* Nos. 2, 5, annexed to *Hobwell's* account “Of the Gentoo-Fasts and Festivals.” *Historical Events*, (Pt. ii.) 1767, p. 152.

‡ “*Numina vocant, quæ si spiritu accepto subito occurrerent, monstra haberentur.*” *Leland*, C. R., l. p. 166.

§ “*Quæ omnia sapiens servabit, tanquam legibus jussa, non tanquam diis grata.*” *Ibid.*

|| “*Omnem istam ignobilem deorum turbam quam longa superstitio congegessit, sic adorabimus, ut meminerimus cultum istum magis ad morem quam ad rem pertinentem.*” *Ibid.*

destruction of life, and other evils occasionally produced by natural causes, as by heat, drought, lightning, earthquakes, &c. These the Heathens of course ascribed to the agency of their gods. They would, therefore, imagine that they were sometimes very angry, and that great sacrifices were necessary to appease them. Apprehensive, then, of greater evils, they willingly subjected themselves to those that were less.

In general, the Heathens thought the sacrifice of slaves and captives would satisfy the blood-thirsty appetites of their gods; but on particular occasions, fearful that this would not be deemed sufficient, they sacrificed the children of the most distinguished persons in the state, as those of their kings themselves. The *Carthaginians*, after some great disaster in war, sacrificed at one time three hundred young men of the first families in their commonwealth.* In this the Israelites, during their apostacy from their own religion, imitated their Heathen neighbours, as we read, *Psalms* cvi. 37, 38: "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto *demons*, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan." *Jer.* vii. 31 [xix. 5]: "They built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire. They built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal." This place was called *Tophet*, from a Hebrew word which signifies a drum, or *sistrum*, instruments which made a loud noise, which the priests made use of to drown the cries of the victims, as it was the custom to burn them alive.

By *Baal* was meant the sun, the principal object of worship in all ancient nations; and as the heat of the sun is sometimes very destructive, it is no wonder that they supposed him to be actuated by the passion of anger. Lord Herbert observes, that victims of less dignity were deemed sufficient for the inferior deities, but that to their highest god, the sun, human sacrifices, as the most valuable, were to be offered.†

Human sacrifices appear to have been universal in ancient times. They were in use "among the *Egyptians* till the time of *Amasis*."‡ They were "never so common among the *Greeks* or *Romans*;" yet with them they were in use "upon extraordinary occasions." *Porphyry* says, "that

* See Vol. II. p. 85.

† *Relig. Gent.* (Ch. iv.), p. 38.

‡ *Leland*, C. R., I. p. 167. See *Young*, II. p. 163.

the Grecians were wont to sacrifice men when they went to war." *Clemens Alexandrinus* says, "that Erectheus, king of Athens, and the famous Roman general, Marius, sacrificed their own daughters. Plutarch, in his life of Themistocles, informs us, that three very beautiful Persian captives, richly habited and adorned, were, by the advice of the prophet Euphrantides, offered as sacrifices to Bacchus Omestes, or the devourer, as a vow for victory," at the commencement of the Persian war; "and though Themistocles was startled at the inhumanity of it, the people, with one voice, invoking Bacchus, and bringing the captives to the altar, compelled him to perform the sacrifice.

"The same great historian and philosopher, in his life of Marcellus, tells us, that the Romans, in the beginning of a war with the Gauls, in obedience to some oracles contained in the Sybilline books, buried alive a Greek man and a Greek woman, and also a Gaulish man and a Gaulish woman, in the ox market, by way of sacrifice. *Livy* acquaints us, that they repeated this sacrifice at the beginning of the second *Punic War*."*

"Human sacrifices were still offered" at *Rome*, says *Porphyry*, "till the reign of the emperor *Adrian*, who ordered them, in most places, to be abolished." This writer, "who lived in the reign of the emperor *Diocletian*, mentions it as a thing well known, that in the city of *Rome* itself a man was wont to be sacrificed at the feast of *Jupiter Latiaris*. *Lactantius*, who wrote a little after *Porphyry*, says the same was practised in his time."† Human sacrifices were so numerous among the *Gauls* and *Britons*, that the *Romans* forbade the public exercise of their religion. According to *Cæsar*, they sometimes made images of an immense size, constructed of wicker work, which they filled with men, and then burned them alive.‡

In later times we find human sacrifices as numerous among the *Mexicans* and *Peruvians*, who, of all the inhabitants of *America*, had arrived at the greatest degree of civilization, as in any of the ancient nations. The most authentic record says, that the *Mexicans* sacrificed annually twenty thousand men, and at the dedication of their great temple, not less than sixty or seventy thousand. If any person will only read with attention "the *History of Mexico*,"

* *Hist. L.* xxii. C. lvii.; *Leland, C. R.*, I. pp. 168, 169.

† "Jupiter etiam nunc sanguine colitur humano." *Divin. Instit. L.* i. C. xxi. p. 113; *Leland, C. R.*, I. pp. 169, 170.

‡ *De Bello Gallico, L.* vi. Sect. xv. (P.) See Vol. II. p. 84.

by *Clavigero*,* he will be convinced that such was the rooted attachment of that people to their religion in general, and this horrid rite in particular, that nothing but such a conquest of them as that by the Spaniards, would ever have put an end to that custom. His account of the state of facts will abundantly justify the conduct of Divine Providence in the utter extermination of the inhabitants of *Canaan*. It was for the good of mankind that such nations should be extirpated from the face of the earth.

If any persons will say that the Author of nature could not give a commission, which they think to have been so cruel and unjust, let them say whether the Author of nature does not continually do things which they themselves must say are more cruel and unjust; as the promiscuous destruction of persons of all ages and characters by pestilence and famine, by hurricanes and earthquakes, as also by diseases and death, which are universal. Did not the Author of nature clearly foresee these calamities, and, therefore, intend that they should take place? And, where is the difference, in a moral view, between doing any thing by laws of his appointment, or by a special commission? The thing to be objected to is the ultimate event, not the means by which it was effected. In fact, they who make this objection, and others of a similar nature, first form to themselves an idea of the Author of nature from their own imagination, and not from the observation of his works, which is the only method of forming a just idea of any character, and then pronounce that such and such things as they wish to have been otherwise are incompatible with his character. Besides, the firmest believer in the Divine benevolence (and justice, strictly considered, is only a modification and branch of benevolence) will say, that any kind or degree of evil that may, directly or indirectly, be productive of a greater good, is compatible with it, and of this ultimate tendency of things, God himself, and not man, is the judge. This conduct, however, is not to be imitated by man, on account of the imperfection of our knowledge. We must not *do evil that good may come*, though this is constantly done by the Divine Being, because we cannot tell whether the evil *will* be productive of good, whereas, he always knows the end from the very beginning, and therefore cannot be mistaken with respect to the final result.

* "Translated from the original Italian, by Charles Cullen," 1787, 2 Vols. 4to.

Besides the horrid custom of human sacrifices, which were thought to be necessary to appease the wrath of some of the Heathen deities, they had other rites, which, though they did not terminate in death, were extremely painful. The priests of *Baal*, as we read, 1 *Kings* xviii. 28, "cut themselves—with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out upon them," when they were desirous of getting a favourable answer from him. The same, according to *Herodotus*, was practised in the worship of *Isis*, an Egyptian deity, and of *Bellona* among the Romans. Also, in the festivals of *Cybele*, called *the mother of the gods*, the priests, who were castrated, made hideous noises and howlings, and cut themselves till the blood gushed out. The worship of this goddess was introduced from the *East* to Rome.* At a festival in *Sparta*, boys were whipped with so much severity, on an altar of *Diana*, (the priestess attending to see that it was done in a proper manner,) that they often died in consequence of it. When this was the case, and the boys had borne the torture with sufficient fortitude, they had the honour of a public funeral, as having died in the service of their country. This custom was instituted by *Lycurgus*, the great Spartan lawgiver, in exchange for the sacrifice of a man every year at the same altar, the oracle having only declared that the altar of that goddess must be sprinkled with human blood.† There was also an altar of *Bacchus* in *Arcadia*, on which many young women were beaten with rods till they died.‡

The rites of Heathen religions now or lately existing, are as cruel as those of any of the ancients. In *Indostan* it is frequent, and deemed particularly meritorious, for widows to be burned alive with the bodies of their husbands,§ and

* Liv. Hist. L. xxix. C. xiv.; *Leland*, C. R., I. pp. 170, 171.

† See *Potter*, I. (Ch. xx.), pp. 379, 380; *Leland*, C. R., I. pp. 171, 172.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 172.

§ Mr. Holwell, who had "been present at many of these sacrifices," observed "in some of the victims a pitiable dread, tremor, and reluctance, that strongly spoke repentance for their declared resolution." In such cases the victim, he adds, "is with gentle force obliged to ascend the pile, where she is held down with long poles, held by men on each side of the pile, until the flames reach her; her screams and cries, in the mean time, being drowned amidst the deafening noise of loud music and the acclamations of the multitude."

Mr. Holwell proceeds to give an instance of the "most amazing, steady, calm resolution and joyous fortitude," in one of these "self-devoted victims," which was witnessed by himself, "and several other gentlemen of the *East India* Company's factory at *Cossimbuzaar*," in "Sir F. Russell's chiefship." She was "aged between 17 and 18," the only wife of "Rhaam Chund Pundit, of the *Mahahrotter* tribe, aged 28," who died in 1743. His widow, "as soon as he expired, disdaining to wait the term allowed her for reflection, immediately declared to the *Bramins* and witnesses

their *Faquirs* voluntarily undergo such tortures as it is painful to read of. They will often continue so long in the most constrained postures, that their limbs are incapable of any motion; so that they remain so until they die, their

present, her resolution to burn." After relating the unavailing attempts of "the merchants and her relations," and the humane interference of Lady Russell, "to dissuade her," especially alleging "the infant state of her *three* children," Mr. Holwell says,

"The body of the deceased was carried down to the water side early the following morning, the widow followed about ten o'clock, accompanied by three very principal *Bramins*, her children, parents, and relations, and a numerous concourse of people. The order of leave for her burning did not arrive from *Hossey Khan*, *Fouzdaar* of *Morshadabad*, until after one, and it was then brought by one of the *Soubah's* own officers, who had orders to see that she burnt voluntarily.

"The time they waited for the order was employed in praying with the *Bramins*, and washing in the *Ganges*; as soon as it arrived, she retired and stayed for the space of half an hour in the midst of her female relations, amongst whom was her mother; she then divested herself of her bracelets, and other ornaments, and tied them in a cloth, which hung like an apron before her, and was conducted by her female relations to one corner of the pile: on the pile was an arched arbour formed of dry sticks, boughs and leaves, open only at one end to admit her entrance; in this the body of the deceased was deposited, his head at the end opposite to the opening.

"At the corner of the pile, to which she had been conducted, the *Bramin* had made a small fire, round which she and the three *Bramins* sat for some minutes; one of them gave into her hand a leaf of the bale tree, (the wood commonly consecrated to form part of the funeral pile,) with sundry things on it, which she threw into the fire; one of the others gave her a second leaf, which she held over the flame, whilst he dropped *three times* some ghee on it, which melted and fell into the fire, (these two operations were preparatory symbols of her approaching dissolution by fire,) and whilst they were performing this, the third *Bramin* read to her some portions of the *Aughtorrah Bhade*, and asked her some questions, to which she answered with a steady and serene countenance; but the noise was so great we could not understand what she said, although we were within a yard of her.

"These over, she was led with great solemnity *three times* round the pile, the *Bramins* reading before her; when she came the third time to the small fire, she stopped, took her rings off her toes and fingers, and put them to her other ornaments; here she took a solemn majestic leave of her children, parents, and relations; after which, one of the *Bramins* dipped a large wick of cotton in some ghee, and gave it ready lighted into her hand, and led her to the open side of the arbour; there all the *Bramins* fell at her feet; after she had blessed them, they retired weeping; by two steps she ascended the pile and entered the arbour; on her entrance, she made a profound reverence at the feet of the deceased, and advanced and seated herself by his head; she looked in silent meditation on his face, for the space of a minute, then set fire to the arbour in *three places*; observing that she had set fire to leeward, and that the flames blew from her, instantly seeing her error she rose, and set fire to windward, and resumed her station; ensign *Daniel*, with his cane, separated the grass and leaves on the windward side, by which means we had a distinct view of her as she sat. With what dignity, and undaunted a countenance, she set fire to the pile the last time, and assumed her seat, can only be conceived, for words cannot convey a just idea of her. The pile being of combustible matters, the supporters of the roof were presently consumed, and it tumbled upon her!" *Religious Tenets of the Gentoos in Hist. Events*, Pt. ii. (Ch. iv.), pp. 92—97.

Among the "Extracts from an Account of the Writings, Religion and Manners of the Hindoos," by W. Ward, "one of the Baptist Missionaries at Serampore," 1813, No. II., there are a number of horrible instances on this subject. "Persons were, in 1804, stationed in different places within thirty miles of Calcutta," to take "account of every instance of a widow's being burnt, which came within their observation; the result made between two and three hundred for the year. How many thousands of these widows," adds Mr. Ward, "must be murdered in a year in so extensive a country as Hindoosthan!" See p. 13.

wants supplied, and their prayers requested, by great numbers of persons. Sometimes, having strong iron hooks thrust through the skin of their backs, they get themselves to be drawn up, and whirled round in the air, with the greatest violence, by means of a machine constructed for the purpose. The *Mexicans*, "being accustomed to bloody sacrifices of their prisoners, they also failed not," says *Clavigero*, "to shed abundance of their own blood.—It makes one shudder to read of the austerities which they exercised upon themselves, either in atonement of their transgressions, or in preparation for their festivals. They mangled their flesh as if it had been insensible, and let their blood run in such profusion, that it appeared to be a superfluous fluid of the body. The effusion of blood was frequent and daily with some of their priests.—They pierced themselves with the sharpest spines of the aloe, and bored several parts of their bodies.—Through the holes which they made with these spines, they introduced pieces of cane, the first of which were small pieces, but every time this penitential suffering was repeated, a thicker piece was used.—Besides these and other austere practices—watching and fasting was very frequent amongst the *Mexicans*."*

At the fast of the *Tlascalans*, which lasted *one hundred and sixty days*, the *chief priest*, "attended by all those who had courage to attempt this penitential duty, the number of whom used to exceed two hundred, ascended the very lofty mountain, *Matlacueje*.—They afterwards descended from the mountain, and caused a number of little knives of *itzli*, and a great quantity of small rods of different thicknesses to be made.—The first day they bored holes in their tongues, through which they drew the little rods, and notwithstanding the excessive pain and loss of blood which they suffered, they were obliged all the while to sing aloud songs to their god; every twenty days this cruel operation was repeated. When the first eighty days of the fast of the priests were elapsed, a general fast, from which even the heads of the republic were not exempted, began with this people, and continued an equally long time."†

Inconsistent as it may seem to have been with this austerity, other rites of the ancient Heathen religions, and those which occurred the most frequent, encouraged, and indeed required, the extreme of sensual indulgence; and sometimes that of the most unnatural kind. It is not easy to say by

* *History*, l. pp. 284, 285.

† *Ibid.* pp. 287, 288.

what particular train of thinking they were led to conclude that such practices as these could be pleasing to the gods, but some of those deities that were to be appeased by human sacrifices, were supposed to be no less pleased to see their worshippers indulge themselves in whatever could gratify their appetites; and their groves, and the temples themselves, were scenes of open prostitution.

It is well known that, in general, the Heathens ascribed to their gods the passions and actions of men; and too many of the oriental princes, and those the most celebrated for their warlike and other exploits, gave into the extreme of both cruelty and lust. It is possible, however, that the indecent symbols of their worship, which might be originally designed to represent what is, no doubt, the most remarkable circumstance in the constitution of nature, viz. its *reproductive power*, or that of generation, might lead to those acts of lewdness with which the Heathen worship abounded. And, incredible as it may appear to us, figures, which cannot be named with decency, were exposed and carried about in these sacred processions, hymns were sung to them, and religious worship paid to them.* This was done by the Egyptians, and most other ancient nations, especially the Greeks, who borrowed the custom from them.†

To recite the particulars of the indecencies of the Heathen worship, would be disgusting, and the account could hardly be given in language proper for a public assembly; but as something of this kind is become necessary, in order to give a just idea of the state of *facts* which have been strongly disguised by unbelievers, and to shew the great superiority of revealed religion to that which almost all mankind naturally fell into, I must be excused if, for the sake of those who may have been misled by such writers as *Voltaire* and others, (who have smoothed over the enormities of the Heathen worship,) I recite as many particulars as may be necessary to give you an idea of the general character of the system, which they represent as perfectly innocent, and not at all unfavourable to purity of morals,

* See *Potter*, I. (Ch. xx.) pp. 383, 403; *Leland*, C. R., I. pp. 176, 177.

† *Lucian*, a Heathen writer, says that, in the portico of the temple at *Hierapolis*, which stood on a hill, there was a tower three hundred cubits high, built in that indecent form, to the top of which a man ascended twice a year, where he continued seven days, that he might, with more advantage, converse with the gods above. In the worship of the people of *Indostan*, figures even more shocking to modesty than those of the ancient Western nations are now made use of. (P.)

their festivals, as *Voltaire* says, being only seasons of rejoicing, which could not be prejudicial to mankind.* This would be true, if their festivals had been nothing more than seasons of rejoicing. But judge for yourselves, whether they were not something more.

That lewdness was a part of the ancient Heathen worship, is evident from the account that Moses gives of that of *Baal-Peor*, to which the *Israelites* were enticed by the *Moabites* and *Midianites*; for, during that festival, *Phinehas* asserted the honour of his religion, by killing a man and a woman in the very act of fornication, which, from the narrative, appears to have been committed without any concealment; for we read, *Numb.* xxv. 6—8, 14, 15, “And behold, one of the children of Israel came, and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman, in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest saw it, he arose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand, and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through her belly.—Now the name of the Israelite who was slain—was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites, and the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, who was head over a people and of a chief house in Midian.”†

This worship of *Baal-Peor*, if we may credit several ancient writers, consisted in such obscene practices, or postures at least, as are not fit to be mentioned; so that it is not easy to say, whether they were more ridiculous, or impure. *Hosea* (ix. 10) says of this worship, “They went unto Baal-Peor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved,” or, as the Bishop of Waterford [*Newcome*] renders it, “and became abominable as the object of their love,” or worship.‡

The farther we go back into antiquity, or so much nearer to the time of Moses, the more undisguised were these shameful practices. It appears from *Herodotus*, the oldest Greek historian, that the temples of the Heathen gods had been universally places of prostitution; for he says the

* See *supra*, p. 36.

† See Vol. XI. p. 352.

‡ See, on *ver.* 8, Vol. XI. p. 260.

Egyptians were the first who forbade it in their temples. He says that all other nations, except the *Greeks*, (who borrowed much of their religion from the *Egyptians*,) scrupled not to perform those actions in the temples.* Nor did the *Greeks* wholly abstain from them. For, when *Antiochus Epiphanes* converted the temple at Jerusalem into a temple of *Jupiter Olympius*, we read, *2 Macc.* vi. 4, "The Temple was filled with riot and revelling by the Gentiles, who dallied with harlots, and had to do with women, within the circuit of the holy places."

Julius Firmicus says that, after the season of *mourning*, with which the principal festival of the oriental nations commenced, the rest of the time was spent with every expression of mirth and jollity, to which they added the most abominable debauchery, adultery, and incest. These were constantly practised in their groves and temples.†

Surely, then, we may say, with the apostle in my text, that, as a punishment for men's apostacy from his worship, *God gave up the Heathen world to vile affections*; and that there was infinite wisdom and goodness in the Jewish and Christian dispensations, in which we are taught a mode of worship worthy of a pure and holy God, a religion the great object of which is the purest morality, and in which all the abominations of the Heathen worship are treated with just abhorrence. For our unspeakable happiness in being favoured with these revelations, we cannot be too thankful. But I must defer the farther consideration of these, and other enormities of the Heathen worship, with which the generality of Christians are little acquainted, but which you must be sensible, it is highly useful for them to know, though disgusting to contemplate, to another Discourse, with which I shall conclude this part of my subject.

* See *Young*, II. pp. 105—110; *Leland*, C. R., I. pp. 174, 175.

† "In what temple," says *Juvenal*, a Roman Heathen poet, "are not women debauched?" *Quo non prostat fœmina templo?* Sat ix. 24. (P.)

"C'étoit pour prévenir toutes ces dissolutions, dont l'idolâtrie fournissoit l'occasion et le prétexte, que Moïse fit une défense qui peut d'abord étonner quelques lecteurs. (*Deut.* xvi. 21.)

"Abraham en avoit planté dans les lieux où il adoroit; et quelques-uns de ses descendans avoient suivi son exemple. La verdure des arbres et la fraîcheur de leur ombre offroient aux adorateurs une retraite agréable dans ces climats: le silence et l'obscurité de ces bois sacrés pouvoient contribuer au recueillement.

"Les peuples idolâtres en plantèrent aussi autour des autels de leurs faux dieux. Mais l'idolâtrie abusa bientôt de ces bocages. Ils devinrent les rendez-vous de la débauche, et le théâtre du crime.

"Dans la crainte que ses Hébreux n'en abusassent de même, le législateur leur défend d'en planter aucun; et parce que les Païens varioient leurs arbres selon les différentes divinités qu'ils adoroient, il les leur interdit tous." *Lettres de quelques Juifs*, III. pp. 201, 202.

DISCOURSE IV.

A VIEW OF HEATHEN WORSHIP.

ROM. i. 18—26:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections.

THE most plausible objections made to the system of revelation, and those by which persons who have no knowledge of antiquity are most liable to be impressed, are those which relate to the *Jewish* religion, and the books of the *Old Testament*, with which the generality of *Christians* are too little acquainted. *Voltaire* and other unbelievers are more particularly fond of representing the institutions of *Moses* as unreasonably intolerant, with respect to the *Heathens* who, they say, only differed from the *Hebrews* in religious opinions. It therefore behoves those who undertake the defence of revealed religion to shew, what it is very easy to do, that ancient Heathenism was by no means a mere system of speculative opinions, and innocent practices; but that, besides being absurd in the extreme, it really promoted the most destructive and most execrable vices, and that the

religion of the Hebrews was free from every tendency of the kind, and infinitely superior to it in every other respect.

In my last Discourse I gave you an idea of some of the enormities of the Heathen religion, such as, though well known to the learned, are not so to the generality of Christians, and yet without this knowledge it is impossible that they can have a just idea of the value of their own religion, or a right understanding of the Scriptures, especially those of the *Old Testament*, in which there are perpetual allusions to the principles and rites of the Heathen worship. I particularly mentioned the multiplicity of the Heathen deities, the vile characters of many of them, the horrid rite of human sacrifices, the painful austerities to which their religion subjected them, and the open prostitution which was encouraged by it, and practised in their very temples; and in support of my representations, I recited a variety of facts, from the authority of the Scriptures, and other ancient writings. Had I contented myself with exclaiming in general terms only against the religion of the *Heathens*, saying of it, as *Voltaire* does of the religion of the *Jews*, that it was an *execrable superstition*,* without reciting any of the circumstances which shew it to have been such, all that you could have inferred would have been, that I was desirous of impressing your minds with an abhorrence of that religion, but then you would have had no knowledge of the reasons why it deserved that abhorrence, and therefore might have paid no regard to my unsupported representation.

My last Discourse concluded with observing that a most prominent feature in the religion of the ancient Heathens, was the encouragement it gave to lewdness, and this continued with increase, when, in the progress of civilization, the cruel rite of human sacrifices, and their painful austerities, became less frequent. For this reason the apostle Paul, in the chapter which contains my text, and in other parts of his epistles, particularly dwells upon it.

On this subject I shall only mention one more circumstance, which is several times mentioned or alluded to in the Scriptures. It is, that a considerable revenue arose to many of the Heathen temples, as is now the case in *Indostan*, from the prostitution that was encouraged in them, or in places provided for that abominable purpose adjoining to them. The Divine Being, alluding to this practice of

* "La plus détestable superstition." See *Lettres de quelques Juifs*, p. 13.

the Heathens, says by Moses, *Deut.* xxiii. 17, 18, "There shall be no *harlot* of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a *harlot*—into the house of the Lord thy God."* For, incredible as it may appear to us, who have had the happiness of being educated in the principles of the purest of all religions, even unnatural pollution was allowed and encouraged in the religion of the ancient Heathens. For this we have the clear evidence of the Scriptures, as well as of many ancient writers. Concerning the pious king *Josiah*, we read, 2 *Kings*, xxiii. 7, that "he brake down the houses of the sodomites that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove,"† or rather for *Asteroth*, or *Astarte*, a famous *Syrian* goddess.‡

In the time of *Constantine*, and no doubt from times of the most remote antiquity, the *Egyptians* had religious rites, in which sodomy was practised, and they imagined that the rise of the *Nile* depended on the observance of them. These this Christian emperor ordered to be discontinued; and whereas the superstitious Heathens had imagined that the consequence of this suppression would

* See Vol. XI. p. 289.

† See *ibid.* p. 478.

‡ *Herodotus* informs us that at *Babylon*, a city the most devoted to the worship of idols of all the nations of antiquity, every woman was obliged once in her life to prostitute herself to some stranger in the temple of *Venus*. Because the most wealthy disdained to expose themselves in public, among the rest, they went in covered chariots to the gates of the temple, with a numerous train of servants attending at a distance. But the far greater part went into the temple itself, and sat down covered with garlands. The galleries in which they sat were in a straight line, and open on every side, that all strangers might have free passage to choose such as they liked best. The beautiful women, he says, were soon dismissed; but the deformed were sometimes obliged to wait three or four days before they could satisfy the law. The person who made choice of any of them made her a present, which was sacred to the deity, and could not be refused, though ever so small.

The same historian says, that the women of *Cyprus* had a custom not unlike this of the *Babylonians*. There was the like in the temple of *Venus* at *Sicca* in *Africa*, at *Corinth*, and at *Comana* in *Cappadocia*. In the temple of *Venus* at *Aphaca*, on *Mount Libanus*, there was a kind of academy of lewdness, open to all debauched persons, where the most beastly crimes were committed in the temple, as a privileged place, exempt from all law and government. The *Ludi Florales* at *Rome* were celebrated by a company of prostitutes, who ran up and down naked, using the most lascivious postures.

The temple of *Venus* at *Corinth* maintained above a thousand prostitutes, sacred to her service, and what they got was given to the goddess. The same is the case at this day with respect to many of the temples in *Indostan*. *Tavernier* says, there is a *Pagod* near *Cumbaye*, where women prostitute themselves, [and "girls, when they are 11 or 12 years old,"] and *Marco Polo* says, that the like custom prevailed at *Camul*; and that when it was forbidden by the *Mahometan* prince, *Mongon Khan*, and the order had been obeyed three years, the people sent deputies to get it repealed, as they said that their fields had not been so fruitful as they had been before. (*P.*) See *Tavernier* in *Harris's Voyages*, 1703, II. p. 353; *Young*, pp. 106—111; *Leland*, *C. R.*, I. pp. 173—175.

be, that the river would not rise as usual, the Christians said it rose higher than before.*

Sodomy, says *Julius Firmicus*, who wrote in the time of the sons of *Constantine*, was then practised in the temple of *Juno*. He adds that "they were so far from being ashamed of it, that they made it the subject of their glorying."† And it appears from various writers that the gains of this abominable kind of prostitution were a source of revenue to the Heathen temples, as well as those of the women who belonged to them. And yet of this religion *Voltaire* says, that "it could not be of any prejudice to mankind."‡

Besides the rites which were performed in public, and at which all persons were permitted, and often required, to be present, there were in the ancient Heathen religions, rites of a private nature, to which none were admitted but under an oath of secrecy, the violation of which was deemed

* See Vol. VIII. p. 279.

† "Publicant facinora sua, et contaminati corporis vitium cum maximâ delectationis macula confitentur." *De Errore Profanæ Religionis*, pp. 10, 11, *Oxon.* 1678, *Leland*, C. R., l. p. 176.

‡ How the rites of the goddess *Cybele* operated as an incentive to lewdness may be seen in *Juvenal*, Sat. vi. 313, &c.

That these practices, thus sanctioned by religion, had a fatal influence on the public opinion and the public morals, is evident from the writings of the Heathens, especially those of the poets, which abound with the most disgusting obscenities.

One of the most admired eclogues of *Virgil*, who is esteemed the chastest of the Roman poets, celebrates the love of a man to a boy, [*Alexis*,] and the only remaining and much-admired poem, of the Greek poetess *Sappho*, describes that of a woman to a woman, which is an abundant confirmation of what to us appears most incredible, in the apostle Paul's representation of the depravity of the Gentile world. [*Rom.* i. 26, 27.]

With the disbelief of revelation we find in fact, that the just abhorrence which all the Christian world entertain for these unnatural vices disappears; a proof of which might be given in some well-authenticated anecdotes of the late King of Prussia, but not to be related in this place. (P.) See Vol. II. pp. 95, 96; Vol. XIV. (on *Rom.* i. 29—32) p. 199.

The learned Dr. Trapp, in the *Introductory Remarks* to his Translation of the Second *Eclogue*, has indignantly repelled, rather than satisfactorily refuted the imputation on "so grave, chaste, and religious a writer as *Virgil*." See Trapp's *Virgil*, 1735, Ed. 3, l. p. 14. Yet the impure sense which has been generally, and probably too justly assigned to the *Alexis*, would not be unacceptable to the poet's patron, *Mæcenas*, if we may receive his character from *Tacitus*, (*Ann.* cliv.) See Dr. *Scomberg's Life of Mæcenas*, 1766, p. 144.

Dr. Hartley represents "ancient Heathen poetry," as well as too much "modern poetry, of most kinds," as having "close connexions with vice, particularly with the vices of intemperance and lewdness;" which "they represent in gay, pleasing colours, or, at least, take off from the abhorrence due to them." See *Observ.* Pt. ii. (*Prop.* lix.) II. pp. 253, 254. It is a question worthy of more attention from moralists, not to say Christians, than it has yet received, whether they should encourage, even for the cultivation of a classical taste, the re-publication of such poetry in any form, except that of a judicious selection, which would leave to a poet

Not one immodest, one corrupted thought,

One line which, dying, he might wish to blot;

an excellence for which Lord Lytleton justly commends the muse of Thomson.

to be the greatest act of impiety. Some have supposed that the design of these *mysteries*, as those rites were called, was to shew the absurdity of the popular worship; but this is in the highest degree improbable.* Indeed, nothing which should have been suspected to have that tendency would have been borne with, and they who made the greatest account of these mysteries were the most devoted to the popular superstitions. The most probable opinion is, that whatever was the original intention of these private mysteries, they became a scene of such exhibitions and practices, as were worse than any that were transacted in public.

Socrates, the most moral of all the Heathen philosophers, and the least attached to the vulgar superstition, would never be initiated into these mysteries.† In *Cicero's* time the terms *mysteries* and *abominations* were almost synonymous,‡ and we may well suppose what the nature of them must have been, when it is known that they were celebrated in the night, in honour of *Bacchus*, *Venus*, or *Cupid*, and that indecent images were carried in procession in them,§ so that they could not fail to countenance that impurity and dissoluteness of manners, which was so general in the Pagan world. To these mysteries it is most probable that Paul refers, when he says, *Ephes. v. 12*, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret." *Clemens Alexandrinus* called these *mysteries* "the mysteries of atheistical men;" adding, "I may rightly call those Atheists, who are destitute of the knowledge of him who is truly God, and most impudently worship a boy discerped, or torn in pieces by the Titans, a woman lamenting, and the parts which modesty forbids to name."|| A Roman consul discovered that the *Bacchanalian* mysteries consisted of such things as the most unbounded prostitution could exhibit in private and nocturnal assemblies, that no person could be initiated into them without renouncing his modesty, while the priests who presided over them prescribed in public, to those who were to be admitted to them, a ten days' abstinence.¶ *Constantine*, who forbade the practice of sodomy in the religious rites of the Egyptians, forbade all secret rites of initiation in all the Roman empire.**

But there is no occasion to pry into the *secret mysteries*

* See *Leland*, C. R., I. pp. 196—202.

† See *ibid.* p. 193.

‡ *Ibid.* (*Div. Leg.*) p. 194.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 194, 195.

|| *Ibid.* I. p. 225.

¶ See *Livy*, A. R. 566, B. C. 186, L. xxxix., C. viii.—xviii.

** See Vol. VIII. p. 279.

of the Heathen religion for scenes sufficiently shocking to decency. Public games and plays, in which the flagitious actions of the Heathen gods were represented, were always considered as acts of religion, and celebrated in their honour, though some of the wiser of the ancients were ashamed of these exhibitions. "Speaking of Jupiter's adulteries, and of his ravishing Ganymede, and carrying him off to be his cup-bearer, *Austin* quotes that passage of *Tully*, 'Homer feigned these things, and ascribed human actions and qualities to the gods. I had rather he had raised men to an imitation of the divine.'"* It is not, however, true that *Homer* invented those stories. He only introduced into his poems what was generally believed in his time. "The same gods," says *Austin*, "were laughed at in the theatre and adored in the temples."† And what is particularly remarkable, is, that worse things were ascribed to gods of the greatest dignity, as *Jupiter*, than to any of an inferior rank.‡ Such was the religion which *Voltaire* represents as perfectly innocent with respect to its moral tendency.

Some of the rites of the ancient Heathen religions, which were not remarkable for their cruelty or lewdness, consisted of such instances of savage ferocity and extravagance, as are not easily accounted for. But whatever was the *cause* that led to such rites, the *facts* that I shall mention are unquestionable, and perhaps such persons as *Voltaire* would not have been shocked, but only amused, with them.

"When the sun entered the sign *Aries*, which was at the vernal equinox, the *Egyptians* celebrated a feast in honour of this deity with extravagant, enthusiastical rites. Persons of both sexes counterfeiting frenzy and madness, ran about the streets, hills, and deserts, pulling the carcass of the animal they offered, in pieces, and, breaking all its bones, ate it with the blood running out of their mouths; and left no sort of extravagance uncommitted." From *Egypt* this rite passed into *Greece*. "*Porphyry* says, that at *Chios*, 'they sacrificed a man, whom they pulled in pieces,' and he tells us that they had the same custom at *Tenedos*." *Plutarch*, speaking of these things, says, "Those feasts and direful sacrifices, which are celebrated by eating raw flesh, torn by men's nails; as others wherein they fast, and smite their

* "Fingebat hæc Homerus, et humana ad deos transferebat, divina mallem ad nos." (*Tusc. Disp.* L. i. C. xxvi.) *Leland*, C. R., I. p. 163.

† "Non alii dii ridentur in theatris quam qui adorantur in templis." (*De Civit. Dei*, L. vi. C. viii.) *ibid.* p. 165.

‡ See *Austin* on the *Dii Selecti* in *ibid.* p. 164.

breasts; were not, I think, performed on any of the gods' account, but rather to avert, mollify and appease the wrath and fury of some bad demon: for it is not likely there ever was a god that expected or required men to be sacrificed to him, as has been anciently done, or received such kind of sacrifices with approbation.* But *Plutarch*, from his own better reason, thought too favourably of the religion of his ancestors.

In the *Omophagia*, which was a festival of the *Greeks* in honour of *Bacchus*, the priests tore with their teeth, and devoured the entrails of the goats which they sacrificed, raw and reeking, in imitation of their god.† And “the *Lupercalia*, one of the most ancient Roman festivals, in honour of *Pan*, was celebrated” by “the priests running about the streets, naked, all but the middle, and striking all they met, especially the women, with thongs made of the skins of goats, which they had sacrificed.” And the women, thinking there was great virtue in those lashings, rather threw themselves in their way than avoided them.‡

What a striking contrast, with respect to all the things I have enumerated, do we see between the religious rites of the *Heathens*, and those prescribed to the *Hebrews*, in none of which is there any thing that savours of cruelty, immorality, or indecency; and yet *Voltaire* is ever loading the religion of the *Jews* with every term of reproach, and apologizing for that of the *Heathens*.

The proper parent of all superstition and false religion, is, as I have observed, *ignorance of nature*, and the true causes of events; and men being naturally anxious about the good or evil that may befall them, not knowing their true causes, but ascribing every thing to some cause or other, were led, from circumstances which it is impossible at this distance of time to trace, to fix upon causes entirely foreign to the purpose. But though their opinions, and some of the practices derived from them, cannot now be mentioned without exciting a smile of contempt, they were serious things in times of antiquity; and to have laughed at them then would have cost a man dear.

When the sun, and his emblem fire, were the principal

* “De Oraculorum Defectu.” See *Leland*, C. R., I. p. 139; *Young*, pp. 196, 198.

† See *Potter* (B. ii. Ch. xx.), I. pp. 384, 439. “It was customary for the priests to put serpents in their hair, and in all their behaviour to counterfeit madness and distraction.” *Ibid.* p. 384.

‡ See *Plutarch* in *Rom. and Cæs.*; *Kennet's Antiq. of Rome*, Pt. ii. B. ii. Ch. ii.; *Leland*, C. R., I. p. 173.

objects of worship, it was imagined that no child would live or thrive, that was not made to pass through the fire, and, therefore, the drawing them over lighted straw, or any kind of flame that would not materially injure them, was deemed a necessary rite of religion. This we find practised by the *Israelites*, in imitation of their neighbours, during their defection from their own religion. Thus we read concerning *Manasseh*, 2 *Chron.* xxxiii. 6, that "he caused his children to pass through the fire, in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcrafts, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards;" all which practices were of Heathen origin, and deserved to be particularly noticed.

The *observing times*, or distinguishing days into the lucky and unlucky, when they cannot have any real influence on the business transacted in them, was a very ancient Heathen superstition, and even continues to this day, though one of the remains of Heathenism, in most Christian countries.

Lucian, a Heathen philosopher, speaking of unlucky days, says, on them "neither do the magistrates meet to consult about public affairs, neither are law-suits decided in the hall, nor sacrifices offered, nor, in fine, any sort of business undertaken, wherein a man would wish himself fortunate."* He says, "that *Lycurgus* the Lacedemonian lawgiver, had made it a fundamental institution of government, never to enter upon any warlike expedition, but when the moon was at the full; that people being of opinion that all things were under her influence and direction, and that, consequently, their forces abroad would not act with such vigour and success, nor their affairs at home be so well managed, in the increase, as in the decrease, of the moon.† The emperor *Augustus* was so much a slave to this superstition, that he "never went abroad on the day after the *nundinæ*," (on which the public markets were held,) "nor began any serious undertaking on the *nones*"‡ of any month. *Ambrose* says, that the first converts from Heathenism were much addicted to these observances.

What is called *witchcraft*, which is another of the superstitious practices to which *Manasseh* was addicted, was very common among the Heathens. It consisted in the invoca-

* *Pseudologist* in *Young*, II. pp. 133, 134.

† *Concerning Astrology* in *ibid.* p. 134. See Vol. XV. p. 217.

‡ "Observabat dies quosdam, ne aut postridie *nundinas* quodam proficisceretur; aut *nonis* quidquam rei seriæ inchoaret." *Sueton.* in *August.* C. xcii. See *Young*, II. p. 132.

tion of demons, in order to produce by incantation, charms, medicated compositions of herbs, &c., the most surprising effects. This art, *Maimonides* says, was much practised by the *Zabii*, and the *Chaldeans*; and it was very common among the *Egyptians* and *Canaanites*.

None of these magical operations could be performed without a regard to the stars; for they held that every plant had its governing star. With the Heathens, therefore, these magical practices were acts of religion. By this means they believed that the demons were subject to them. In the ancient Heathen religions the most extraordinary effects, especially of the mischievous kind, were ascribed to charms and talismans; but it was supposed that they might be counteracted by more potent charms, though alike insignificant. A superstitious person, says *Theophrastus*, if he sees a weasel cross his path, goes no farther, till some other person goes before him, or till he has thrown three stones across the way.* Many of these things, though absurd in the extreme, made so deep an impression on the minds of the Heathens, that it was with great difficulty that they were brought to disregard them when they embraced Christianity.

It might be imagined that these idle notions and customs were peculiar to the vulgar among the Heathens, but they were regularly practised by the gravest magistrates of the wisest states in antiquity. For, in fact, when those states were constituted, the legislators themselves were not, in these respects, more knowing than the rest of the people. When any great public calamity was to be averted at *Rome*, the first magistrate went in solemn procession, and drove a nail of brass into the temple of *Jupiter Capitolinus*.† This was deemed to be the most effectual method of appeasing the anger of the gods.

The greatest stress was laid by the ancients on solemn *imprecations*, as we see in the case of *Balak*, king of *Moab*, who, at a great expense, sent for the prophet *Balaam* to curse Israel; ‡ for the curses of prophets and priests were thought to be the most efficacious. Hence it was customary for men condemned for any notorious crime to be publicly cursed by the priests. It was also often done from particular enmity and faction. Thus, when *Crassus*, the Roman triumvir, undertook his famous expedition against

* See "The Moral Characters of Theophrastus," translated by *Budgell*, 1714, (Ch. xvi. *Superstition*,) p. 49.

† See Vol. II. p. 82.

‡ See *Numb.* xxiii., Vol. XI. pp. 255, 256.

the *Parthians*, his opponent *Ateius Capito*, the tribune, “ran before to the gate” of the city through which he passed, “and placed there a censer with fire in it. At the approach of Crassus, he sprinkled incense upon it, offered libations, and uttered the most horrid imprecations, invoking at the same time certain dreadful and strange gods.”*

Prying into futurity was always a great object in the religion of the Heathens; and from their ignorance of nature, they imagined that the gods, who were the rulers of the fates of men, gave indications of future events by various signs, which it was the business of the priests to study.† This was the art of divination.

Divination was most commonly made by sacrifices, and especially by the observation of the entrails, and more particularly the livers of the victims.‡ This among the Romans was a science of itself, and a distinct order of priests, called *Haruspices*, were appointed to the study and practice of it.§ Another solemn divination was by the observation of the flight of birds, and this was the business of another order of priests, called *Augurs*; and unless their reports were favourable, no public business could be transacted. A peculiarly solemn rite of this kind, called *taking the auspices*, was by observing the manner in which a coop of poultry, which was kept for the purpose, ate their food. If they did it heartily, the omen was thought to be favourable; if otherwise, unfavourable; and so much were the minds of the Roman soldiers impressed by this circumstance, that no prudent general would risk an engagement with the enemy till the augurs made a favourable report.||

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, did not undertake his expedition against Jerusalem without first consulting the gods, according to the rites of divination practised in his time, though we know but little of them at present. Thus we read, “The king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of two ways; to use divination, he mingled his arrows, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. Towards his right hand fell the divination against Jerusalem; to set *battering*-rams, to open the mouth in slaughter, to lift up the voice in shouting, to set *battering*-rams against the gates, to cast up a mount, to build a tower.”¶

* *Plutarch in Marc. Crass.* See *Langhorn*, III. p. 440.

† See the *Divination* to discover the successor of *Valens*, Vol. IV. p. 573.

‡ See *Potter* (B. ii. Ch. xiv.), I. p. 316; *Young*, I. pp. 199, 200.

§ See Vol. XI. pp. 21, 22.

|| See Vol. II. p. 86.

¶ *Ezek.* xxi. 21, 22, *Newcome.* See Vol. XII. pp. 278, 279.

It were endless to enumerate all the various modes of divination practised by the ancient Heathens, as by lots, by ominous words and things, &c., with allusions to which the *Greek* and *Roman* writers abound, so that they are well-known to every school-boy. But one of the most extraordinary and direful of these modes of divination, that by having recourse to the dead, I must briefly mention. This was the serious art of *necromancy*, to which *Manasseh* was said to have been addicted; and to this, king *Saul* had recourse in his distresses.* Thus, also, *Ulysses* is represented by *Homer* as sacrificing a black sheep in a ditch, and after pouring libations, inviting the ghost of *Tiresias* and others to drink of the blood, in order to their answering the questions that would be put to them.†

Similar to this was the *having to do with familiar spirits*, and *wizards*, with which *Manasseh* is likewise charged; for the answers received by this means are represented as seeming to come from under the ground, the place of the dead; as we read,

Seek unto the necromancers and the wizards;

To them that speak inwardly and that mutter,

And thou shalt be brought low: thou shalt speak as from beneath the earth:

And from out of the dust thou shalt utter a feeble speech.‡

Sometimes the persons who pretended to this art seemed to speak out of their own bellies. Of this kind, *Maimonides* says, is the oracle of *Pytho*. "He is one who offers a certain kind of fumigation. He flourishes a myrtle rod in his hand, and pronounces certain set words of enchantment. Then he seems to consult one who is talking with him, and answering him questions, as it were from underground, with so low a voice, that he cannot hear it, but must collect the meaning by his imagination."§

Thus have I endeavoured to give you a general idea of the nature of the Heathen religion, as it was practised in the earliest ages, and indeed as it continued, with little or no improvement, till the promulgation of Christianity. It was not, you see, a merely contemptible superstition, founded on the grossest ignorance of the laws of nature, but such as in the highest degree must have debased the

* 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 7—19. See Vol. XI. pp. 386, 387.

† See *Odyssey*, B. xi. *ad init.* "The ancients called this book *Νεκρομαντεία*, or *Νεκρῶν*, the Book of Necromancy." Pope's Note.

‡ *Isaiah* viii. 19, xxix. 4, Bp. *Lowth*.

§ *Havoda Sara* in *Young*, II. pp. 145, 146.

minds, and have corrupted the morals of men. How justly is the state of the Heathen world described by the apostle Paul in my text, and other sacred writers; and how remote from truth, and the appearance of truth, is the account that *Voltaire* and other unbelievers, out of a desire to discredit revelation, have given of it! Surely, then, the rectifying these fundamental errors, into which all the world had fallen, with respect to religion, and the putting an end to practices so debasing to the human character, and so destructive of human happiness, was an object not unworthy of the great Parent and friend of mankind.

That there was no prospect of men, by any use they could make of their own reason, recovering from this deplorable ignorance and corruption, was evident by the experience of three thousand years, in which, though many parts of the world became enlightened in other respects, they grew, if possible, more confirmed in their attachment to their religions received from their ancestors; continuing to believe, notwithstanding the strongest appearances to the contrary, that the prosperity of their several states, and even the fertility of the ground, depended upon the observance of their particular rites. And therefore, as soon as the Heathen magistrates saw the rapid spread of Christianity, and the danger to which their ancient religions were exposed in consequence of it, they employed all their power to suppress it, persecuting the professors of the new religion in every form, though happily in vain. Truth, supported by clear evidence, could not be overcome by power.

That nothing less than repeated interpositions of the Deity could have preserved any part of the human race from this shocking idolatry, so destructive of virtue and of happiness, is particularly evident from the history of all the nations descended from *Abraham*, whose founders were, no doubt, instructed by him in the knowledge and worship of the one true God, and who, notwithstanding this, all became idolaters. This was the case with the *Arabs*, descended from *Ishmael*, and other sons of that great patriarch, though in the time of *Job*, who was probably prior to *Moses*, some of them were not so. This was also the case with the *Edomites*, though descended from *Isaac*, and of the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, descended from *Lot*, the friend and companion of *Abraham*. There must, therefore, have been something exceedingly fascinating and plausible in the systems of Heathen worship, though to us, who have been enlightened by revelation, nothing appears more absurd and shocking.

But when "the world by *its own* wisdom knew not God, it pleased God," as the apostle says, 1 *Cor.* i. 21, "by the foolishness of preaching," that is, by the gospel (which, at its first publication, was ridiculed as foolish by those who were reputed wise) to effect a reformation. And to this day there has not been any reformation of the most absurd of the Heathen religions, but by means of the gospel. All that *Mahometanism* has done in this respect was by means of the principles derived from the *Jewish* and *Christian* religions, the truth of which it supposes. Thus was verified the declaration of our Saviour, *John* xiv. 6, "No man cometh unto the Father" (or attains to the knowledge and worship of the one true God) "but by me;" a most extraordinary prediction, but abundantly verified by facts.

Can we, then, be too thankful to God for the promulgation of the gospel, which has not only "brought life and immortality to light," [2 *Tim.* i. 10,] by the clear revelation of a future state; but has freed mankind from the grossest ignorance, and superstitious addictedness to innumerable practices of the most horrid and abominable nature; such as furnished incentives and opportunity for every vice, the most debasing of the characters of men, and the cause of infinite mischiefs to them, both as individuals, and as members of society! The gospel, whatever else may be said of it, has been, if there be any truth in history, the only, but it has been an effectual remedy of these great evils; while all the evils that have been charged upon it, are clearly owing to a departure from its genuine principles, as they are now to be seen in the *New Testament*, the rise and progress of them being investigated with the greatest ease and certainty. And as the reformation advances they are now every where abated, and may therefore be expected soon to disappear, when the gospel will again appear in its purity, the greatest of blessings to all the human race.

DISCOURSE V.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE MOSAIC INSTITUTIONS.

DEUT. iv. 5—8:

Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do

them; for this is your wisdom and understanding, in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is, in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day?

HAVING in the two preceding Discourses, given you a view of the religions of the ancient *Heathen* nations, I shall now, by way of contrast, give you a similar view of that of the *Hebrews*; and this it will be the easier to do, as the original records of it are extant in the writings of Moses, which were composed at the time of its institution; so that there cannot be any difficulty in distinguishing the genuine principles of this religion from the corruptions and abuses of it. No other nation can give such an account of the origin of their religion; for it is not pretended that any other has writings coeval with their institutions. All the accounts of them are traditional, and their traditions are derived from the most remote antiquity; so that much is necessarily left to conjecture with respect to them.

The superior excellence of the system of Hebrew religion and policy, for they had the same source, and the most intimate connexion, is strongly asserted by Moses in my text. On the other hand, *Voltaire*, followed by the generality of unbelievers, says, that the Jews were “an ignorant and barbarous people, who have for a long time joined the basest avarice to the most detestable superstition.”* “They have done much hurt,” he says, “to themselves, and to the human race.” This writer had, no doubt, read the books of Moses, and the other books of the *Old Testament*, for he frequently quotes them; but many persons, without ever reading these books themselves, take for granted that what he says of them is true. But, my brethren, be persuaded to make use of your own eyes, and judge for yourselves. To assist you in this, I shall, as briefly as possible, lay before you the most important particulars of which the institutions of Moses consist, and occasionally compare them with particulars of a similar nature in the systems of the *Heathens*, which were contemporary with them.

* *Letters of certain Jews*, I. p. 33. “Un peuple ignorant et barbare, qui joint depuis long-temps la plus indigne avarice à la plus détestable superstition.” *Lettres de quelques Juifs*, I. p. 13.

In order to throw the greater odium on the *Hebrew* nation, *Voltaire* says, that "this people was never famous for any art; the Jews never were natural philosophers, geometricians, or astronomers."* Admitting this to be the case, if there be any wisdom or superior excellence in their religious or political institutions, it will be the more probable that they had some other source than any knowledge of their own. But I do not desire to take any advantage of this circumstance.

It is not true that, in ancient times, the *Hebrews* were much, if at all inferior to other nations, with respect to the arts. In the art of war, which, even in the age of *Moses*, comprised many other arts, it will hardly be denied that the *Hebrews*, if there was nothing miraculous in their history, must have excelled. For, to say nothing of their emancipating themselves from the yoke of the *Egyptians*, then the most warlike people in the world, when they were wholly unprovided for the contest, they completely expelled the inhabitants of *Canaan*, ten times more numerous than themselves, who had horses and chariots of iron, and whose cities are said [*Deut.* ix. 1] to have been *fenced up to heaven*, when they only fought on foot. The whole land of *Canaan* was of no great extent, and yet *David* conquered, and held in subjection all the neighbouring nations; and it is probable that they continued tributary to the *Israelites* all the reign of *Solomon*. There are few nations in all antiquity that can boast of two such princes as *David* and *Solomon*, with all their faults.

The construction of the *Tabernacle* in the time of *Moses*, and of the *Temple* in the time of *Solomon*, shews that there were ingenious artists among them, as well as in other countries; and the knowledge that any people, in these early ages, had of real *science*, that is, of the laws of nature, and the application of that knowledge to any useful purpose, was very inconsiderable. Knowledge of this kind would have prevented that miserable superstition in which, as I have shewn, the ancient *Heathen* religion consisted.

As to what is properly called *literature*, or the art of writing and composing books, no ancient nation can pretend to vie with the *Hebrews*. We have no account of any books so old as those of *Moses*, and though there is not in them the least appearance of *art*, or studied composition,

* See *Letters of certain Jews*, l. p. 46. "Ce peuple ne fut renommé par aucun art. Les Juifs ne furent jamais, ni physiciens, ni géomètres, ni astronomes." *Letters de quelques Juifs*, l. p. 26.

they are written with that engaging simplicity which has not yet been exceeded by any writings whatever. The pathos in the address of *Moses* to his nation, in the book of *Deuteronomy*, [xxix.—xxxii.,] written just before his death, is inimitable. It is not possible to read it, if I may judge of the feelings of other persons by my own, without the strongest emotions. The incidents in the history of *Joseph* were not the invention of *Moses*, but they have lost nothing in going through his hands. There is not, in all antiquity, so affecting a narrative.

With respect to the knowledge of human nature and human life, *the Proverbs of Solomon* discover as much of it as the sayings of the seven wise men of *Greece*, in a much later period; and for sublimity of sentiment and energy of expression, the *Psalms of David*, and the writings of *Isaiah*, and other *Hebrew* prophets, though in a language but imperfectly known, and though they have suffered more than any writings whatever, by frequent copying, are infinitely superior to any poetical compositions of the *Greeks* or *Romans* in any age, especially if they be read in prose translations, which is all that we can do with respect to the poetry of the *Hebrews*, the measure of which is now lost. Both are extant. Let them be compared by the principles of just criticism; but not by so prejudiced a person as *Voltaire*.

The *Egyptians* had the art of writing, but they had no books of which we have any certain account. The same was the case with the *Chaldeans*. And as to the *Greeks*, they were, in a period long after the time of *Moses*, as barbarous and ignorant as the *North-American Indians* at this day. If we may judge of the ancient *Hebrews* by the *Jews*, who are descended from them, we must say that, with respect to natural ingenuity or industry, they are far from being inferior to the rest of mankind; they are perhaps rather superior, not by nature, (for in that respect, probably all mankind are nearly equal,) but in consequence of the greater exercise of their faculties, owing in a great measure to the treatment they have met with from other nations, and the manner in which they are compelled to provide for their maintenance among them. In *Europe*, at least, a very silly, or a very idle *Jew* could hardly subsist.

But without any regard to the *people*, let us consider their *institutions*; and in doing this, we must endeavour to forget or overlook principles that are familiar to us *Christians*, and which we derived from the *Scriptures*, and attend simply to

the state of the world in the time of Moses, and the principles and customs which were then most prevalent, and which the Israelites themselves had, in a great measure, adopted while they were in *Egypt*. Admitting that Moses, in consequence of his having been educated at the court of *Pharaoh*, was acquainted with all the learning of the Egyptians, he had no opportunity of acquiring *more*, or, indeed, any knowledge of a different kind; and he was not likely to improve his knowledge of any kind by living afterwards forty years among the *Arabs*, where he married and was settled; having probably given up all thoughts of ever returning to *Egypt*, his life being in danger, if he did.

Notwithstanding this, at the age of eighty, he did return, and though *Egypt* was then in a state of its greatest power, and his countrymen in a state of the most abject servitude, destitute of arms or friends, he effected their complete emancipation in a very few months, without the loss of a single life, while the Egyptians were so weakened or overawed, that, though the Israelites continued many years in their neighbourhood, and without any connexion with other nations, their old masters never attempted to get them back again; and yet, on account of the service they had derived from them, they had been most unwilling to part with them. This, however, is a circumstance which, though highly favourable to the supposition of there being something miraculous in their deliverance, I only mention by the way, before I recite the particulars of those institutions which, in their state of emancipation from their bondage in *Egypt*, and before they had got any other settlement, Moses delivered to them.

In considering these institutions, let us pay no regard to what Moses says of their having been delivered to him by God, but only what they are in themselves, that we may judge from the circumstances of the times, whether it be more probable that they were devised by himself, or that they were communicated to him in the manner that he relates. In this view of the *Mosaic* institutions, I shall not, however, strictly confine myself to what may be drawn from the writings of Moses, but take advantage of the farther lights that are thrown upon them in other books of the *Old Testament*, the authors of which had no other sources of information. They are all written on the same principles, and in the same spirit.

1. You have seen the monstrous *Polytheism* of all the nations of antiquity. In direct opposition to this, the first,

and most fundamental principle in the religion of the *Hebrews*, was that of *the Unity of God*. The first of the ten commandments, delivered from Mount Sinai, is, (*Exod. xx. 2.*) "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me." This precept is repeated with the greatest emphasis through all the writings of Moses, and those of the subsequent prophets. *Deut. vi. 4, 5*: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," that is, with an undivided affection, there being no other legitimate object of worship besides him.

That this principle is a just one, will not now be questioned; but, compared with the principles and practices which then prevailed in the world, it must be pronounced to be not only just, but also great and sublime, being entirely remote from the apprehensions of the most enlightened of mankind in that age. That such an immense and infinitely various structure as that of the world, or rather what was called the universe, consisting of all the visible objects in nature, the system of the sun, moon, and stars, as well as the earth and sea, should have had any proper Author, and much more only *one* Author; that one mind should perfectly comprehend and direct the whole, was utterly incomprehensible by mankind; and therefore they had recourse to a multiplicity of superior beings, each presiding in his separate province; and hence the idea of the different characters and dispositions of the Heathen gods, and the varieties in their modes of worshipping them. It is in vain that we look for such an idea as Moses gives of the Deity, even among the learned *Greeks*, two thousand years after his time, when they had long been possessed of leisure, and every other advantage, for speculations concerning the origin of the universe, which was indeed the great object of their philosophy.

2. You have seen in what strange *forms* the Heathens represented their divinities, and under what symbols, as the figures of animals, and others, they worshipped them, a practice that must have suggested low and degrading ideas of their gods. And it actually led to the worship of the animals and the images themselves, divine powers being supposed to reside in them. This was universal among the nations that bordered on *Judea*. The *Persians*, indeed, who worshipped the sun, had no images of their god besides fire; but all the nations that the *Hebrews* in the time of Moses were acquainted with, were properly *idolaters*, worshipping

their gods by means of images in various shapes, and the *Egyptians* the animals themselves.

This source of corruption and abuse was effectually cut off in the institutions of Moses. The second commandment expressly says, *Exod. xx. 4*, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.” Also when Moses, a short time before his death, reminds the *Israelites* of what they had seen and heard, and of their obligation to respect his laws, he says, *Deut. iv. 12, 15—19*, when “the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire, ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice.—Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire,) lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth; and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heavens, shouldest be *drawn* to worship them and serve them.”

The very idea of an intelligent Being, immense and omnipotent, and without any definite form, never occurred to any of the Heathens. It is in vain that we look among their philosophers for any thing so great and sublime. The least degree of attention will convince us of the greatness and sublimity of it, and yet it was familiar to this *ignorant and barbarous people*, as *Voltaire* represents the *Hebrews* to have been.

These great and splendid objects, the sources of light and heat, and, as was supposed, of other beneficial influences, which were the primary objects of worship to other nations, Moses always described as having been created by the one supreme God, as well as the earth, which was another great object of worship to the Heathen world. According to the just and sublime description of the writers of the *Old Testament*, all things are subject to the controul of this one great Being. *Dan. iv. 35*: “He doeth according to his will

in the army of heaven" above, as well as "among the inhabitants of the earth" beneath. *Heaven* is the *throne*, and the *earth* the *footstool* of God.

According to the principles of the wisest of the Heathen nations, *matter*, if not the world itself, with all the visible system of things, was eternal, and the gods who were the objects of the popular worship, arose out of it, and of course after it: for the idea they had received by tradition of *one God* having created all things, was soon lost and forgotten, so that he was no object of their worship at all.

The supremacy of this one God, as the Author and Lord of universal nature, is declared in the most emphatical terms on a variety of occasions in the *Hebrew* Scriptures. On a solemn fast, after the return from the *Babylonish* Captivity, we find an address made to God, in which they say, *Neh.* ix. 5, 6, "Blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord alone. Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth, and all things that are therein, the sea, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee." Do such sentiments as these, and such language as this, bespeak the *Hebrews* to have been that ignorant, barbarous, and superstitious nation, that *Voltaire* describes them as having always been?

3. Let us now see what are said to have been the *attributes* of this one God, the sole object of worship to the *Hebrew* nation, according to their own writings. The objects of the worship of the Heathen nations, we have seen, were, according to themselves, all limited in their knowledge and powers, and indeed by one another, one of them being occupied in this province, and another in that. But the God of the *Hebrews* is always represented as omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. According to the sublime language of the prophet, it is he

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand ;
 And hath meted out the heavens by his span ;
 And hath comprehended the dust of the earth in a tierce,
 And hath weighed in scales the mountains, and the hills in a
 balance ?

Who, (*says he*,) has directed the spirit of Jehovah ;
 And, as one of his council, hath informed him ?
 Whom hath he consulted, that he should instruct him,
 And teach him the path of judgment ;
 That he should impart to him science,
 And inform him the way of understanding ?

Behold, the nations are as a drop from the bucket ;
 As the small dust of the balance shall they be accounted ;
 Behold, the islands he taketh up as an atom.
 All the nations are as nothing before him ;
 They are esteemed by him as less than nought, and vanity.

To whom, therefore, will ye liken God ?
 And what is the model of resemblance, that ye will prepare for
 him ?

Will ye not know ? Will ye not hear ?
 Hath it not been declared to you from the beginning ?
 Have ye not understood it from the foundations of the earth ?
 It is He that sitteth on the circle of the earth ;
 And the inhabitants are to him as grasshoppers :
 That extendeth the heavens, as a thin veil ;
 And spreadeth them out, as a tent to dwell in :
 Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard,
 That Jehovah is the everlasting God,
 The creator of the bounds of the earth ;
 That he neither fainteth, nor is wearied ;
 And that his understanding is unsearchable !*

What a sublime idea doth *Solomon* give of the attributes
 of God, on occasion of the dedication of the Temple, 1 *Kings*
 viii. 27, “ But will God indeed dwell on the earth ?
 Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot
 contain thee ; how much less this house which I have
 built ?” In the prophet *Jeremiah* the Divine Being is repre-
 sented as saying,

Am I a God near at hand,
 And not a God afar off !
 Can any one hide himself in secret places,
 So that I shall not see him ? saith *Jehovah*.
 The heavens and the earth,
 Do not I fill ? saith *Jehovah*.†

The secrets of the hearts of men are represented as known
 to God :

I, *Jehovah*, search out the heart,
 And try the reins ;
 To give to every man according to his ways,
 And according to the fruit of his doings.‡

Where shall we find in any of the *Greek* or *Latin* poets
 such an idea of any of the Heathen gods as *David* gives us
 of the God of the Hebrews in *Psalms* cxxxix. ? [1—12.]
 “ O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou
 knowest my down-sitting, and my up-rising. Thou under-
 standest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassedst my path,
 and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

* *Isa.* xl. 12—15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 28, *Bp. Lowth.* † *Jer.* xxiii. 23, 24, *Blayney.*
 ‡ *Ibid.*, xvii. 10, *ibid.*

For there is not a word in my tongue but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit; or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in *the grave*, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, or dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

The absurdity of the Heathen worship, and the vain pretensions of the Heathen gods, are finely ridiculed by the Hebrew prophets. *Isaiah*, foretelling the destruction of *Babylon*, a city peculiarly devoted to the worship of idols, says,

Bel boweth down, Nebo croucheth;
 Their idols are laid on the beasts and the cattle;
 Their burdens are heavy, a grievous weight to the weary beast.
 They crouched, they bowed down together;
 They could not deliver their own charge;
 Even they themselves are gone into captivity.*

Jeremiah expresses equal contempt of them, when he says,

Thus hath Jehovah said;
 Unto the way of the Heathen conform ye not;
 Neither be ye dismayed at the signs of the heavens,
 Although the Heathen be dismayed at them.
 For the institutions of the people are vanity itself;
 For they cut down trees out of the forest,
 The manufacture of him that worketh with a sharp tool.
 With silver and with gold they decorate,
 With nails and with hammers they fasten them
 That they may not totter.
 As the palmtree are these for stiffness,
 And they cannot speak;
 They must altogether be carried,
 For they cannot walk:
 Fear ye them not, for they cannot hurt;
 And also to do good is not in their power.
 There is none like thee; O Jehovah,
 Great art thou, and great is thy name in might.
 Who will not fear thee, O king of nations,
 When he shall approach unto thee?†

* *Isa.* xli. 1, 2, *Bp. Lowth.*

† *Jer.* x. 2—7, *Blayney.*

4. Considering the shockingly cruel and abominable customs of the Heathens, we do not wonder that such worship as theirs was most strictly forbidden to the *Israelites*. Indeed, to preserve in the world the knowledge and worship of the one true God, was the great object of the institutions of Moses; and a greater and more worthy object cannot be conceived. In the directions that Moses gives his countrymen, how they should conduct themselves in the land of *Canaan*, he says, *Deut. xii. 2*, “Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every *green tree*. And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire. And ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of *their places*.” No idolater was permitted to live in the country of the *Hebrews*, which was appropriated to the worship of the one true God; and every *Jew* conforming to the Heathen worship was to be put death without mercy. It is to be observed, however, that the *Israelites* were not directed to propagate their religion by the sword, and compel other nations to conform to their worship. Their conquests, and the extirpation of idolatrous worship, were confined to the boundary of the land of *Canaan*, the country promised by God to *Abraham*. Accordingly when *David*, who had more zeal for his religion than any of the kings of Israel, conquered all the neighbouring nations, he did not compel any of them to change their religion for his.

5. The characters of the principal of the Heathen gods we have seen to have been stained with vices of the grossest kind, and the most abominable rites were practised in their groves, and the temples themselves, as peculiarly proper for their worship. The reverse of every thing of this kind is always represented by Moses and the prophets, as the disposition of the God of the *Hebrews*. Nothing of impurity, or indecency, was admitted into his worship. Nay, the great object of the whole system of the *Hebrew* religion was to form men to the perfection of moral character; and all the rites and ceremonies of it are constantly said to be wholly insignificant without this. *Be ye holy*, says Moses, *Lev. xix. 9*, *for the Lord your God is holy*.

When the *Psalmist* describes the character of the man who was acceptable to God, and fit to be admitted to his presence, he says, (*Psalms xv. 1, 2*), “Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He

that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." On the other hand, vice and wickedness are always represented as the great, and indeed, the sole object of his displeasure: "There is no peace," says God, "unto the wicked." (*Isaiah* xlvi. 22, lvii. 21.)

The insignificance of all merely ritual observances, in which the whole of the Heathen religion consisted, compared with moral virtue, is expressed in the most emphatical manner by severel of the sacred writers :

What have I to do with the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah :

I am cloyed with the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ;

And in the blood of bullocks, and of lambs, and of goats, I have no delight.

When ye come to appear before me,
Who hath required this at your hands?

Tread my courts no more; bring no more a vain oblation :
Incense! it is an abomination unto me.

The new moon, and the sabbath, and the assembly proclaimed,
I cannot endure; the fast, and the day of restraint.

Your months, and your solemnities, my soul hateth :

They are a burthen upon me; I am weary of bearing them.

When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you;

Even when ye multiply prayer, I will not hear;

For your hands are full of blood.

Wash ye, make ye clean; remove ye far away

The evil of your doings from before mine eyes :

Cease to do evil; learn to do well;

Seek judgment; amend that which is corrupted;

Do justice to the fatherless; defend the cause of the widow.

Come on now, and let us plead together, saith Jehovah :

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;

Though they be red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*

Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah? -

Wherewith shall I bow myself unto the high God?

Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings;

With calves of a year old?

Will Jehovah be well pleased with thousands of rams;

With ten thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my first-born *for* my transgression;

The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good,

And what doth Jehovah require of thee,

But to do justice, and to love mercy,

And to be humble *in* walking with thy God? †

* *Isaiah* i. 11—18, Bp. *Lowth.*

† *Micah* vi. 6—8, *Newcome.*

Passages equally excellent, and as purely moral as these, abound in the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*.

6. The public festivals of the Heathen gods were seasons of rioting and lewdness, but those of the *Israelites* were scenes of innocent rejoicing, joined with acts of devotion, which are by no means incompatible with it; and every thing relating to the service of the Tabernacle and the Temple, was conducted with the greatest regard to decency; while the utmost abhorrence is expressed for the horrid customs of the Heathens. "Inquire not," says Moses, (*Deut. xii. 30, 31,*) "after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods. For even their sons and their daughters have they burned in the fire to their gods." And yet this very thing, which is here mentioned as the greatest enormity in the worship of the Heathens, viz. human sacrifices, *Voltaire* says, was practised in that of the *Jews*.* Is it possible for effrontery to go farther than this? (Except, indeed, his maintaining that the Jews were cannibals, and fed on human flesh,)[†] while without any evidence, but his own, and contrary to every representation of the facts by Heathen writers themselves, he speaks of the Heathen festivals as mere seasons of perfectly innocent festivity![‡] But justly or unjustly, every thing not Jewish must be harmless, and their religion must be, as he calls it, *a detestable superstition*.

7. While the religion of the *Hebrews* was free from every stain of impurity, it contained nothing of unnecessary austerity. It had no painful rite, except that of circumcision, which, being performed on children of eight days old, who can have no apprehension of the thing before hand, and whose wounds soon heal, is a very trifling inconvenience. The *Hebrews* had only one fast, and that of no more than a single day in the year, but three festivals of some continuance.

In the principal of the Heathen festivals there was first a solemn mourning, all the people performing whatever was customary at funerals, or in seasons of great calamity. They

* "Ces sacrifices sont clairement établis dans la loi de ce détestable peuple, et il n'y a aucun point d'histoire mieux constaté." See *Lettres de quelques Juifs*, II. p. 56; *Letters of certain Jews*, II. p. 72.

† "Parmi lesquels cet horrible aliment fut en usage, même du temps de leurs prophètes." See *Lettres de quelques Juifs*, II. p. 35; *Letters of certain Jews*, II. p. 197. See Vol. II. pp. 211, 212.

‡ See *supra*, p. 36.

tore their hair, shaved their heads, and mangled their flesh. But the *Israelites* were expressly forbidden to do any of those things. *Deut.* xiv. 1, 2: "Ye are the children of the Lord your God. Ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead," (that is, for idolatrous uses,) "for *ye are* an holy people unto the Lord *your* God."* These directions had no view to private mournings; for on those occasions they always did these very things, but to the worship of God.

It was the custom of the Heathens to imprint on their skin various indelible marks, being figures and characters expressive of their devotedness to their gods, which must have been a painful operation. But this was also forbidden to the Hebrews. *Lev.* xix. 28: "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh, for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord."†

8. If the extreme of austerity was with so much care avoided in the *Hebrew* institutions, that of sensual indulgence was avoided with more. Every incentive to lewdness, which was encouraged and openly practised in the Heathen temples, was far removed from the worship of Jehovah. The Heathens were fond of worshipping on the tops of mountains, and in groves, in which every species of abomination was committed; and for this reason both were forbidden in the *Hebrew* worship. *Deut.* xvi. 21: "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove—near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make *unto him*."‡

In the rites of some of the Heathen deities, men were habited like women, and women like men. This was more especially the case in the worship of *Venus*. This manner of worship was also common among the *Syrians* and *Africans*, and thence it passed into *Europe*, the *Phœnicians* having brought it to *Cyprus*. In a religious rite of the *Argives*, says *Plutarch*, the women were clothed like men, and men like women.§ But in the laws of Moses it is said, *Deut.* xxii. 5, "The women shall not wear that which appertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God."||

You have seen that the *Heathens* had places adjoining to their temples, in which both men and women prostituted themselves in honour of their deities, and to augment the

* See Vol. XI. p. 280.

† See *ibid.* p. 215.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 282; *supra*, p. 49, Note †.

§ *De Mulierum Virtutibus*, in *Young*, I. pp. 102, 103. || See Vol. XI. p. 286.

revenues of the place. With a view, no doubt, to this abominable custom, the *Hebrews* were commanded to avoid these practices. *Lev. xix. 29, 30*: “Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness. Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord your God.”*

9. A superstitious respect for the Heathen temples and altars made them *asylums* for all kinds of criminals, and it was deemed the greatest act of impiety to take any person from thence, whatever his guilt had been, and however clear the proof of it. But this was not the case in the religion of the *Hebrews*, which *Voltaire* represents as the extreme of the most detestable superstition. *Exod. xxi. 12—14*: “He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall surely be put to death. If a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then will I appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.”† Where, then, do we find the proper characters of superstition, and where are those of good policy and good sense?

DISCOURSE VI.

THE

EXCELLENCE OF THE MOSAIC INSTITUTIONS.

DEUT. iv. 5—8:

Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep, therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and understanding, in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is, in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?

* See Vol. XI. p. 214.

† See *ibid.* pp. 162, 163.

IN my last Discourse, I began to give you a general view of the religious institutions of *Moses*, corresponding to that which, in two preceding *Discourses*, I gave you of the religion of the Heathens, to which they were opposed, in order to enable you to judge, whether it was probable that the former were devised by men, or were of divine origin. You have seen that, in a variety of important respects, the religion of the *Hebrews*, said by unbelievers to be a barbarous and superstitious people, had doctrines and rites infinitely superior to those of the Heathens. I particularly mentioned the great doctrine of the Scriptures, concerning the Unity of God, in opposition to the multiplicity of Heathen deities; his being represented as having no definite form, so as to be worshipped under any image; his attributes of creating and governing the world; his omnipresence, omnipotence, and infinite wisdom; the perfection of his moral character, and his making the strictest virtue the great end of his worship. I mentioned the decency of all the religious festivals of the Hebrews, as the reverse of the licentiousness encouraged in those of the Heathens, and at the same time their freedom from any unnecessary or painful austerity, and the peculiar abhorrence in which human sacrifices, and other rites of the Heathen worship, were held by the Hebrews. I also observed that the Hebrew altars afforded no *asylum* for criminals, which those of the Heathens constantly did.

10. I now proceed to observe that, whereas much of the attention of the Heathen nations was taken up with the superstitious practice of *divination*, in a great variety of forms, with witchcraft and *necromancy*, these being essential parts of their religion, and more studied than any other; (so that at Rome, to despise the established *auguries*, would have been reckoned the extreme of profaneness;) the *Hebrews*, of all the ancient nations, were entirely exempt from this wretched superstition, the offspring of the most extreme ignorance, though they knew no more of philosophy, or the true causes of events, than other people. Every branch of this superstition was strictly forbidden to the *Israelites*, as well as things of greater enormity. *Lev.* xix. 26: "Neither shall ye use enchantments, nor observe times."* *Deut.* xviii. 10—14: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer

* See Vol. XI. pp. 213, 214.

of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord; and because of these abominations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners; but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.”* Is this any mark of the *detestable superstition* with which *Voltaire* charges the religion of the *Jews*? On the contrary, it is such good sense as we in vain look for in the religion of other nations, that this writer represents as, in all respects, their superior.

Considering the very strong hold that these opinions and practices still have on the minds of men, (for to this day many Christians, and even many unbelievers in Christianity, have great faith in charms, and other things of a similar nature, relating to good or bad fortune, as insignificant as the sailors whistling for a wind,) there is not a clearer and more unequivocal mark of superior, of divine wisdom, than the contempt that is so strongly expressed for every thing of this kind, in the books of Moses, especially considering the times in which they were written.

11. The Heathens had many superstitious rules with respect to *sacrifices*. Thus, hogs were sacrificed to *Ceres*, an owl to *Minerva*, a hawk to *Apollo*, a dog to *Hecate*, an eagle to *Jupiter*, a horse to the sun, a cock to *Æsculapius*, a goose to *Isis*, and a goat to *Bacchus*. The *Zabians* sacrificed to the sun seven bats, seven mice, and seven other reptiles. The *Egyptians* were so far from sacrificing horned cattle, that they worshipped them, as also the ram.† The *Hebrews* alone kept to the natural and rational idea of sacrifices, which was to confine them to things most proper for the food of man, in order to express their gratitude to God, as the giver of it, and, as it were, to be the guests at his table.

That sacrifices, though not required of Christians, were a natural mode of worship, cannot be denied, because they were universal, and are used by all Heathen nations to this day. No philosopher, in the most enlightened period of the Heathen world, ever objected to them.

The Heathens were used to reserve some of the flesh of the animals they sacrificed, for superstitious uses, as the

* See Vol. XI. pp. 283, 284.

† See *Young*, I. pp. 191—195.

Christians, when superstition crept in among them, did of the consecrated bread in the Eucharist; for the Christians derived all their superstitious practices from the Heathens. When the *Mahometans* sacrifice a sheep, as they always do on their pilgrimage to *Mecca*,* they dry a great part of the flesh, which, by this means, may be kept two years, and make presents of it to their friends at their return. This was probably an ancient idolatrous custom, which *Mahomet* kept up. But to prevent every superstitious use of sacrifices, the *Hebrews* were directed to keep nothing of theirs till the next day; and no flesh of the Pascal lamb was to be carried out of the house in which it was eaten. They were also strictly forbidden to eat any part of it raw, (*Exod.* xii. 9,) which has been observed to have been a superstitious and indecent custom with the *Egyptians* and others. †

12. Some parts of the first-fruits of their harvests were reserved by the Heathens for magical purposes. On the contrary, the Israelites were directed; when they presented their first-fruits, to recount the goodness of God to them in the following pious form, (*Deut.* xxvi. 3,) in the presence of the priest: "I profess this day, unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us." When the priest had taken the basket out of his hand, and presented it, he was to say farther, [*vers.* 5—10,] "A Syrian, ready to perish, was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation great, mighty, and populous, and the Egyptians evil-intreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage; and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and an out-stretched arm, and with great terribleness,

* At "the place, as they say, where Abraham went to offer up his son Isaac,—two or three miles from Mecca.—Here they all pitch their tents, and spend the time of *Curbaen Byram*, viz. three days.—Every individual *Hagge*" (a name conferred by the *Imam*, or priest, on those who have performed the prescribed devotions) "the first day throws seven" of "49 small stones," which he had previously gathered, "against a small pillar, or little square stone building."—This they do three days.—"They, at the same time, pronounce the following words: *Erzum le Shetane wazbete*, that is, stone the Devil, and them that please him.—As I was going to perform this ceremony, a facetious *Hagge* met me. Saith he, 'You may save your labour—for I have hit out the *Devil's* eyes already.'—After they have thrown the seven stones, on the first day—every one buys a sheep, and sacrifices it, some of which they give to their friends, some to the poor which come out of *Mecca*, and the rest they eat themselves." *Pitts's Religion of the Mahometans*, 1731, Ed. 3, pp. 139, 140.

† See Vol. XI. p. 141.

and with signs, and with wonders; and he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey; and now behold I have brought the first-fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me."

When some of the ancient idolaters had gathered all their fruits, they took a kid and boiled it in its mother's milk, and with magical rites sprinkled with it their fields, gardens, and orchards, thinking that by this means they would become fruitful. This practice was expressly forbidden to the Hebrews, no doubt as superstitious and idolatrous. "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk." (*Exod.* xxiii. 19; *Deut.* xiv. 21.)* To this custom it is not improbable that *Isaiah* alludes, when, speaking of idolaters, he says,

"Who eat the flesh of the swine,
And the broth of abominable meats is in their vessels." †

For they might put other things into the pot along with the flesh of the kid; and on this account, when they had distributed their tithes, they were directed to say, (*Deut.* xxvi. 13—15,) "I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments, which thou hast commanded me. I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them. I have not eaten thereof in my mourning," (alluding to the solemn mourning in the festival of *Isis*,) "neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead," (that is, for idolatrous purposes,) "but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swearest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey." ‡ Here certainly is piety and good sense, and nothing of that *detestable superstition* which *Voltaire* ascribes to this ancient people.

13. The rules laid down in the books of Moses, for the *diet* of the Israelites, permitting the use of some kinds of food, and prohibiting others, will, no doubt, be deemed superstition by some persons. But if the particulars be

* See Vol. XI. pp. 165, 280.

† See Vol. XI. pp. 291, 292.

‡ *Isa.* lxxv. 4, Bp. *Lowth*.

considered, it will be found that the Israelites were confined to that food which was the most wholesome, and best suited to the climate they were destined to inhabit. On the contrary, there was real and mere superstition in the restrictions that many of the Heathens laid themselves under in this respect; and in all ancient nations, religion was concerned in the choice of food. Thus the *Egyptians* would not eat the flesh of a cow. It was commonly said of them, they would as soon eat that of a man.* Their priests, and the *Pythagoreans*, who followed them in it, abstained from beans. The priests in *Syria* ate no fish, the *Phœnicians*, no pigeons,† and the ancient *Arabians* abstained from eating a variety of things, because they thought them particularly consecrated to some of the heavenly bodies, which were the objects of their worship, and because they made use of them in their divinations. Moses, therefore, or rather God by him, in order to counteract and prevent this superstition, (for it cannot be called any thing else, as the things refrained from cannot be denied to be wholesome food,) established a distinction of meats on a quite different and perfectly rational principle.

The article that will perhaps be mostly objected to, is the prohibition to eat *swine's flesh*, which we find not to be unwholesome. But the *Egyptians*, *Arabians*, and all the eastern nations, from *Ethiopia* to *India*, detest swine's flesh, and so do the *Mahometans* universally.‡ As to *blood*, I believe it is generally allowed to be gross and unwholesome food; § but probably the principal reason why it was forbidden to the *Hebrews* was, the use that was made of it in some of the sacrifices of the Heathen nations, who drank of the blood, by way of communicating with the infernal deities. || For this reason too, it might be, that, in the *Hebrew* sacrifices, the blood was directed to be sprinkled on the altar, or poured out at the foot of it. The blood was also considered as, in a peculiar manner, the seat of animal life,

* See *Young*, I. p. 206.

† See *ibid.* II. pp. 59—63. "Lucian (on *Dea Syria*) says that goddess 'was at last transformed into a dove.' It is not improbable that such as believed this fable should, upon this account, pay divine adoration to these birds; as M. Voltaire tells us there are few *Muscovites* who will venture to eat a *pigeon*, because the *Holy Ghost* is painted in form of a dove." *Ibid.* pp. 62, 63. "Peu de *Moscovites* osoient manger du pigeon, parce que le Saint Esprit est peint en forme de Colombe." *Histoire de Charles XII.* 1764, p. 22.

‡ See *Lettres de quelques Juifs*, I. pp. 235—237; *Letters of certain Jews*, I. pp. 251—253.

§ See Vol. II. pp. 376, 377.

|| See *Young*, I. pp. 235—238.

and by giving it back, as it were, to God, they acknowledged that it came from him.*

14. There is, indeed, hardly any species of superstition that was practised by the ancient idolaters that is not either directly noticed, or alluded to, and particularly guarded against in the religion of the *Israelites*. The *Zabians*, it is said, constructed certain images, according to the constellations, which they called *talismans*, by means of which they expected to perform the greatest wonders, and especially to foretel future events. These were probably the *teraphim*, of which mention is made in the Hebrew Scriptures; † and it is well known that the use of them was condemned by Moses; and the *Israelites* were directed to other means of becoming acquainted with such future events as it was proper for them to be informed of. But this I shall make the subject of a separate Discourse.

There are several things in the *Hebrew* ritual for which we are not at present able to give any satisfactory reason. But this is probably owing to our not being sufficiently acquainted with remote antiquity, and especially the worship of the most ancient idolaters, which it was the great object of the *Mosaic* institutions to oppose. For this reason, and perhaps in some cases for no other, the customs of the *Israelites* were ordered to be the very reverse of those of other nations. ‡ When the Heathens worshipped their superior divinities, who were supposed to have their residence above the clouds, they did it not only on mountains, and in high places, but on high altars, thinking that by that means they had a nearer access to the objects of their worship. For this reason the *Hebrews* were directed not to build such altars, or to worship in such places. § The Heathens used *leaven* and *honey*, in the cakes which they offered to their gods, whereas in those of the *Israelites* they were both forbidden, but they were always to use *salt*. || The Heathens bowed towards the *East*, as an act of homage to the rising sun; and therefore their temples were made to front the *West*, that when they entered them, which they always did bowing, it might be towards the *East*. For this

* See *Lev. xvii. 6, 11*; *Young. I. pp. 245, 246.*

† See *Judges xvii. 4, 5*, Vol. XI. p. 347; *Young, II. pp. 21—24.*

‡ “As if God intended, as *Maimonides* says, to cure the diseases of their minds as physicians do those of bodies, by the application of contraries.” *Young, I. p. 187.*

§ See *Exod. xx. 24, 25*, Vol. XI. p. 161; *Young, I. pp. 214—230.*

|| See, on *Lev. ii. 11, 13*, Vol. XI. p. 195.

reason the tabernacle and temple of the *Israelites* were made to look to the East, that on entering them, the worshippers might bow towards the West, turning their backs on the place of sun-rising.*

The ancient idolaters held *heifers* in peculiar veneration, and for this reason perhaps it was ordered, (*Deut.* xxi. 3,) that if any person was found murdered, and the murderer could not be discovered, a heifer which had not been used to the yoke should be slain in his place. It was not sacrificed, but its head was to be struck off.† The *Egyptians* held in peculiar abhorrence animals that had *red hair*, which they supposed to have been that of *Typhon*. In opposition, perhaps, to this, the *Israelites* were commanded to prepare their water of purification with the ashes of a red heifer, without spot, or perfectly red. *Numb.* xix.‡

15. Many unbelievers think that wherever there are *priests* there must be *priestcraft*, and of course the interest of the people sacrificed to their emolument; it being always, as they think, in the power of that order of men to impose upon the rest. But there were several circumstances in the situation of the *Hebrew* priests, which shew that they could have had no such power. In the first place, the *Hebrew* priests had no *secrets*. Every thing that they knew, or that they did, was as well known to the whole nation as to themselves. It was all detailed in the books of the law, which were not confined to themselves, as the sacred books of the *Hindoos* are to the *Bramins*,§ but directed to be read in the hearing of all the people. To these books they always had access, and the *Levites* were dispersed all over the country, that they might with the more advantage instruct the people in them.

So far was Moses from wishing that the priests should have any advantage over the people by their superior knowledge, that his exhortations to all the people to make themselves accurately acquainted with the law are peculiarly emphatical. *Deut.* vi. 6—9: “ These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy

* See *Young*, I. pp. 230—234.

† See *ibid.*, I. p. 207.

‡ See Vol. XI. pp. 247, 248; *Young*, I. pp. 208—213.

§ See Vol. IV. p. 503.

house, and on thy gates." Had the Israelites observed this excellent precept, they could never have revolted, as they did, from their own religion to that of the neighbouring nations.* It were to be wished that Christians would observe this excellent rule, or adopt the spirit of it. There would not then be so many unbelievers as there now are in Christian countries.

There was indeed, a part of the Tabernacle, and of the Temple, into which only the priests entered, and another into which the high-priest only entered; but there was nothing deposited in those places, or done in them, but what was perfectly well known to the whole nation, and they did not, and could not, pretend to derive any extraordinary powers from their having access to those particular places. Whereas, in all the ancient Heathen religions, there were *mysteries* or *secrets*, with which only the initiated were acquainted, and which were communicated to them under the most solemn oath of secrecy. Which of these institutions, then, bears most of the marks of priestcraft?

In the next place, though the *Hebrew* priests were of a particular family, and considered as the most respectable order of persons in the nation, as being more immediately employed in the service of God, they could have no landed property, and without this they could never attain any great degree of civil power; and in fact their judges, who were occasionally appointed to direct the civil power, and the kings, who held it permanently, were never of the order of priests, till the time of the *Maccabees*, which was a long time after the *Babylonish* Captivity, when they had departed very far from their original plan of government.

However, the priests of Israel were not so far a separate order of men, but they were capable of civil offices. They were also married, and so much mixed with the rest of the people, that they could have no interest separate from theirs. Their chief dependence was upon the tithes which they received from the people, who by this means had them completely in their power. By this means, however, it was wisely provided that it should be their interest to instruct the people in the law, and keep them to the observance of it. But when the priests and *Levites* did their duty in this respect, and received all the advantages they could from it, it does not appear that the tribe of *Levi*, which comprehended the family of the priests,

* See, on *ver.* 7, Vol. XI. p. 27.

the descendants of *Aaron*, was upon the whole so well provided for as any of the other tribes. The Levites in general must have been poor; for when mention is made of charity, the case of the Levite is generally recommended, together with that of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. Indeed some part of the tithes, as you have seen, were given to all these without distinction. *Jacob*, who foretold the future condition of all his sons, speaks of the *Levites*, as well as the *Simeonites*, as under a kind of curse. For he says of them, *Gen. xlix. 7*, "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in *Jacob*, and *separate* them in *Israel*." This was a punishment for their treachery, and cruelty with respect to the inhabitants of *Sichem*. [*Gen. xxxiv. 25, 26.*]

Whatever advantage the *Hebrew* priests were possessed of, it must have depended upon their keeping the people to the strict observance of their religion. But in this they notoriously failed, (which is an abundant proof that their influence was not great,) through the strong predilection of the Israelites in favour of the religions of the neighbouring nations; and many times, but more especially during the reign of *Ahab*, the priests of *Baal* had far more influence than the priests or prophets of *Jehovah*. *Elijah* was then the only prophet who made his appearance, while the priests of *Baal*, including those of the groves, or rather of *Astaroth* or *Astarte*, were eight hundred and fifty; (see *1 Kings xviii. 19*;) and there were not more than *seven thousand* persons in all the country who were not worshippers of *Baal*. (*1 Kings xix. 18*.) At the same time the influence of the court, and of the nobles, was in favour of that foreign religion. As to the priests of *Jehovah*, there is no mention made of them in any transactions of those times, so that they could not have been at all conspicuous. Whatever, therefore, of priestcraft there was at that time in the country, it must have been in the hands of the priests of *Baal*, and not of those of *Jehovah*.

16: In all ancient states, religion and political institutions had a very near connexion. With the *Hebrews*, there was a peculiar reason for its being so. They were a nation separated from all others, for the sole purpose of preserving in the world the knowledge and worship of the one true God, in a time of universal defection from it, and they were made to depend upon the providence of God, more immediately than other nations; God, according to their original constitution, being their proper king, or supreme

civil magistrate. He was *their God*, and they were *his people*, in a peculiar sense. In his address to them, when they had left *Egypt*, he says, *Exod.* xix. 4—6, “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” He also says, *Exod.* xxv. 8, “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” Agreeably to this, when, in imitation of the neighbouring nations, they wished to have a king, it was considered as a rejection of the government of God, to which they had been subject, and therefore God says to *Samuel* on the occasion, 1 *Sam.* viii. 7, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”* Under the immediate government of God, that of the *Hebrews* was an equal *republic*, while all the neighbouring nations were governed by *kings*, and in the most arbitrary manner. What could have led *Moses* to think of such an excellent mode of government as this? He could not have seen, or heard, of any thing resembling it. For, at that time no such thing existed in any part of the world.

The religion and civil government of the *Hebrews* having this intimate connexion, I shall mention some particulars of the latter, that we may see whether it was so very barbarous and absurd a system as *Voltaire* and other unbelievers represent it to have been, and whether the civil institutions of other ancient nations bear greater marks of wisdom and liberality. But on this subject I mean to be very brief.

The great object of the institutions of several of the ancient nations was *offensive war* and *conquest*. That of the *Hebrews* was simply *agriculture*, which is certainly the most natural and rational object, leading to the happiest state of human society. Foreign commerce was not encouraged, on account of the danger that was to be apprehended with respect to their religion, from an intercourse with foreign and idolatrous nations. And as a purely agricultural, and not a commercial nation, they were forbidden to take any interest for money lent to one another.†

In order to attach them to the lands of their inheritance,

* See Vol. XI. p. 365.

† See *Exod.* xxii. 25, *Lev.* xxv. 36, Vol. XI. pp. 164, 221; *Sir R. Filmer on Use for Money*, 1678, pp. 16—22.

the *Hebrews* had in their laws an excellent provision unknown in any other, viz. their reverting to the family of the original proprietors at the year of *Jubilee*, which was every half century, at which time also any contract which a Hebrew might make to bind himself to servitude was dissolved. By this means it was not in the power of the most improvident spendthrift entirely to ruin his family.* He could only mortgage his possession for a limited time, nor could there be any instance of a permanently excessive landed property. What an excellent institution was this for preserving a reasonable equality among this people, the only security for liberty, and also for creating an attachment to the soil, and of course the love of their country, in which all history shews that no nation ever exceeded, or equalled, the Jews.

Beyond the boundary of the land of *Canaan*, which was promised by God to their ancestors, and of which they got possession not by any power of their own, but by the immediate hand of God, they were not to attempt any conquest. All their wars were to be defensive, and when they took arms to repel an invasion, they were ordered, in the first place, to propose terms of peace. In case of success in war, and when, in consequence of it, they marched into the country of the enemy, they were required to do no unnecessary injury to it; and especially not to cut down the fruit trees, and to spare all who did not bear arms.†

Every *Israelite* of an age capable of bearing arms was, as in all ancient nations, obliged to join the army; but at the head of it a proclamation was directed to be made, excusing every person who had either lately married a wife, built a house, or planted a vineyard, which would naturally make him more attached to life. Even if any man felt himself on any other account fearful and faint-hearted, he might return home.‡ It is in vain that we look for maxims of such moderation and good sense in any other ancient nation.

The great strength of any country consists in its population, and such were the principles of the *Israelites*, that with them, beyond all other nations, celibacy was deemed to be a misfortune, barrenness a reproach, and a multitude of children the greatest blessing. But in Heathen nations many persons devoted themselves to a single life as an act

* See *Exod.* xxi. 2, Vol. XI. p. 162.

† See *Deut.* xx. 19, xxiii. 9, Vol. XI. pp. 285, 289.

‡ See *Deut.* xx. 5—8, Vol. XI, 285.

of religion ; as the *Vestal Virgins* among the *Romans*. They were Heathen principles and practices that led to the system of monks and nuns among Christians.

The *Hebrew* institutions allowed of servitude, but enjoined more humanity to slaves than those of any other nation. If a master, in beating his slave, struck out an *eye*, or even a *tooth*, he was obliged to set him free. *Exod.* xxi. 26, 27.* If a slave committed a capital offence, the judge, and not his master, was to pronounce the sentence. If the master wilfully murdered his slave, he was to suffer death.† The Israelites were not permitted to use the captive women, who were of course slaves, at their pleasure. The law is so express on this subject, that I shall recite it. *Deut.* xxi. 10—14: “When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife, thou shalt bring her home to thy house, and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails,” (as it is in our translation ; but the meaning is, that she should make them beautiful by colouring them, which is at this time done in the *East*, and considered as a great article of beauty,) “and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month ; and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and—she shall be thy wife. And it shall be if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will, but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.”‡ We shall find no law approaching to the humanity of this, among the *Greeks* or *Romans*, a thousand years after this time, and still less among nations of greater antiquity. How little will the treatment of slaves by *Europeans* bear to be compared with this !§

Voltaire charges the *Jews* with a violent hatred of all other nations ;|| but let us attend to their original laws and institutions on this subject. *Lev.* xix. 33, 34: “If a stranger sojourn with you in your land, ye shall not vex him, but the stranger shall dwell with you. He shall be unto you

* See Vol. XI. p. 163.

† “He shall be surely punished” is the law. *Exod.* xxi. 20.

‡ See Vol. XI. p. 286. § See Vol. XV. pp. 371, 372.

|| “La plus horrible haine pour tous les peuples qui les tolèrent et les enrichissent.” *Lettres de quelques Juifs*, I. p. 13; *Letters of certain Jews*, I. p. 33. On the toleration of the Jews, see Vol. XV. p. 298, Note.

as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself. For ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."* The Lord "loveth the stranger." *Deut. x. 18.* Many ancient nations made great difficulties about the naturalization of foreigners; but among the *Hebrews* any person, being circumcised, and conforming to the laws of the land, became one of themselves in all respects. Only, for particular reasons, persons of certain nations could not be completely naturalized till after the expiration of a certain number of generations.

In all ancient nations, as in many modern ones, *torture* was made use of both in the punishment of crimes, and for procuring evidence. But no use whatever was made of it among the *Hebrews*. Punishment by scourging was limited to forty stripes; [*Deut. xxi. 3;*] murder and some other atrocious crimes were punished with death;† but executions were performed by stoning or hanging, and the body buried before sunset. Where, then, are those "cruel and torturous executions, and that unrelenting vindictiveness," which Mr. Paine says contribute to make him consider the Bible as "the word of a demon rather than the word of God," and which makes him "detest it," as he says "he detests every thing that is cruel"? They have no existence whatever, but in his own imagination. How easy is it to calumniate what a man does not understand, and what he is strongly predisposed to dislike and misrepresent! In cases of mere manslaughter, a city of refuge was provided, in which the innocent author of the death of another, was safe from the pursuit of the relations of the deceased.‡ Theft was punished by restitution, by fine, or slavery, but not with death.§

Such, my brethren, is the general outline, and some of the principal features of that system of religion and civil policy which *Voltaire* treats as most execrable; but judge for yourselves, with what justice. On the contrary, I have no doubt but that, if all the circumstances of the *Hebrew* nation, and of other ancient and neighbouring nations, could be known, we should be satisfied that it was, in all respects, the best system possible, as much superior to any of those of human invention, as the works of nature are superior to those of art.

* See Vol. XI. p. 216.

† See, on "Crimes punishable with Death," the references, Vol. XI. p. 36.

‡ See, "Of Places of Refuge," the references, *ibid.*

§ See, on "Crimes not punishable with Death," the references, *ibid.*

DISCOURSE VII.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HEATHEN PHILOSOPHY COMPARED
WITH THOSE OF REVELATION.

1 COR. i. 21 :

The world by wisdom knew not God.

IN my two last Discourses I shewed you how greatly superior were the religious institutions of *Moses*, though so much decried by modern unbelievers, to those of the Heathens, the shocking enormities and gross abominations of which are so much disguised and smoothed over by them. But because it will be said, that what I then exhibited was only the system of *superstition*, adopted by the *vulgar*, and that the more intelligent persons among the Heathens (though, for political reasons, they did not choose to oppose, and even countenanced it) held a more rational system, I shall now shew you what that more rational system was.

For this purpose I shall lay before you, and in as intelligible a manner as I can, (for I will not undertake to make the two Discourses, which it will be necessary for me to give on this subject, perfectly intelligible to *all*,) what it was that the philosophers among the ancients really thought concerning the system of nature, and the government of the world, and also concerning the nature of man, and his future destination, with some of their ideas concerning the principles of morals, that you may compare them with those that are advanced in the Scriptures. And if it appear that these are more consonant to reason, it will afford a considerable presumption that they were of divine origin. For, how can it be supposed that the authors of the books of scripture, who had no advantage of literature, and whom unbelievers treat with the greatest contempt for their ignorance and barbarity, should have adopted a more rational system on these great subjects, than those who have been the most celebrated for their wisdom, in the most polished and civilized nations in the world? It will be very easy to make this comparison, as there is sufficient evidence what the tenets of the ancient philosophers were, many of their own writings being now extant, as well as the Scriptures of the *Old and New Testament*.

1. It was a fundamental maxim with all the philosophers of antiquity, that *creation from nothing* was absolutely im-

possible: and many of those who admitted a principle of intelligence in the universe, maintained that *matter*, in some confused, chaotic mass, was another principle, co-eternal with it, and independent of it, and, therefore, could only be modified, but not destroyed by it. *Moses*, on the contrary, asserts a proper *creation* of every thing that exists, antecedent to the *chaotic state* which he describes. *Gen. i. 1, 2*: “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth; * and the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” And since the *properties* of bodies are all that we know of them, the appointment and changing of *these*, which the philosophers admitted to be within the province of the intelligent principle, implies a power of proper *creation* and proper *destruction*; for if we take away all the properties of any thing, nothing will be left. The system of *Moses*, therefore, is more rational than theirs. This, however, continued to be the doctrine of the *Greek* philosophers to the latest period of their history. *Plato* held that matter existed co-eternally with God.† Also, “according to *Zeno*,” the founder of the Stoical philosophy, “and his followers, there existed from eternity a dark and confused chaos, in which were contained the principles of all future beings.”‡

2. Another set of philosophers, and perhaps of greater antiquity than the other, equally maintaining that creation from nothing was impossible, maintained that every thing was originally emitted from the substance of the self-existent and Supreme Being. And not only did they suppose that *intelligent* beings of all orders proceeded from him, by this mode of *emanation*, as rays of light from the sun, but that other substances of an inferior nature, proceeding in the same manner from *them*, at last *matter* itself, the most remote from the Divine essence, came into existence, and, therefore, that this substance, of which they speak with the greatest contempt, had its origin from the Divine essence. This was the system of the *Oriental* philosophy, which is still found in *Indostan*, and other parts of the *East*, and from them was derived the doctrine of the *Gnostics*, by which Christianity was corrupted in the time of the apostles. § I need not say how far this notion of the derivation

* See Vol. XI. p. 42.

† “In his *Timæus*,—which comprehends his whole doctrine on the subject of the formation of the universe, matter is manifestly spoken of as eternally co-existing with God.” *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. viii. Sect. i.), I. p. 223.

‡ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xi. Sect. i.), I. p. 328.

§ See *ibid.* (B. iii. Ch. iii.), II. pp. 147—155.

of every thing from the substance of the Divine Being, deviates from reason. There is certainly nothing so wild and absurd as this, in the writings of *Moses*, who always supposes God to have created all things, but not by the projection of them from his own essence.

The same class of philosophers who held that every thing had been produced from the substance of the Supreme Being, also supposed that, after a certain period, they would be absorbed into it again; and as originally nothing had existed besides this self-existent being, he would again exist alone; but that, after another period, other beings would be again produced from him, and that these successive revolutions would go on for ever. This ever has been, and still is, the established doctrine in the *East*, and it was adopted by some of the *Grecian* philosophers, especially the *Stoics*, who said that “the world, including the whole of nature, God and matter, subsisted from eternity, and will for ever subsist; but the present regular frame of nature had a beginning, and will have an end—from the prevalence of *moisture*, or of *dryness*; the former producing an universal *inundation*, the latter an universal *conflagration*.” That, however, from both of these catastrophes every thing “again emerges, by the energy of the Efficient Principle—and all the forms of regulated nature are renewed, but to be dissolved, and renewed, in endless succession.”*

This scheme excludes all idea of *melioration*. For, according to it, every thing has been, and in all future revolutions ever will be, just what it now is. Accordingly *Seneca* says, “This restoration many would reject, were it not that their renovated life is accompanied with a total oblivion of past events.”† How far less rational, as well as less pleasing, is this system, than that of the Scriptures, which supposes a constant tendency to a better state of things, every rational being retaining his separate consciousness, always distinct from the Supreme Being, but making nearer approaches to him, in perfection and happiness, to all eternity. As to any proof or evidence of the truth of this philosophical system, of every thing having been produced by way of emanation from the Divine essence, and being absorbed into it again, it is only this; that there cannot be *two* eternal principles, and therefore every thing that exists, must have been derived, immediately or mediately, from *one*, and this

* *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. xi. Sect. i.), I. p. 338.

† *Ibid.* p. 341.

one must have been the spiritual and intelligent principle. But will any modern philosopher admit the validity of such an argument as this, and adopt the conclusion? It is universally rejected with contempt.

As to the *essence* or *substance* of the Supreme Being, from which they say that all things were derived, it is a question of no moment; since all that we have to do with are his *attributes*, as those of power, wisdom, and benevolence, in whatever it be that they may be said to reside. But according to our apprehensions, there is something degrading in the idea of his being of the same nature with all other beings, as he must be, if every thing was produced by mere *protrusion* from his substance. *Zeno*, however, supposes "that both the active and passive principles in nature," that is, both *God* and *matter*, "are corporeal," only that the former is a "pure ether, or fire, inhabiting the exterior surface of the heavens,"* that is, a more attenuated kind of matter. And *Epicurus*, "because the human figure is the most perfect," says, that "the gods resemble men in their external shape; but we are not to suppose them to be gross bodies—but thin, ethereal substances."†

3. Both the classes of philosophers whose opinions I have now described, admitted a principle of *intelligence* in the universe, and a real distinction between *God* and *matter*. But in later times this was, by many, denied, and some philosophers even proceeded so far as not to admit the existence of any such being as *God*, in any sense of the word. *Sanchoniathon*, explaining the philosophical system of the *Phœnicians*, says, that "from the necessary energy of an eternal principle, active but without intelligence, upon an eternal, passive, chaotic mass, arose the visible world."‡ This is supposed to have been advanced in opposition to the principles of *Moses*; but certainly these will not suffer any thing by the comparison. If there be no marks of *intelligence*, that is, of *design*, in the universe, where shall we find them? Not surely in the works of men. How much more just and noble are the sentiments and language of the *Psalmist*, (*Ps.* civ. 24,) "O Lord how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!"

Aristotle did not in words deny the being of a *God*, but he supposed the universe to have existed from all eternity, independent of any wisdom or contrivance of his. He only

* *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. xi. Sect. i.), I. p. 330.

† *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xv.), I. p. 473.

‡ *Ibid.* (B. i. Ch. vii. *ad fin.*), I. p. 62.

considered him as the main-spring of the whole machine, and therefore, properly a part of it, employed, in some inexplicable manner, in communicating motion to it.* *Strato of Lampsacus*, a disciple of *Aristotle*, held "that the world has neither been formed by the agency of a Deity, distinct from matter, nor by an intelligent, animating principle, but has arisen from a force innate to matter, originally excited by accident, and since continuing to act, according to the peculiar qualities of natural bodies. It does not appear that *Strato* expressly denied or asserted the existence of a divine nature; but, in excluding all idea of deity from the formation of the world, it cannot be doubted that he indirectly excluded from his system the doctrine of the existence of a Supreme Being." †

These atheistical doctrines were not confined to a single philosopher or his disciples, many of them, and those of the greatest eminence, entertained the same, or similar sentiments. *Democritus* held that "the first principles of all things are two, *atoms* and *vacuum*," in which, by a natural necessity, or fate, they perpetually move, and that from "their combinations arise all the forms of things." ‡ *Pythagoras* also had held that "motion is the effect of a power essential to matter." *Protagoras* "in one of his books, said, 'concerning the gods I am wholly unable to determine whether they have any existence or not; for the weakness of the human understanding, and the shortness of human life, with many other causes, prevent us from attaining this knowledge.'" § But *Diagoras* openly rejected "the whole doctrine of deity." || Although *Heraclitus* introduced into his system the term *God*, he seems to have made use of it to express, not a distinct being of a peculiar nature, but merely that innate *force* in the primary *fire*," (from which he supposed all things to have proceeded,) and "by means of which" he supposed that "its particles have been in eternal motion, and have at length united, to form the present regular system of nature. To this *force*, considered as distinct from the *matter* to which it belongs, he gave the appellation of *God*." ¶

* "He makes God, indeed, the cause of all motion; but in supposing the universe to have existed from eternity, he divests him of the glory of creation, and connects him with a world already formed by the chain of necessity, for no other purpose than to make him the first spring of a vast machine." *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. ix. Sect. i.), l. p. 282.

† *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. ix. Sect. ii.), l. pp. 292, 293.

‡ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xiii.), l. p. 429.

§ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xiii.), l. p. 434.

|| *Ibid.* p. 435.

¶ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xiv.), l. pp. 442, 443.

Epicurus admitted a Deity into his system, but it was chiefly to avoid popular odium; for he maintained, that “the universe always existed, and will always remain; for there is nothing into which it can be changed. There is nothing,” he said, “in nature, nor can any thing be conceived, besides *body* and *space* ;” * that “atoms are the elements from which all things are compounded.—Not only are they the materials out of which bodies are made; but that *energy*, or *principle of motion*, which essentially belongs to them, is the sole agent in the operations of nature.” †

As the *Oriental* philosophers supposed that all things would be resolved into the Divine essence, from which they originally sprung, *Epicurus* supposed that they would be resolved into their original atoms. “The world,” he said, “is preserved by the same mechanical causes by which it was framed; and from the same causes it will at last be dissolved. The incessant motion of atoms, which produced the world, is continually operating towards its dissolution; for nothing is solid and indissoluble but atoms. Whence it may be concluded, that the time will come when nothing will remain but separate atoms, and infinite space.” ‡

Epicurus absolutely denied all *wisdom* in the construction of the universe, even in the most obvious instances. “The parts of animals,” he said, “were not originally framed for the uses to which they are now applied; but, having been accidentally produced, they were afterwards accidentally employed. The eye, for example, was not made for seeing, nor the ear for hearing; but the soul, being formed within the body, at the same time with these organs, and connected with them, could not avoid making use of them in their respective functions.” §

Can we attend to these things, and not be struck with the truth of the apostle’s observation in my text, *the world by wisdom knew not God*? It was not even able to retain that knowledge of God which had been originally communicated to man. And how justly is their case described by the same apostle, in another passage, where he says, *Rom. i. 21*, “They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened”! But are not their minds equally, or more darkened, who can prefer the absurd conceits of these philosophers to the rational doctrines of revelation? We shall, however, see more of the wanderings of the human

* *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. xv.), l. p. 462.

† *Ibid.* p. 467.

+ *Ibid.* p. 464.

§ *Ibid.* p. 469.

imagination when left to itself, in what I have farther to observe.

4. The existence of *evil* always created the greatest difficulty to those who speculated concerning the origin and construction of the universe, and the causes of events. Indeed, so difficult is the question, that nothing but revelation could have solved it. In the Scriptures we learn that *evil*, as well as *good*, is the appointment of the same great Being, but always for the most benevolent purposes. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God," says *Job*, (ii. 10,) "and shall we not receive evil?" *Chap.* i. 21: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In *Isaiah*,

I am Jehovah, and none else;
Forming light, and creating darkness;
Making peace, and creating evil:
I Jehovah am the author of all these things.*

All these evils, in the administration of this greatest and best of Beings, are subservient to good, as the *Psalmist* says, (*Psalm* xcvii. 1,) "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." But through these clouds and this darkness, the Heathens, by the help of their greatest wisdom, could not see. Some of the ancients, as the *Persians*, thought that there were *two independent principles* in nature, one the author of good, and the other of evil. The good principle, they called *Oromazes*, and the evil, *Arimanius*.† The *Egyptians* also worshipped an evil principle under the name of *Typhon*.‡

The *Greek* philosophers in general considered *matter* as the cause of all evil. In their ancient *cosmogonies* it is ascribed to *chaos*. *Plato* held, that "there is in matter a necessary but blind and refractory force; and that hence arises a propensity in matter to disorder and deformity, which is the cause of all the imperfection which appears in the works of God;"§ so that he appears to have thought that matter, from its nature, resists the will of the Supreme Artificer, so that, on this account, he cannot perfectly execute his designs. *Plato* was also influenced by the argument

* *Isaiah* xlv. 6, 7, Bp. *Lowth*.

† See Vol. V. p. 399; *Plutarch's Is. and Osir.* in *Morals*, 169, IV. pp. 122, 123; *Enfield* (B. i. Ch. iv.), l. pp. 44, 45.

‡ See *Young*, l. pp. 208, 209; *Enfield* (B. i. Ch. viii.), l. p. 77.

§ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. viii. Sect. i.), l. p. 225.

from *contraries*. "It cannot be," he said, "that evil should be destroyed, for there must always be something contrary to good."*

The *Stoics* said, "that evil was the necessary consequence of that eternal *necessity* to which the great whole, comprehending both God and matter, is subject. Thus, when *Chrysippus* was asked whether diseases were to be ascribed to Divine Providence, he replied, that it was not the intention of nature that those things should happen; nor were they conformable to the will of the Author of nature and Parent of all good things; but that, in framing the the world, some inconveniences had adhered, by necessary consequence, to his wise and useful plan."†

How different is this from the sublime doctrine of the Scriptures on this subject, as when we read, *Psalm cxxxv.* 5, 6, "I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."

5. It is in vain that we look for the rational and sublime doctrine of an *universal providence* among the philosophers of antiquity. But according to the Scriptures, there is no event, great or small, but what comes to pass according to the will of God. *Dan.* ii. 20, 21: "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. He changeth the times and the seasons, he removeth kings and setteth up kings." The proud king of *Assyria*, in the midst of his conquests, is represented, *Isaiah* x. 5, as *the staff* in the hand of God. At the same time we are assured by our Saviour, *Matt.* x. 29, 30, that *a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his will, and that the very hairs of our heads are numbered*. And this is true philosophy, for so connected are all the parts of the system, that the smallest things are as necessary as the greatest, and in many cases we cannot but see that the greatest things depend upon the smallest. *Voltaire* justly observes, that had a particular stone been thrown with a little more force, it would have given a different turn to the whole history of the *East*. It was a stone by which *Mahomet* was knocked down, as he was engaged in battle,‡ but not killed.

* *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. viii. Sect. i.), I. p. 226.

† *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xi. Sect. i.), I. p. 336.

‡ Against the *Coreishites*. (2, *Hejra*, A. D. 624.) "They pressed on so near the apostle as to beat him down with a shower of stones and arrows." *Life of Mahomet* prefixed to Ockley's *Saracens*, Ed. 3, 1757, I. p. 44.

There is most of the appearance of the doctrine of a providence, among the *Stoics*. But according to *Zeno* and *Chrysippus*, there is in nature a *fate*, or “an eternal and immutable series of causes and effects, within which all events are included, and to which the Deity himself is subject,” though “the later *Stoics*,” who wrote after the promulgation of Christianity, changed this *fate* into the *providence of the gods*.*

Other philosophers did not pretend that God, or the gods, had, in any sense, or in any respect, the government of the world. According to *Aristotle*, the Deity, if it can be said that he believed in any proper deity, is “eternally employed in the contemplation of his own nature. He observes nothing,” (this philosopher says,) “he cares for nothing beyond himself. Residing in the first sphere, he possesses neither immensity nor omnipresence: far removed from the inferior parts of the universe, he is not even a spectator of what is passing among its inhabitants, and therefore cannot be a proper object of worship and reverence.” †

Epicurus, I have observed, said that there were gods, only to avoid popular odium. According to his own account of them, they were of no manner of use in creating or governing the world. “There are,” he said, “in the universe, divine natures,—but it is inconsistent with our natural notions of the gods, as happy and immortal beings, to suppose that they encumber themselves with the management of the world, or are subject to the cares and passions which must necessarily attend so great a charge. We are, therefore, to conceive that the gods have no intercourse with mankind, nor any concern in the affairs of the world.” ‡ But, according to the Scriptures, every thing is conducted by the Supreme Being, without trouble. With respect to creation itself, it is said, [*Psalms* xxxiii. 9,] “He spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast.” He said, [*Gen.* i. 3,] “Let there be light, and there was light;” and the government of the world is, no doubt, as easy to him as the creation of it. It is, in fact, a continuation of the same exertion, whatever that be; but no idea so sublime as this was ever entertained by any Heathen philosopher.

It was the consideration of the immensity of the universe, and the idea men had of the multiplicity of cares that was

* *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. xi. Sect. i.), who says, less correctly, *of God*. See I. p. 322.

† *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. ix. Sect. i.), I. p. 282.

‡ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xv.), I. p. 478.

necessary to the government of it, that led those of the philosophers, who supposed that the world was in any sense governed by superior beings, to think it necessary to provide a great number of them, each to superintend his particular province. They had no conception of the sublime, but truly rational doctrine of the Scriptures, according to which one intelligence, one mind, perfectly comprehends and directs the whole. And yet the uniformity we observe in the works of nature might have suggested the idea of one mind having arranged and directed the whole, immense as that whole is. But the amazing variety and seeming discordancy of many parts of the system prevented their perceiving their uniformity, nor could *Moses*, or any of the *Hebrews*, have been able to discover it of themselves.

6. Mention is made in the Scriptures of *angels*, as created beings, superior to man; but they are never supposed to interfere in the affairs of men, except on particular occasions, and by the express appointment of the Supreme Being; never by their own voluntary agency. They are employed merely as *messengers* (for so their name in the *Hebrew* signifies) to convey the orders of the Almighty. But according to the system of all the philosophers, as well as that of the vulgar, among the Heathens, there are beings inferior to the Supreme, who, *at their own pleasure*, interfere in the affairs of men, and act according to their peculiar humours and passions.

Among the *Egyptians* the idea of one supreme God was, from the earliest times, connected with the belief of inferior divinities, residing in the various parts of nature; whence arose the worship of those parts of nature. According to the mythology of the *Greeks*, those inferior deities sprung from chaos. *Pythagoras* “supposed the region of the air to be full of spirits, demons, or heroes,” according to their rank, these last approaching the nearest to the nature of man. These, he said, “communicate, at their pleasure, by means of dreams and other instruments of divination, the knowledge of future events,”* and the good demons are to be invoked by prayer. “Besides the one Supreme Deity, Socrates admitted the existence of beings who possess a middle station between God and man, to whose agency he ascribed the ordinary *phenomena* of nature, and whom he supposed to be particularly concerned in the management

* *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. xii. Sect. i.), I. p. 396.

of human affairs ;” and he “ encouraged the practice of divination, under the notion that the gods sometimes discover future events to good men.” *

Plato supposed that there were “ subordinate divinities— and that the Supreme Being appointed them to the charge of forming animal bodies, and superintending the visible world.” † *Xenocrates*, a disciple of *Plato*, “ taught that the heavens are divine, and the stars, celestial gods ; and that besides these divinities, there are terrestrial demons, of a middle order between the gods and man, which partake of the nature both of mind and body, and are, therefore, like human beings, capable of passions, and liable to diversity of character.” ‡

Aristotle, who believed in no particular providence, yet supposed that there are “ intelligent natures inferior to the first mover,—who preside over the lower celestial spheres.” §

Though *Democritus* rejected the doctrine of a Supreme Deity, he admitted “ the popular belief of divinities inhabiting the aerial regions, teaching that they make themselves visible to favoured mortals, and enable them to foretel future events.” He said, “ they are in form like men, but of a larger size, and superior nature ; that they are composed of the most subtle atoms, and less liable to dissolution than human beings, but are nevertheless mortal.” || According to the *Stoics*, “ Portions of the ethereal soul of the world, being distributed throughout all the parts of the universe, and animating all bodies, hence arise—inferior gods or demons, with which all nature is peopled.” They conceived them, however, to be “ limited in their duration,” returning at length to their original, and losing “ their separate existence.” ¶

* *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. iv.), I. pp. 175, 176. “ Admire the goodness of the *Gods*,” said *Socrates*, “ and consider, that as there is in the world an infinite number of excellent things, but of very different natures, they have given us senses that answer to each, and by whose means we enjoy all of them.—As we cannot always foresee what is to happen to us, nor know what it will be best for us to do, they offer us their assistance by the means of the oracles ; they discover the future to us when we go to consult them, and teach us how to govern ourselves in our affairs.” Here *Euthydemus*, interrupting him, said, “ And, indeed, these *Gods* are, in this regard, more favourable to you than to the rest of mankind ; since, without expecting you to consult them, they give you notice of what you ought, or ought not to do.” “ You will allow, therefore, that I told you true,” said *Socrates*, “ when I told you there were *Gods*, and that they take great care of men.” *Memorabilia*, B. iv. *Trans.* 1722, pp. 156, 157. See *Leland*, C. R., I. pp. 267—270, 301.

† *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. viii. Sect. i.), I. p. 231.

‡ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. viii. Sect. ii.), I. pp. 241, 242.

§ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. ix. Sect. i.), I. p. 282.

|| *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xiii.), I. p. 432.

¶ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xi. Sect. i.), I. pp. 334, 335.

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HEATHEN PHILOSOPHY
COMPARED WITH THOSE OF REVELATION.

1 COR. i. 20:

The world by wisdom knew not God.

HAVING given you a comparative view of the religion of the *Hebrews*, and that of the ancient idolatrous nations, I began, in my last Discourse, to give you a similar view of the principles of the *Heathen philosophy*, that it might not be said that I took an unfair advantage, in relating nothing more than the opinions and practices of the vulgar among the Heathens, instead of the real sentiments of the wisest among them. These, however, I shewed you were, in several respects, far less rational than those of the Scriptures. I mentioned their universal opinion of the impossibility of creation out of nothing, of the eternity and indestructibility of matter; its necessary evil tendency; the doctrines of many of them, of the production of all inferior beings by emanation or protrusion from the substance of the Deity, and their absorption into it again: the absolute denial of the being of a God, by many, and those some of the most eminent of the Greek philosophers; their various and unsatisfactory opinions concerning the origin of evil; their denial of a Divine Providence, their belief of the existence of intelligent beings, inferior to the Supreme, who at their pleasure, and contrary to the will of the Supreme Being, interfered in the direction of human affairs. I now proceed to observe,

7. If the Heathen philosophers became so *vain in their imaginations*, when they speculated concerning the nature of God, and the origin and government of the universe, and were not able to retain the great truths which mankind had received by tradition, relating to them, much more did they wander in uncertainty and error with respect to the doctrine of a *future state*, concerning which, as I have observed, the light of nature gives us no information at all. On this subject, so important that without it the doctrine concerning God and providence is merely a curious speculation, of no practical use, the principles of those philo-

sophers who admitted a future state are totally discordant with those of the Scriptures, which alone are agreeable to reason, though not discoverable by it. On this subject, I must be excused if I advance some things which will not be approved by the generality of Christians, who, in my opinion, have not entirely got rid of doctrines introduced into Christianity from a Heathen source, from which have been derived almost all its corruptions.

According to the Scriptures, the future state of man depends entirely upon a *resurrection*, to take place at a distant period, called *the last day*, and nothing is said concerning the rewards of the righteous, or the punishment of the wicked, antecedent to that time. Our Saviour, recommending acts of charity, says, (*Luke xiv. 14.*) "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just," and on no occasion did he refer his hearers to any state of things prior to this. When he speaks of being *cast into hell*, it is with hands and eyes, which are members of the body; and the rich man in the parable is represented as with a tongue, tormented with burning thirst, though for the sake of some circumstances in the parable, the future state is represented as taking place before the proper time. [*Luke xvi. 23, 24.*]

The apostle Paul, comforting the *Thessalonians* on the death of some of their friends, refers them only to the resurrection, and gives no hint of their enjoying any degree of happiness at the time that he was writing, which would have been unavoidable, if, in his opinion, they had been happy then. *1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, 16*: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him—and the dead in Christ shall rise first," that is, before any change take place on those who will be then alive. Why, indeed, did he use the term *sleep*, if, in his idea, the dead were not in a state of *insensibility*, and not to be awaked to life and action, but at the resurrection?*

Again, when the same apostle exhorts Christians to live sober, righteous, and godly lives, *Tit. ii. 13*, he directs them to look "for that blessed hope, *even* the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," when he shall come again to raise the dead and judge the world. When our Saviour says that he will receive the apostles to

* See Vol. II. p. 357; Vol. III. p. 257; Vol. XIV. pp. 17—19.

himself, he refers them to the same time, and nothing prior to it. *John* xiv. 3: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."* When, therefore, the apostle *Paul* speaks of being "absent from the body and present with the Lord,"† he must have meant the same great period, overlooking all that passed between the time of his death and his resurrection, which indeed will only appear as a moment: as in the case of a man awaking from a profound sleep.‡

When *Moses* describes the formation of man, he represents him as made wholly, and not in part only, "of the dust of the ground," and says after this, God put breath and life into him, thereby giving motion to the curious machine, which was before a lifeless mass.§ It is to this doctrine of *Moses* that our Saviour refers, when he says, that God "is able to destroy both body and soul," or the power of life, "in hell."|| For the word that is here rendered *soul*, is elsewhere rendered life; meaning that men, by killing the body which God has been pleased to put in their power, cannot prevent its returning to life, this being in the power of God only. There is not, in reality, any more reason to suppose *life* to be a real substance, than *death*, which we nevertheless personify, when we say that *death comes*, and *surprises men*, and *takes them*.¶ In the Scriptures, both *death* and *sin* are personified.

The *Gnostics*, who were the first of the philosophers who embraced Christianity, could not divest themselves of their prejudices with respect to *matter*, as the source of all evil; and thinking it the happiest state of the soul, to be entirely detached from it, they explained away the doctrine of the *resurrection*, as to be understood of something that took place during life. To them the apostle *Paul* alludes, when he says, (2 *Tim.* ii. 18,) that *they erred concerning the faith; saying that the resurrection was past already, and overturned*

* See Vol. XIII. p. 314.

† See 2 *Cor.* v. 8—10, Vol. II. pp. 360, 361; Vol. XIV. pp. 166, 167.

‡ See *Luther* and *Layton*, Vol. II. p. 60, Note.

§ See *Gen.* ii. 7, Vol. XI. p. 46.

|| *Matt.* x. 28. See Vol. XIII. pp. 134—136.

¶ "I am verily persuaded, and dare confidently aver it, that several persons of this, as well as other nations, do conceive *death*, as he is pictured, to be a form of *dry bones*; and that he *strikes* those who at any sickness are appointed to die, which have given the grounds to that vulgar saying, in any one who is seized with desperate symptoms at the beginning of a sickness, he or she is *death-struck*. Now if such opinions as these, because they have been generally received, should not be examined into and exposed, our religion would become only a pretty mixture of folly and superstition." Dr. Coward's *Second Thoughts*, Ed. 2, 1704, p. 38.

the faith of some. Justin Martyr*, the first Christian writer after the apostolic age, whose works are come down to us, enumerating the particular tenets of the *Gnostics*, who were deemed to be *heretics*, and not allowed to be properly Christians, says of them, "They also say that there is no resurrection of the dead, but that immediately after death, souls are received into heaven. Do not take these to be Christians."†

This language of this ancient and venerable writer, is not a little remarkable. Think not, however, that I approve of his harsh censure of the *Gnostics*. Others will say, that they who reject the doctrine of a soul, are not Christians. Both are equally reprehensible. The *Gnostics* as well as *Justin*, believed the divine mission of Jesus, and a life of retribution after death, and many of them were martyrs as well as himself. The doctrine of a future life is the most important article of Christian faith: the time, the place, or the manner, in which it will be effected, are all comparatively of little moment.

Though after this, Christians in general adopted the doctrine of a soul distinct from the body, they thought that, after death, it remained in a place under ground, called *Hades*, where it waited for the resurrection of the body, when, and not before, it would be admitted to the immediate presence of God and of Christ, in heaven.‡ This continued to be the faith of the Christian world for about a thousand years. They pretty soon, however, made an exception in favour of the souls of the martyrs, which they thought went directly to heaven.§

There are thought to be some traces of the doctrine of a resurrection, in the Heathen world, as among the *Chaldeans* and *Zabians*. But if this was the case, the doctrine was soon obliterated, and speculative persons, thinking a proper *resurrection* to be absolutely impossible, and yet unwilling to give up all hope of some *future state*, imagined that there was some spiritual, or ethereal principle in man, which having existed long before his birth, would subsist after his death. For, with the Heathens these two doctrines always went together; and *Origen*, one of the most learned of the early Christians, believed both the *pre-existence* of the soul, and its separate existence after death.|| Afterwards Christians

* See Vol. XIV. p. 295.

† See Vol. V. p. 221.

|| See Vol. III. p. 360.

† *Dial.* p. 2. (P.) See Vol. VIII. pp. 98, 99.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 222, 223.

in general abandoned the former, but retained the latter, though originally they were both derived from the same source.

But what evidence is there, from any appearances in nature, which is all that the Heathens had to look to, on which their belief either of the *pre-existence*, or the separate existence of the soul is founded? The former will be allowed to have been wholly chimerical: but with respect to the latter, is it not evident that the power of thinking depends upon the brain; and if thought is suspended in the state of sound *sleep*, and during a *swoon*, must it not be more effectually suspended in a state of *death*?*

It will be said that we cannot conceive of any connexion between the properties of perception or thought, and the idea of matter. But we know nothing at all of the connexion of any properties with those of any substance whatever. Who can explain the connexion between the magnet and the property of attracting iron, or the cause of the gravitation of all material substances towards each other? And what clearer ideas have we of the connexion between the power of perception and thought, with an *immaterial* substance any more than with a *material* one? Let us, then, no longer cover our ignorance, or our fancied knowledge, with the

* The pious and learned author of *Universal Restoration* has contrived the following *theory*, to explain "how the soul, at death, may be said at once both to awaken, and to fall asleep." Without chart or compass, but with an amusing credulity, he thus accompanies this child of his imagination in her *intellectual excursions*:

"The soul hath a twofold life: one which it exercises by the organs of the body, of which the body hath a sense. The soul hath another life which it is capable of exercising without the organs of the body: of this the body can have no sense at all. When a man sleeps naturally, the soul gathers up itself into that life, which it exercises without the organs of the body.

"The soul sleeps not: it is as incapable of sleep as of death. The soul is a spirit; that is, an act of life invisible and indivisible. It is gathered up entirely into one, having no parts by which it is capable of any separation. It is of a pure, simple, immaterial, and spiritual nature; it is all vital and lively; life in the very essence and substance of it; its very being is all life, act, vigour and energy; so that it can neither die nor sleep. The soul still lives and wakes, and works in the sleep of the body: yea, the soul is then most awake. For as one saith very well, The body's night is the soul's day. Our better part, saith *Cardan*, is never its own man till now; when exalted into a state of separation (as it were) in the body: it spends its time in contemplations free, and congenial to its own extraction.

"But however the soul thus lives, wakes, and works in the sleep of the body, the body hath no sense of this. The soul makes no impression, no manifestation of these workings upon and to the body; because it makes no use of the organs of the body, which are now bound up in sleep. Thus it is in the death of a saint. The soul, while a saint lives on earth, exercises her spiritual life in the body, by the natural faculties of soul and body; but when the hour of death comes, the soul then is drawn up entirely into the spirit. There it is broad awake." *Funeral Sermon* (on 1 *Thess.* iv. 14) for "Rev. Francis Fuller." By *Jeremiah White*, 1702, pp. 16, 17. See Vol. III. pp. 254—256.

repetition of mere words, to which we have no ideas, but confine ourselves to known *facts*, such as the strict connexion between the powers of thought, and the organization of the brain. When that is destroyed, sensation and thought cease; so that there cannot be any rational ground to expect the restoration of the one without the restoration of the other.* And certainly the great Being who made man of the dust of the ground, can make him again, though reduced to the same dust. As to the *manner* in which this is to be effected, we know as much of the one as of the other; which is just nothing at all. But as the one has been effected by the same Being who has promised the other, we have no reason to entertain any doubt of its accomplishment at the time appointed.

The only rational hope of a future life must, therefore, be founded on the scripture doctrine of a *resurrection*, when the whole man, with all his powers, will be revived. That this doctrine of a resurrection is inconsistent with that of a soul which survives the body, and retains all its faculties, not only unimpaired but improved, (for such is the original and proper doctrine on the subject,) is obvious to the slightest consideration. For if such be the condition of the soul, when freed from the clog and obstruction of the body, a resurrection would not only be unnecessary, but even undesirable. The two systems are, therefore, repugnant to each other, and cannot be rationally held together.

The doctrine of a soul, and consequently that of an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, has been the foundation of the worship of dead men and women, called saints, of the doctrine of purgatory, and many other doctrines of Popery. These, and almost every other corruption of genuine Christianity, came from the same Heathen source, as I have shewn at large in my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*.†

The imagination of man being let loose in speculations on the origin and nature of souls, and their existence after death, we do not wonder at the wildest and most extravagant *hypotheses* on so obscure a subject. The general opinion of the philosophers was, that all souls, having been portions of the Divine essence, or of the great Soul of the world, and having contracted various impurities in their state of separation from their source, must pass through a course of purgation, by going through various animal bodies, before

* See Vol. II. p. 354; Vol. III. pp. 242—247.

† Vol. V. pp. 217—228. See Vol. III. p. 257.

they could be reunited to the fountain from which they sprung, and to which they always tend.

“ Herodotus gives it as the opinion of the *Egyptians*, that when the body decays, the soul passes into some other animal, which was then born; and that after it has made the circuit of beasts, birds, and fishes, through a period of three thousand years, it again becomes an inhabitant of a human body.”* They, therefore, endeavoured to delay this transmigration, by embalming the body, and thereby preserving it uncorrupted, and in a state fit for the residence of the soul, as long as possible.

Pythagoras, who borrowed his doctrines from the *East*, carried this of transmigration into *Greece*. He also held that of the final return of all souls into the Eternal Source from which they sprung. It does not, however, appear that the doctrine of transmigration, though still held in the East, remained long in Greece; but the doctrine of *pre-existence* ever accompanied that of a *soul*, and on this principle, the Grecian philosophers believed its natural independence on the body, and its continued existence after its separation from it by death. *Socrates* held this doctrine, but either with some degree of doubt, or having no high opinion of the happiness of a future state.† *Plato* represents him as saying to his friends, who attended him at his trial, “ whether it is better to live or die, was known only to the gods.”‡

Plato, though a disciple of *Socrates*, combined his doctrines with those of other philosophers, and had some peculiar ideas on this subject. These, on account of his great celebrity, I must not omit to mention, if it were only to shew what very absurd and extravagant notions the greatest of men have adopted when destitute of the light of revelation. He supposed that “ there exists something between *God* and the *matter* of which the world was formed, which he calls *ideas*, existing in the Divine mind; and as external objects are perceived by the *senses*, these can only be perceived by the *intellect*.” Sensible things, he said, “ being in a state of continual fluctuation, cannot be the object of *science*; but these *ideas*, being permanent, *may*; and by the

* *Enfield* (B. i. Ch. viii.), I. p. 79.

† The Heathens in general, at least the *Greeks*, do not appear to have had any high idea of the happiness of the best of men after death; for *Homer* makes *Achilles* say to *Ulysses*, when he found him in the *Elysian* fields, “ I had rather be a poor man, and serve another poor man, who had himself a bare sufficiency of food, on earth, than rule over all the dead.” (P.) See Vol. II. pp. 98, 99.

‡ See *Leland*, C. R., II. pp. 338, 339.

contemplation of them, he supposed that men might attain to a kind of union with God, in whose mind those ideas exist. He also supposed that there is a *third substance*, composed of spirit and matter, diffused through the universe, and the animating soul of the world; that the souls of men are not derived immediately from God, but from this soul of the world, which from its origin was debased by a mixture of material principle.”

He said “that when God formed the universe, he separated from the soul of the world, inferior souls, equal in number to the stars, and assigned to each its proper celestial abode; but that these souls (by what means, or for what reason does not appear) were sent down to the earth into human bodies, as into a sepulchre, or prison;” and “that it is only by disengaging itself from all animal passions, and rising above sensible objects, to the contemplation of the world of intelligence,” (the *ideas* above-mentioned,) “that the soul of man can be prepared to return to its original habitation.” He moreover “speaks of the soul of man as consisting of three parts; the first, the seat of intelligence; the second, of the passions; the third, of appetite; and assigns to each its proper place in the human body.”*

The *Stoics* thought very differently from each other “concerning the duration of the soul of man.” Some of them were of opinion “that all souls would remain till the final conflagration;” some, “that this would only be the lot of the wise and good;” some “asserted that, as soon as the soul is released from the body, it returns to the soul of the world, or is lost in the universal principle of fire. Some were so absurd as to believe that the human soul, consisting of a fiery spirit, condensed by its union with air, is capable of being extinguished; whilst others, with equal absurdity, conceived that the human soul, shut up within the gross body, could not, at death, find a free passage, but remained with the body till it was entirely destroyed. In the universal restoration of nature, some imagined that each individual would return to its former body; whilst others conceived that, after a revolution of the *Great Year*, similar souls would be placed in similar bodies.”† Uncertainty cannot be more strongly indicated than in this diversity of opinion.

It does not appear “whether *Aristotle* thought the soul of

* *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. viii. Sect. i.), I. p. 293.

† *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xi. Sect. i.), I. pp. 341, 342.

man to be mortal or immortal ; but the former appears most probable, from his notion of the nature and origin of the human soul, which he conceived to be an intellectual power, externally transmitted into the human body, from an Eternal Intelligence, the common source of rationality to human beings." He does not say " what he conceived this Universal Principle to be ; but there is no proof that he supposed the union of this Principle with any individual, to continue after death."*

If we may collect the sentiments of *Aristotle* from those of his followers, we may certainly conclude that he did not expect that men would, in any sense, survive death. *Dicæarchus*, an *Aristotelian*, held " that there is no such thing as *mind*, or *soul*, either in man or beast ; that the principle by which animals perceive and act, is equally diffused through the body, is inseparable from it, and expires with it."† *Alexander Aphrodisæus*, another follower of *Aristotle*, " maintains that *the soul* is not a distinct substance by itself, but the *form* of an organized body,"‡ meaning, probably, that it was a property that was the result of organization. *Theophrastus*, an *Aristotelian*, at the close of life, expressed great regret at the shortness of it, " and complained, that nature had given long life to stags and crows, to whom it is of so little value, and had denied it to man, who, in a longer duration, might have been able to attain the summit of science ; but now, as soon as he arrives within sight of it, he is taken away. His last advice to his disciples was, that, since it is the lot of man to die as soon as he begins to live, they would take more pains to enjoy life as it passes, than to acquire posthumous fame."§ Indeed, the natural inference from this doctrine is, as the apostle expresses it, [1 *Cor.* xv. 32,] " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

The great father of modern unbelievers among *Mahometans* and *Christians* was *Averroes*, a *Saracen*, devoted to the philosophy of *Aristotle*, whose writings made all the unbelievers in the age of *Petrarch*, and that of Pope *Leo X.*|| " He held the eternity of the world, and the existence of one Universal Intellect, inferior to Deity, the external source of all human intelligence," (into which every separate intelligence will finally be resolved,) " and, conse-

* *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. ix. Sect. i.), I. p. 285.

† *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. ix. Sect. ii.), I. p. 293.

‡ *Ibid.* (B. iii. Ch. ii. Sect. v.), II. p. 105.

§ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. ix. Sect. ii.), I. p. 291.

|| See Vol. IX. pp. 449, 584—586 ; Vol. X. p. 80.

quently, denied the distinct existence and immortality of the human soul." * I need not say how irrational this notion, so long prevalent with those who ridiculed the Scriptures, is. Modern unbelievers will smile at the extreme absurdity of it, as much as any Christians, and so they will at all the systems of their predecessors, the Heathen philosophers; though, in a general way, with a view to disparage the writers of the Scriptures, they, but with little real knowledge of them, occasionally cry them up.

I hardly need to mention any more of these vague opinions, altogether destitute of proof or probability. But I shall observe that *Democritus* said, that "men were at first produced from water and earth," and that "the soul, or the principle of animal life and motion, is the result of a combination of round or fiery particles," and "is mortal, and perishes with the body." † And *Epicurus* said, "the soul is a subtle, corporeal substance, composed of the finest atoms." ‡

The principles of sound reasoning and true philosophy have sufficiently exploded all these crude systems, the best of which never produced such a persuasion concerning a future state, as men could act upon, and suffer and die for; whereas the faith of Jews and Christians has unquestionably produced, and does still produce these substantial fruits. And if the great end of *theory*, as it undoubtedly is, be *practice*, a doctrine which is both rational in itself, and supported by sufficient authority, must be infinitely preferable to such wild and incoherent systems as those of the ancient philosophers, the knowledge of which, moreover, never extended beyond their own disciples, and which does not appear to have had any real influence even upon them.

But the great question before us at present is this: if Moses, and the other writers of the *Old* and *New Testament*, are to be classed with *philosophers* or *legislators*, how came they to frame a system so fundamentally different from any that other philosophers and legislators of the same age had conceived? And if they were not, but are to be considered as persons who had no advantage of learning or education, and, therefore, to be classed among the *vulgar*, and the vulgar of a rude and barbarous nation, as the *Jews* are generally considered, how came they to discover so much true knowledge, and adopt a system of religion, laws, and morals,

* *Enfield* (B. v. Ch. i. *ad fin.*), II. p. 250.

† *Ibid.* (B. iii. Ch. xiii.), I. p. 430.

‡ *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xv.), I. p. 469.

which cannot be denied to be free from the crude conceptions and gross absurdities with which the systems of the boasted philosophers of the Heathen world are chargeable? The only answer is, that what they wrote was from a source of wisdom *not their own*, or any that they could have borrowed from the neighbouring nations, but one much superior, and, as they profess, *from God*. But what are we to think of those who, with the facts that I have recited before them, whether they will attend to them or not, are continually exclaiming against the religion of the Bible, without sparing any term of reproach, and praising the superior attainments and philosophy of the *Greeks* and *Romans*? Happily, however, there are facts enow before us, and abundantly ascertained, by which impartial persons may easily form a true judgment concerning both; and I hope there is yet in the world common sense, and candour too, sufficient to make a just comparison between them.

8. In a former Discourse, I shewed you to what horrid and abominable practices the popular religions among the Heathens led. But these, it may be said, were peculiar to the *vulgar*, and that the *philosophers* would not fail to condemn those practices. This, however, was far from being the case. Many of the philosophers, no doubt, knew better, and among themselves despised and ridiculed the popular superstitions, at least some of them; but they had not the just courage in the cause of truth and virtue to run any risk in opposing so destructive a torrent. They themselves conformed to all the superstitious practices of those times, and recommended the same to others. *Xenophon* began his account of his beloved master *Socrates*, with saying, that “he wondered how he came to be charged with not believing in the gods of his country, when he not only joined in the public sacrifices, but frequently sacrificed in private, and openly practised divination, which was always deemed a part of religion.” *Socrates* himself said, “that it is the duty of every person to follow the customs of his country, in all its religious rites.”* In such veneration did several of the philosophers hold the laws of their country, that they maintained there was no other rule of right and wrong. This doctrine was avowed by *Democritus* and *Aristippus*. I need not observe how absurd this maxim was. Were the laws themselves framed by no rules of natural right

* See *Memorabilia*, L. i.; *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. iv.), I. p. 165; *Leland*, C. R., I. pp. 320—323.

or wrong? And how are we, on this principle, to make an estimate of the comparative excellence of different systems of law?

So far were the ancient philosophers from entertaining the liberal sentiments which it is now the fashion to ascribe to them, that, in a period of three hundred years, during which the Christians were persecuted, as opposers of the vulgar superstition, there is no example of any philosopher pleading for the toleration of them. On the contrary, they were often the foremost to promote the persecution. The celebrated emperor *Marcus Aurelius*, who was himself an eminent philosopher, was one of the most unrelenting persecutors of Christians.*

9. As several of the philosophers were aware that some of their tenets would have given offence to the vulgar, either from the nature of them, or from their being liable to be misunderstood, they had *doctrines* which they communicated only to a few, and this under a strict injunction of secrecy. This practice was adopted by *Pythagoras*, from the *Egyptian* priests. He, moreover, enjoined upon his pupils a silence of two, and sometimes of five years. In this state of probation they were not permitted even to see their master, or to hear him, except from behind a curtain; and when they were admitted to his presence, and favoured with his secret doctrines, they bound themselves by an oath not to divulge them. Something of this nature was adopted by *Plato*. He said, "It is a difficult thing to discover the nature of the Creator of the universe, and being discovered, it is impossible, and would be impious, to expose the discovery to vulgar understandings. He therefore threw a veil of obscurity over his public instructions, which was only removed for the benefit of those who were thought worthy to be admitted to his more private and confidential lectures."†

But how much more noble was the conduct of Moses and of our Saviour, who made no secret of any thing that they taught! How much dignity was there in the charge that Jesus gave to his apostles, to publish every thing that they knew of his doctrines! *Matt. x. 27*: "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops."

10. In general, no doubt, the Heathen philosophers had

* See Vol. VIII. pp. 122—125.

† See *Leland, C. R.*, I. pp. 240, 241, 270, 271.

just ideas concerning moral virtues ; and in their writings they express themselves with truth and energy on the subject ; but, in several respects, their peculiar tenets misled them, and were unfavourable to a right disposition of mind, and a proper conduct in life. This could not but be the case with the *Stoics*, the most rigidly moral of all the ancient sects. Their opinion that all souls are portions of the Divinity, from which they inferred that they were sufficient for their own happiness, inspired them with a great degree of pride ; for they said, “ it was not in the power of the gods to make a good man unhappy.” They maintained that pain was no evil, and that a wise man may be happy even in the midst of torture. They also held that he ought to be free from every emotion of affection or passion. Nature would never suffer any man to reduce this absurd system to practice ; but the attempt to do it must have had an unfavourable influence on a man’s temper and conduct. Whether consistently with their principles, or not, many of the more eminent of the *Stoics* put an end to their own lives. This was done by *Zeno* himself, the founder of the sect, when, in a very advanced age, he was in much pain from breaking his finger.*

11. It is common with unbelievers to decry both *Christianity* and *Judaism*, as species of *superstition*. But no misconceptions or abuse of the Jewish or Christian religions led to more absurd superstitions than the doctrines of the Heathen philosophers, concerning the defiling nature of matter, their consequent contempt for the body, and their ideas of the purification of the soul by the mortification of it. It was, in fact, from the Heathen philosophers that the Christians of the second and following centuries derived their opinions and practices on the subject. It was from them also that the monkish ideas of the superior merit of a *contemplative* to an *active* life, and of the value of seclusion from the world, were originally derived.

Pythagoras said that “ contemplative wisdom cannot be completely attained, without a total abstraction from the ordinary affairs of life, and a perfect tranquillity and freedom of mind.”† But the later *Platonists*, among whom we might expect the most advanced and improved state of philosophy, carried these ideas still farther. “ They practised the most rigorous abstinence, as by this means they

* See *Leland*, C. R., II. pp. 191, 192 ; *Enfield* (B. ii. Ch. xi. Sect. i.), I. p. 317.

† *Ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xii. Sect. i.), I. p. 390.

expected to purify themselves from moral defilement; and they passed whole days and nights in contemplation, and what they called devotion." *Plotinus* had such a contempt for the body, "that he could never be prevailed upon to make use of any means to cure the diseases to which his constitution was subject, or to alleviate his pain.—His rigorous abstinence and determined neglect of his health, at last brought him into a state of disease and infirmity, which rendered the latter part of his life extremely painful."* In Christians this would be laughed at; but in this deep philosopher, it may perhaps be admired.

To this superstition these philosophers joined the most extravagant enthusiasm. They supposed, that "the soul of man, prepared by previous discipline, might rise to a capacity of holding immediate intercourse with good demons, and even to enjoy in ecstasy an intuitive vision of God himself," a degree of perfection and felicity which some of the more eminent among them, such as *Plotinus*, *Porphyry*, *Jamblicus*, and *Proclus*, were supposed actually to have attained. *Plotinus* is said to have "ascended through all the Platonic steps of divine contemplation, to the actual vision of the Deity himself," and to have been "admitted to such intercourse with him as no other philosopher ever enjoyed."† *Porphyry* "relates, that in the sixty-eighth year of his age, he was in a sacred ecstasy, in which he saw the Supreme Intelligence, the God," he says, "who is superior to all gods, without an image."‡

According to *Jamblicus*, "the human soul has an innate knowledge of God, prior to all reasoning, having originally derived its essence from, and subsisted in the Divine nature. By the intervention of demons, it enjoys communication with the superior divinities, and with God himself.—Gods, demons, and heroes," he says, "appear to men under various forms, in dreams, or waking visions, to render them bodily or spiritual services, and to enable them to predict future events. These communications with divine natures are not to be obtained, but by the observance of sacred rites.—The signs of divine communications," he says, "are a temporary suspension of the senses and faculties, the interruption of the ordinary functions of life, and a capacity of speaking and doing wonders, so that the person doth not live an animal, or human, but a divine life."§

* *Enfield* (B. iii. Ch. ii. Sect. iv.), II. pp. 67, 68.

† *Ibid.* p. 72.

§ *Ibid.* p. 98.

Ibid. p. 69.

Jews and *Christians* are reproached for their credulity, and for their faith in miracles, however well attested; but can unbelievers say that these *Platonists* were less credulous? "With a view to destroy the credit which the Christian religion derived from miracles, or at least to reduce it to a level with their own, they pretended to a power of performing supernatural operations, by the aid of invisible beings; and maintained that the miracles of Christ," which they did not deny, "were wrought by the same magical, or," as they termed them, "*theurgic* powers, which they themselves possessed."* The emperor Julian, "made great use of the magic arts—in executing his political purposes. Whilst he was at Vienne, he reported that, in the middle of the night, he had been visited by a celestial form, which had, in heroic verse, promised him the possession of the imperial dignity."†

With these facts before us, and many more of the same kind might have been adduced, surely Christianity will no longer be exclusively taxed with superstition, enthusiasm, or credulity. But no countenance is given to these idle notions, or absurd practices, in the Scriptures. Christ and the apostles were not monks, nor had they any monkish ideas. Their piety was perfectly rational, and their love of God evidenced by benevolence to man. And they inculcated no austerity, or mortification, besides that temperance which is opposed to vicious excess, and contributes to the true enjoyment of life.

On the whole, we may surely say that, had modern unbelievers found in the Scriptures any of the doctrines which I have shewn to have been professed by the philosophers of antiquity; had they found there the doctrine of two co-eternal principles, that of the emanation of all souls from the substance of the Supreme Being, the absorption of them into it again, with their repeated emissions and retractions to all eternity; had they found there the doctrine of the formation of all things by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, that the air is filled with demons of different characters, directing the affairs of the world at their pleasure, and giving intimations of future events by omens and divination; had they found in the Scriptures the doctrine of the *pre-existence* of all human souls, their lapse into gross bodies, where they are confined, and also contaminated by their

* *Enfield* (B. iii. Ch. ii. Sect. v.), p. 92.

† *Ibid.* p. 77. See Vol. VIII. p. 394.

connexion with so debasing a companion, the purification of these embodied souls by austerity and mortification, their transmigration through the bodies of animals, by way of preparation for their ascent to the *empyrean* regions; had they there found the doctrine of one common principle of intelligence, or soul of the universe, in all men and animals, without giving to each a permanent existence; had all or any of these doctrines been found in the Scriptures, would they not have exclaimed against such crude notions and wild conceptions, and have rejected the system without farther examination? It was, in fact, the finding no such opinions as these in the Scriptures, that first led Christian philosophers (after having adopted several of them from a Heathen source, and having long endeavoured to hold them in conjunction with their Christian principles) to suspect their truth; and farther reflection on the subject led many to explode them altogether. Thus is the world indebted to Christianity for the detection of errors which were the disgrace of human reason, though patronized by the most eminent philosophers of the Heathen world; yet modern unbelievers, though lying, with the rest of the world, under so great obligations to Christianity, are now busily assaulting it with every weapon of reason or ridicule. Its friends, however, are under no apprehensions about it. This very state of things was foreseen and foretold by its Founder. Revealed religion is so far from shrinking from, that it invites the strictest examination. Its friends being those of reason and truth, engage in its vindication only as supported by reason and truth, and as favourable to the best interests of mankind.

DISCOURSE IX.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE MOSAIC AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS.

HEB. i. 1, 2:

God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son.

IN the preceding *Discourses* I have endeavoured to prepare the way for the proper evidence of revealed religion,

by explaining the nature, and shewing the importance of the subject, and by exhibiting a comparative view of the *Heathen* religions, and that of the *Hebrews*, which is that branch of revealed religion which is most objected to by unbelievers. The systems of the Heathen religions, especially those of remote ages, coeval with the *Mosaic* institutions, you have seen to have been not only a confused mass of miserable superstition, arising from a total ignorance of the laws of nature, but to have consisted in rites shocking to humanity, good morals, and common decency, and that they were, in a great measure, the cause of the horrid depravity of manners which prevailed in the Gentile world. On the contrary, the tenets of the religion of the *Hebrews*, which has been so much decried by *Voltaire* and others, were, in the highest degree rational, worthy of the Supreme Being, leading to the greatest purity of heart and life, and peculiarly calculated to counteract the effects of the absurd and mischievous religions of the neighbouring nations. Being, therefore, so much superior to, and the reverse of all, the forms of religions with which Moses or any of his countrymen could have been acquainted, and even superior, as I have shewn, to the principles advanced by the most celebrated of the Heathen philosophers, there is the greatest antecedent probability that it came from God, the fountain of wisdom; who thought proper to make choice of one nation, in which to preserve the true knowledge and worship of himself, against the general defection from it, and by that means to diffuse, in due time, the most salutary light to all his offspring of mankind. And it has already, in a great measure, effected this benevolent purpose in the gradual unfolding of the plan in the *Christian* revelation, which has a constant reference to that of *Moses*; so that they are to be considered as parts of the same scheme; the proper evidence of which I shall now proceed to lay before you. In order to do this as briefly as possible, I shall not consider the evidence of each separately, but jointly; especially as I have done the former, and more in detail, in another set of *Discourses* [Vol. XV.], which are already before the public.

I shall begin with observing that the only proper evidence of the interposition of God, as the author of nature, is an exhibition of something which he alone is capable of performing, that is, a proper *miracle*, or a controuling of the order of nature, which it must be allowed that no other than he who established it, and who constantly maintains it, can effect. The medium of divine communications may be

men, and where the instruction and reformation of men is the object, it is most naturally and properly so; but the power by which it is effected, must appear to be of God. Otherwise, there would be no reason to suppose that there was any thing superhuman in the scheme.

It has, indeed, been the opinion of some, that proper miracles may be wrought by beings superior to man, though inferior to the Supreme God, and even for purposes opposite to any that could be *his*, tending to mislead and injure mankind. But this is an opinion which I am persuaded will not be seriously maintained by any person at this day. It cannot, with any appearance of reason, be supposed, that the Supreme Being would put it in the power of any malevolent *demon* (supposing such beings to exist) thus to deceive his creatures, and without reserving to himself the power of undeceiving them. For if such beings as these were permitted to work real miracles, or perform such works as men were unable to distinguish from real miracles, it was all that himself could do; so that the mischief would be without remedy.

We must, therefore, take it for granted, and I doubt not it will be universally allowed, that if there be a real departure from the order or laws of nature, (which in the greater instances there is no danger of mistaking,) it must be by the interposition of a power properly *divine*, and for a purpose worthy of divinity, of the great and good Parent of the human race; for instance, to give them seasonable assistance in the discovery of interesting truth, and removing the causes of error, vice, and misery, which must otherwise have remained without remedy.

Miracles, then, being allowed to be the only, but a sufficient evidence of divine interposition, it will be asked, what is the evidence of their having been wrought, to those who are not themselves witnesses of them? For, it is not pretended that miracles are exhibited before all persons, but only occasionally. I answer, the testimony of those who were properly witnesses of them, but testimony so circumstanced, that the supposition of its being false would be more improbable on the whole, than that of its being true; so that its being false shall, by a fair estimate, appear to be a greater miracle, or a greater deviation from the usual course of nature, than what is related as such. And certainly such cases may be supposed.

If, for instance, a great number of persons, universally allowed to have the use of their senses and understanding,

seriously declare that they actually saw or heard any thing whatever, though *à priori* ever so improbable, and their *veracity* be not questioned, their senses must have been under a miraculous illusion; if the thing be not as they represent it. It will also be allowed, from the opinion generally entertained of human nature, that circumstances may be supposed, in which a great number of persons agreeing to tell a falsehood, when they could not have any motive to do it, would be deemed nothing less than miraculous. *credit for testimony of miracles*

It is readily acknowledged, that miracles not being events of daily or frequent occurrence, require more definite evidence than ordinary facts, and this, in proportion to their antecedent improbability, arising from their want of analogy to events that are common. But there is no fact that is possible in itself, but the evidence *may* be such as to make it credible. The circumstances which tend to give credit to human testimony with respect to miracles, are the following: The witnesses must be in sufficient number; they must be in circumstances in which they could not be deceived themselves, and they must have no apparent motive to deceive others. In order to this, the miracles must be in sufficient number, and exhibited so long as to afford opportunity for examining them. They must also be upon a large scale, or of such a nature as to exclude all idea of trick or imposition. They must be exhibited before persons who had no previous disposition to expect or to receive them. A sufficient degree of attention must be excited to them at the time, and a number of persons must be interested in ascertaining their reality. The history of them must be coeval with the events, and the belief of them must produce a lasting effect.

If all these circumstances should be found to concur in the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, it must be allowed that they have all the credibility that facts so extraordinary, and of so great antiquity *can* have, and nothing more can be required in the case. The most sceptical of men cannot demand more satisfactory evidence. I shall therefore now proceed to consider how far these circumstances apply to the miracles of which an account is contained in the *Old* and *New Testament*. For it is the truth of the system of religion proposed to us in these books that is to be proved by them.

I must, however, remind you, that though I would by no means crave your indulgence in being satisfied with a

small degree of evidence, or less than such as I have described, the thing to be proved is far from being improbable *à priori*, so as to make such extraordinary evidence necessary. If men, who are the offspring of God, were involved in error, vice, and misery, from which it was not in their power to rescue themselves, it might even have been *expected* that their benevolent Parent would provide some effectual means for their relief. And the scheme of revelation, which gives men the fullest information concerning the being, the perfections and the providence of God, concerning man's duty here, and a future state of retribution hereafter, the knowledge of which we have seen the wisest of men never attained of themselves, is excellently adapted to answer this end, and therefore it is not only desirable, but far from being improbable. On the contrary, I have shewn at large that the plan of revelation is, in a variety of respects, the most natural and the most effectual, and, consequently, the most eligible mode of communicating religious instruction to men.

In this, however, I speak to the feelings of the virtuous, the worthy, and the thinking part of mankind, those whose characters and conduct are such as will naturally lead them to wish for, and rejoice in the discovery of such momentous truths, and not the profligate and thoughtless, who are governed by mere appetite and passion, like the brutes, who, looking no farther than to mere animal enjoyments, never think of a God, of a providence, or a future state at all; and who, if it depended upon them, would not choose that there should be any such thing.

It is well known that there are states of mind, in which no attention will be given to any thing that is offensive to it. A philosopher of great eminence, having advanced an opinion concerning something that might be determined by a microscopical observation, refused to look through a microscope that was brought to him, with the object ready prepared, when he was told that the inspection would refute his *hypothesis*. And certainly vicious propensities lay a stronger bias on the mind, than any speculative opinions whatever.

In minds exceedingly debased, there must be an almost invincible bias against the doctrines of revelation; and probably the evidence even of their own senses would not be sufficient to convince them. To such persons as these, I do not address myself at all, because it would be altogether in vain. Indeed, I can hardly suppose that any

motive, even that of curiosity, would bring any person of this character to hear me on the subject, and therefore I will not suppose any such to be present.

1. To those persons whose minds are not absolutely shut against conviction, I would observe in the first place, that the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, and on which the truth of the *Mosaic* and *Christian* institutions rests, are sufficiently *numerous*. Passing over all that preceded the age of Moses himself, the miracles which effected the emancipation of the Israelites from their bondage in *Egypt*, and their settlement in the land of *Canaan*, will certainly be allowed not to have been deficient with respect to *number*, whatever else be objected to them. They began with the miraculous appearance of fire, in a bush which was not consumed by it, the withering and restoring of Moses's arm, and the changing his rod into a serpent, and that serpent into a rod as at first. Then follow the ten great plagues of *Egypt*, beginning with the changing of the waters of the river, into blood, and ending with the death of all the first-born of the *Egyptians* in one night, according to the prediction of Moses. We then proceed to the passage of the Red Sea, while the waters rose on each side to admit of it; the sweetening of the waters of *Mara*; the delivery of the ten commandments in an articulate voice from Mount *Sinai*; the supplying of the whole nation with manna, and the conducting of them with the appearance of a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, during forty years; the drawing water from a rock, enough to supply the whole nation, at two different times; the death of *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, by the opening of the earth, at the word of Moses; the death of *Nadab* and *Abihu*, the two sons of Aaron, by fire from heaven; the passage of the river *Jordan*, by the dividing of its waters; the fall of the walls of *Jericho*, and some others of less consequence, all in the compass of one generation.*

In the subsequent history of the *Israelites*, miracles were not so numerous, but it is probable that no long period of it was entirely without them, till they were discontinued after the *Babylonish* Captivity. But in this interval, the *Hebrew* prophets foretold in the plainest language many future events which came to pass in their own times, or very near to them, and among these the fate of all the

* See Vol. II. pp. 205, 206; Vol. XV. pp. 225—250.

neighbouring nations, as well as of their own, to the latest period of time. *Jeremiah** foretold not only the *Babylonish* Captivity, but the exact duration of it. In the time of *Daniel* we have the deliverance of *Shadrach*, *Meshach* and *Abednego* from the fiery furnace, of *Daniel* himself in the den of lions, and his foretelling the insanity (for such it must have been) of *Nebuchadnezzar*, and his restoration after seven years,† as well as his prophecies concerning the rise and fall of the four great monarchies, which have been wonderfully verified, though part of them yet remain to be fulfilled.‡

After this we have an interval of about four hundred years, in which we find no pretensions to miracles or prophecy. But during the public ministry of Jesus, miracles were more numerous than they had ever been before. His divine mission was announced three times by articulate voices from heaven; he cured the diseases, however obstinate, of all who applied to him, and some when he was at a distance, and he raised at least three persons from a state of death. He twice fed several thousand persons, with a small quantity of provisions, he also changed a large quantity of water into wine. He stilled a tempest at a word; he walked on the sea, and caused a fig-tree to wither, by only speaking; he foretold the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, and the desolation of the country, to come to pass in that generation; he rose from the dead after being publicly crucified, and visibly ascended to heaven.§

Miracles not less considerable than these, distinguished the ministry of the apostles, who succeeded Jesus. They not only expressed themselves in languages which they had never learned, but imparted this power to all the converts; they healed many sick persons, they even raised the dead,|| and foretold several events, which came to pass in their own time. If any person will say that these miracles, (and many are omitted in this general view,) are not sufficiently numerous for the purpose for which they were wrought, he would say that no *number* whatever would be sufficient, and therefore his objection would not be to the *number*, as such, but must be of some different kind, which will be considered under some of the following heads.

* *Ch.* xxv. 11, xxix. 10. See Vol. XII. pp. 232, 235.

† See Vol. XV. pp. 277—279.

‡ See *Dan.* vii.—xi., Vol. XII. pp. 323—341.

§ See Vol. XV. pp. 300—308

|| See *ibid.*, pp. 315—320.

2. Many of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, were on so large a scale, or on other accounts of such a nature, that there could be no suspicion of trick or deception with respect to them. If the *appearances* only existed, (and with respect to them, the senses of men could not be deceived,) the *cause* was indisputable. And such were almost all the miracles exhibited in *Egypt*, as the changing of all the water of such a river as the *Nile*, as large as any in this country, into blood, or any thing like blood, so that no use could be made of it; and this not momentarily, but for a considerable time; and yet an evil of this magnitude was removed at the prayer of Moses. Persons skilled in tricks of slight of hand, which was, no doubt, the case of *the magicians of Egypt*, might impose upon a company, even of intelligent and quick-sighted persons, not used to them, and on Moses himself, with a small quantity of water, contained in a bason, or they might dexterously substitute a serpent in the place of a rod, or a rod in the place of a serpent; but the miracles exhibited by Moses, convinced even the magicians themselves, that what he did was by *the finger of God*, as they expressed themselves.

The plague of frogs, that of the lice, (as our translation renders the word,) of the murrain among the cattle, of the boils, of the hail, of the locusts, and of the darkness, might each of them separately, have been produced by natural causes. But that they should all be announced beforehand, that none of them should affect the district occupied by the *Israelites*, which adjoined to the rest of *Egypt*, and that they should all be removed at the prayer of Moses, are undeniable evidences that the hand of God was in them. Still more was this evident in the death of the first-born, and the first-born only, of man and of beast, through all the country, while not one of the *Israelites* died. By this display of divine power, *Pharaoh* and all the *Egyptians* were so terrified and subdued, that, unwilling as they before had been to part with such useful servants, they were now desirous of getting rid of them, at any rate.

Upon a greater scale still was the passage of the whole nation of *Israelites*, though not fewer than two millions of people, marching at their leisure, with all their cattle and baggage, through an arm of the Red Sea, while the water rose on each side of them, and all the *Egyptians* who had ventured to follow them were drowned. There could be no imposition on the senses in such a scene as this, or in the similar miracle of the passage of the river *Jordan*, in the

same manner. The same may be said of other miraculous appearances in the time of Moses, especially that of the delivery of the ten commandments in an articulâte voice, heard by all the Israelites, then, as I observed, more than two millions of people, from Mount *Sinai*; of a river, (for it could not be less,) issuing from a rock, at the word of Moses; for the blow of his staff could not have had any such effect; and the descent of the manna every morning, with the remarkable and constant exception of one particular day in the seven, on which no manna fell, for the space of forty years; and the pillar of a cloud by day and of fire by night, which also attended them the same time, and directed all their marches. He must have been a bold impostor, indeed, who should have attempted any thing of this kind, and not so reluctant and so timid a leader as Moses evidently was.

Among the miracles which were on so large a scale as to exclude all idea of deception, I may mention the falling down of the walls of *Jericho*, on the ark being carried round the place seven times; the falling down of the idol *Dagon*, in the presence of the ark; the calamities which befel the cities of the *Philistines*, to which it was sent, and the circumstances of its conveyance back into the land of *Canaan*, viz. in a carriage drawn by cows whose calves were kept at home.

Of the miracles that come under this class, was the strength imparted to *Samson*, by which he was able to take down the gates of a city, and carry them to the top of a hill, and after losing his strength, his recovering it again, so as to pull down the building in which were assembled all the lords of the *Philistines*, when they were all killed. Such also was the burning of the sacrifice of *Elijah*, on Mount *Carmel*, while the priests of *Baal* attempted the same in vain, he being alone, and they four hundred men, favoured by an idolatrous king, who was himself present, and the people in general also favouring them. I might add, under this head, several other miracles recorded in the *Old Testament*, and must not omit to mention in this view also, the case of *Shadrach*, *Meshach*, and *Abednego*, who were preserved unhurt in the fiery furnace at *Babylon*, and also the delivery of *Daniel* from the lions, in the same city.

The miracles recorded in the *New Testament* are not, in general, on so large a scale as many of those recited in the *Old*, but they are sufficiently so to be out of the reach of any charge of trick and imposition. < Such were the cures

performed by Jesus, of such diseases as, though sometimes curable by medical treatment, always require a long time; whereas his cures were always instantaneous, and yet complete. Such were his cures of blindness, especially of the man who was born blind; of fevers, which are never cured but by coming to a certain crisis; of leprosy, of the dropsy, and especially of insanity, called the casting out of demons, the supposed cause of that disorder. Of this class, more especially, was his raising to life the daughter of *Jairus*, at *Capernaum*, the widow's son at *Nain*, and of *Lazarus* at *Bethany*. Of miracles of this class were his feeding first five thousand, and afterwards four thousand persons with a few loaves and fishes; his stilling a tempest, his walking on the sea, and a stormy sea, and lastly, his resurrection and ascension.

In the history of the apostles, the miracles of this class are those called *the gift of tongues*, by which thousands of persons were enabled to express themselves in languages which they had not learned; the cure of the beggar who was known to have been lame from his birth, at the gate of the Temple; the deliverance of *Peter* and *John*, and afterwards of *Peter* only, out of prison, when every precaution had been taken to secure them; and also the cure of many diseases by *Peter* and others, similar to the cures performed by Jesus. Several other miracles might be mentioned under this head, but these are abundantly sufficient for the purpose; that is, they were appearances with respect to which there could not have been any deception. Persons who were present could never have been under any mistake with respect to the *facts*; and the facts were of such a nature that they must necessarily have been miraculous, how ignorant soever we may be of the powers or laws of nature in other respects.

3. Many of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, and almost all those that are mentioned under the preceding head, were performed in the presence of a great number of persons. At the miracles performed by *Moses*, all the inhabitants of *Egypt* and the whole nation of *Israelites* were present. All the latter must have seen every thing that passed in the *Wilderness*. The whole nation passed through the river *Jordan*, and saw the falling of the walls of *Jericho*. The whole nation of the *Philistines* could not but know of the triumph of the ark of God over their idol *Dagon*, and the manner in which it was conveyed back to the land of *Canaan*. *Ahab* and his court, and, no doubt,

thousands of the common people, were present at *Elijah's* sacrifice. *Nebuchadnezzar*, and all the people of *Babylon*, must have known of the deliverance of *Shadrach*, *Meshach*, and *Abednego*; and so must *Darius*, and all people in his time, the deliverance of *Daniel* from the lions.

With respect to the miracles of *Jesus*, it is evident from the nature of them, and from his manner of life, that they could not but have been known to the whole nation of the *Jews*. *Peter*, speaking of them to a promiscuous multitude who were assembled in *Jerusalem*, on the report of the wonderful gift of tongues, expressed himself in the following remarkable manner, *Acts* ii. 22: "Ye men of *Israel*, hear these words; *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, a man approved of *God* among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which *God* did by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." Again, addressing himself to *Cornelius*, a Roman centurion, and his friends, he says, concerning *Jesus* and the gospel, *Acts* x. 36—39, "The word which *God* sent unto the children of *Israel*—that word ye know, which was published throughout *Judea*." He evidently did not think it necessary to produce witnesses of particular facts. He took it for granted that they were known to every body, "how *God* anointed *Jesus* of *Nazareth* with the Holy *Spirit* and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for *God* was with him; and we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the *Jews*, and in *Jerusalem*."

Also, when *Paul* was addressing king *Agrippa*, in the presence of *Festus* and the court, he says, *Acts* xxvi. 26, "None of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner." To the resurrection and the ascension of *Jesus*, all the country, but for the best reasons, were not witnesses. But certainly five hundred who saw him at one time were abundantly sufficient to ascertain the fact, as far as any number could do it.

The miracle of the gift of tongues, conferred on the apostles, and all the primitive Christians, could not but be known to all the country, and in every place in which it was conferred. The cure of the lame beggar at the gate of the Temple, was, from the circumstances of it, as public as any thing of the kind could well be; and the deliverance of *Peter* and *John* from prison, when the court and all the people knew of their commitment, and were in expectation of their being produced, must have engaged universal attention. *Paul* was a person so well known to the chief priests,

and so active in the persecution of the Christians, that the circumstances of his conversion were, no doubt, the subject of much conversation, and the miracles that he performed in striking *Elymas* with blindness in the presence of the governor of *Cyprus*; the cure of the lame man at *Lystra*, for which the people would have sacrificed to him as to a god; his cure of the insane woman at *Thessalonica*, and of the *demoniacs* at *Ephesus*, were of the most conspicuous nature.

4. The miracles recorded in the Scriptures, especially the great ones which attended the promulgation of the law of *Moses* and of Christianity, were all performed in the presence of enemies, at least of persons not at all predisposed to believe them, or to be convinced by them. It appears that *Moses* himself, who had resided near forty years in *Arabia*, and was married and had settled there, was exceedingly averse to undertake any thing in favour of his countrymen, and that they, seeing no remedy, had acquiesced in their state of servitude, but that his reluctance was overcome by miracles and the positive command of God.

In his expostulation with God on the subject, he expressed the unwillingness of his countrymen to believe his mission. On the sight of the miracles which he was empowered to work in their presence, they were satisfied with respect to it; but their deliverance not being effected immediately, and their servitude being rendered more galling, they conceived great indignation against *Moses* and *Aaron*, for attempting it. We read, *Exod.* v. 20, 21, "And they met *Moses* and *Aaron*, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh; and they said unto them, the Lord look upon you, and judge; because you have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword into their hands to slay us." *Moses* himself, at this time, repented of his undertaking; for we read, *vers.* 22, 23, "And *Moses* returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil-intreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people, neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." On this, *Moses* received farther encouragement; but when he spake to his countrymen again, *Chap.* vi. 9, "they hearkened not unto *Moses*, for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage."

When, in consequence of a series of miracles, of the most astonishing kind, the deliverance of the Israelites was actu-

ally effected, and they had marched out of the country, on perceiving that they were pursued, they were exceedingly alarmed, and said unto Moses, *Exod.* xiv. 11, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the Wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the Wilderness." It was almost with as much reluctance that the *Israelites* were induced to leave *Egypt*, as the *Egyptians* expressed to let them go. On every adverse event or hardship, we find them making the same complaints, and regretting that they had left *Egypt*.

Thus, when they wanted water, we read, *Exod.* xvii. 3, "The people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this, that thou hast brought us out of Egypt, to kill us, and our children, and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me." Finding no flesh-meat in the Wilderness, they again repented that they had left *Egypt*. *Numb.* xi. 4—6: They wept, saying, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish that we did eat in *Egypt* freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; but now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes."*

On the unfavourable report of the spies, who had been sent to explore the land of *Canaan*, we read, *Numb.* xiv. 2, 3, "All the children of *Israel* murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of *Egypt*, or would God we had died in this Wilderness; and wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return to *Egypt*?" Again, when they wanted water, after passing forty years in the Wilderness, and been maintained by miracle all that time, we read, *Ch.* xx. 2—5, "They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses, and the people said, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord. And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this

* See, on ver. 4, Vol. XI. p. 234.

Wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs or vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink." Lastly, when *Arad the Canaanite* fell upon them, and took some prisoners, we read, *Numb.* xxi. 4, 5, "The souls of the people were much discouraged, because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the Wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread."

As to the religion which Moses prescribed to this people, there is the most abundant and indisputable evidence of their having been very far indeed from having had any predilection for it. On the contrary, they, from the first, discovered a dislike to it, and took every opportunity of deserting it, and revolting to the more alluring rites of the neighbouring nations; and such as, no doubt, they had been accustomed to, and been fond of in *Egypt*. But as this is a subject of the greatest importance, I shall defer enlarging upon it to the next opportunity.

DISCOURSE X.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE MOSAIC AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS.

HEB. i. 1, 2:

God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son.

IN my last *Discourse*, I observed that the only proper evidence of divine revelation is the exhibition of something to which divine power alone is equal, or proper *miracles*, and that these, not being analogous to common events, are, on that account, improbable, *a priori*, and, therefore, require more definite evidence, though there is nothing that is possible in itself, but may be proved to have taken place, by human testimony. And I farther observed, that all that the most sceptical persons could require in the case, were the following circumstances, viz. that the miracles must be in sufficient number, and also exhibited so long, as to afford sufficient opportunity to consider and examine them. They

must be on so large a scale, or otherwise of such a nature, as to exclude all suspicion of trick and imposition; they must be exhibited before persons who had no previous disposition to expect or believe them; a great degree of attention must be excited to them at the time, and a sufficient number of persons must be interested to ascertain their reality, while the events were recent; the history of them must be coeval with the events, and the belief of them must have produced a lasting effect.

Three of the first-mentioned of these circumstances I have already shewn are found in the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, and with respect to the next, I have shewn that the *Hebrew* nation was sufficiently indisposed to believe the divine mission of Moses in general; and I shall now proceed to shew that they were more particularly indisposed to receive the *religion* which he presented to them, and which it was the great object of all the miracles to establish. So far, I have observed, were they from being pre-disposed to receive and embrace it, that, from the very first, they discovered a dislike to it, and took every opportunity of deserting it, and revolting to the more alluring rites of the neighbouring nations, and this disposition continued more than a thousand years.

Upon *Moses's* staying in the Mount longer than the people expected, and thinking they should hear no more of him, (for he had been absent forty days, and where he could not find any sustenance,) we read, *Exod.* xxxii. 1, "The people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us. For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."* After this, they made a golden calf, built an altar before it, offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, when "the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play," no doubt in the licentious manner in which the religious festivals of the *Egyptians* were conducted.†

A severe judgment, and the return of *Moses*, brought them back to the new religion. But after they had passed forty years in the Wilderness, in which they had no opportunity of shewing their disposition, on coming into the neighbourhood of the *Moabites* and *Midianites*, we read, *Numb.* xxv. 1—3, "The people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the

* See Vol. XI. p. 181; Vol. XV. pp. 255, 256.

† See Vol. XI. p. 182.

sacrifices of their gods ; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods ; and Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor." Another heavy judgment recovered them from this defection, but it is not probable that any reasoning or exhortation would have done it.*

The miraculous passage of the river *Jordan*, the falling down of the walls of *Jericho*, and their conquering the warlike inhabitants of *Canaan*, devoted to the worship of idols, satisfied the Israelites that their God was superior to the gods of that country, and therefore we read, *Josh. xxiv. 31*, that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel." But the very next generation shewed a different disposition ; for we read, *Judges ii. 10—13*, when "that generation were gathered unto their fathers, there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim : and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger : and they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth." †

The history of this people, till the time of *Samuel*, is nothing but a repetition of revolts, and punishments for them, by the invasion and oppression of some neighbouring nation. *When they repented*, as we read, *Judges ii. 16—22*, "the Lord raised up judges, who delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them, and yet they would not hearken unto their judges ; but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them. They turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord, but they did not so. And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies, all the days of the judge.—And it came to pass when the judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods, to serve them, and to bow down unto them. They ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and

* See Vol. XI. pp. 259, 260.

† *Ibid.* p. 223.

and he said, Because this people have transgressed my covenant, which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice, I will not henceforth drive out any from before them, of the nations which Joshua left when he died, that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord, to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.”*

For these revolts they were reduced into servitude, first by *Cushan-rishathaim*, king of *Mesopotamia*, from whose power they were rescued by *Othniel*; then by the king of *Moab*, from whom they were delivered by *Ehud*; then by the *Philistines*, when they were delivered by *Shamgar*. From *Jabin* king of *Canaan*, they were delivered by *Deborah* and *Barak*; from the *Midianites* by *Gideon*, from the *Ammonites* by *Jephtha*, from the *Philistines*, a second time, in part by *Samson*, but more completely by *Saul* and *David*, under whom the worship of Jehovah was rendered triumphant; and in that state it continued till the latter end of the reign of *Solomon*, when he had the weakness not only to indulge his wives, taken from the neighbouring nations, in the worship of the gods of their respective countries, but to join them in it.

Notwithstanding the very flourishing state of the affairs of the *Israelites* in the reigns of *David* and *Solomon*, which was always in those days, and long afterwards, ascribed to the power of the God that they worshipped, the ten tribes which revolted from the house of *David*, revolted also from the religion of *Moses*, at first indeed by only setting up images at *Dan* and *Bethel*, in honour of the true God, but afterwards, and especially in the reign of *Ahab*, worshipping *Baal*, and all the host of heaven. And though by the judgment of a three years' drought, in which they found that the worship of *Baal* could give them no relief, and the seasonable miracle of *Elijah* at *Mount Carmel*, they were recovered, at least for some time, from this species of idolatry, they continued to worship the calves at *Dan* and *Bethel*, till their Captivity by the *Assyrians*, when they became so mixed and incorporated with other nations, as not to be distinguished; and whether they be now discovered or not, they are without any badge of their ancient religion, to which it is evident they never discovered any attachment.

The kingdom of *Judah* having the Temple within its

* See, on ver. 23, Vol. XI. p. 323.

limits, and other advantages, adhered better to the worship of the true God, but with several remarkable departures from it, as in the reign of *Rehoboam* the son of *Solomon*, who, as we read 2 *Chron.* xii. 1, “forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him;” in that of *Jehoram*, the son of *Jehosaphat*; of *Ahaziah*; of *Joash*, after the death of the pious high-priest *Jehoiada*; of *Ahaz*; of *Manasseh*, who made use of the Temple itself, for the worship of other gods; and of *Amon*, *Jehoiakim*, and *Zedekiah*, whose reign was put an end to by *Nebuchadnezzar’s* taking *Jerusalem*, destroying the Temple, and carrying the people into captivity to *Babylon*.

If this history, of which I have only given a faint outline, do not supply sufficient and redundant evidence of the dislike which the *Israelites* had to the institutions of *Moses*, and, consequently, of the reluctance with which they must have received and conformed to them, nothing can be proved concerning the disposition and turn of thinking of any people whatever. It cannot, therefore, be denied, that all the miracles wrought to establish this religion, and confirm them in it, may be considered as exhibited before enemies, persons predisposed not to receive, but to cavil at, and reject it. This is the more remarkable, as there is no other instance in all history, of any nation voluntarily abandoning the religion of their ancestors, till the promulgation of Christianity, before which they all gradually disappeared like clouds before the sun.

The *Babylonish* Captivity having been foretold, together with its exact duration, by the *Hebrew* prophets, and the overthrow of *Babylon*, famous for its addictedness to idol-worship, effectually cured those of the Jews who returned to their own country, and no doubt many others, of any disposition to the worship of foreign gods, but they were not by this means the more, but, in fact, the less disposed to receive the miracles of Jesus. Indeed, it is evident that they had not been previously disposed to believe any miracles. For before the appearance of Jesus, there had been no pretensions to a power of working miracles in the country, a circumstance which by no means agrees with the charge commonly advanced against the Jews as a credulous people. It is well known, however, that when Jesus appeared, the nation in general, then in a state of subjection to the Romans, a situation which they ill brooked, were in anxious expectation of the appearance of the *Messiah* announced by their prophets, and who they took

for granted, was immediately to assume the character of a temporal prince, rescue them from their subjection to the Romans, and give them the dominion of the whole world; and certainly to this character that of Jesus bore no resemblance.

Besides, Jesus's free censure of the priests and leading men in the nation, soon made them his most bitter enemies. They seeing that, whatever he was, *they* had nothing to expect from *him*, spared no pains to destroy him, and did not rest till they had actually compassed his death. All the miracles of Jesus, therefore, were exhibited before enemies. Even the most virtuous and best-disposed of the Jews were as much attached to the idea of a temporal prince for their *Messiah*, as any of their countrymen, so that even this part of the nation must have been exceedingly indisposed to receive Jesus, in that character; and when they did it, it was with the idea that, though he did not assume it *then*, he would at some future time. Even after his resurrection, the apostles asked him, *Acts* i. 6, whether he would "at *that* time restore the kingdom to Israel," and their minds were not fully enlightened on this subject till after the descent of the *Holy Spirit* on the day of *Pentecost*.

The resurrection of Jesus, though the most pleasing event to all his disciples, was a thing of which, it is evident, they had no expectation after his death; so that it was not without the greatest difficulty, and the most undeniable evidence, that of their own senses, that they were brought to believe it. The manner in which the apostle *Thomas* expressed his incredulity on the subject, is very remarkable. He was not present at the first appearance of Jesus, and when the others, as we read, *John* xx. 25, said unto him, "We have seen the Lord," he said unto them, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."* In this particular, however, Jesus, the next time that he appeared to his disciples, gave him the satisfaction that he demanded. For he said, [*ver.* 27,] "to *Thomas*, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." No doubt all the rest of the apostles were at first in the same state of mind with respect to this event. In this case, therefore, even the dis-

* See Vol. XIII. p. 378.

ciples of Christ may be considered as prejudiced against the reception of this great miracle, and are by no means to be charged with credulity.

The apostles, and all the first preachers of Christianity, were in the same situation with respect to the great body of the Jews, that Jesus had been in before them; and nothing could be more violent than the opposition they actually met with. One of the most remarkable conversions, was that of *Paul*, and in the history of it we see, in the strongest light, the extreme prejudice which even the better kind of Jews entertained against Christianity. Nothing less than the appearance of Jesus himself, was able to effect his conversion. Of the miraculous circumstances attending this conversion, his chosen companions, men who, no doubt, were actuated with as much zeal as himself against the new religion, and who probably continued enemies to it, were witnesses, and to them he afterwards appealed for what they saw and heard, viz. a light surpassing that of the sun at noon-day; and the sound of a voice, though they did not distinguish the words that were directed to him.*

As to the *Gentiles*, nothing can be imagined more unpromising than the mission of the apostles to them. The pride of the Jews, and the contempt with which they treated other nations, had given rise, as was natural, to an equal degree of hatred and contempt on their side; so that nothing coming from a *Jew*, was at all likely to be favourably attended to by them. The Heathens in general, and the *Greeks* and *Romans* in particular, were most strongly attached to the rites of their religions, and thought the observance of them necessary to the prosperity of their several states. The gravest magistrates dreaded the discontinuance of them, and the profligate and licentious among the Heathens gave a loose, as I have shewn, under the sanction of religion, to their favourite vicious propensities, in their greatest latitude. The learned and philosophical among the Heathens, looked with the greatest contempt on the plainness and want of eloquence in the apostles and other preachers of Christianity. In this state of things, then, was it to be expected, that the Heathen world in general would be at all credulous with respect to miracles wrought by such men. On the contrary, the preachers of Christianity had nothing to expect but the extreme of incredulity. In fact, great numbers could not be brought to give the least attention to any thing

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 422—424, 494; Vol. XV. pp. 320—322.

that was reported concerning them, or to look into any of their books. Dr. Lardner observes, that it is pretty evident that even *Pliny*, who gave the emperor *Trajan* an account of his proceedings against the Christians, and his examination of them, when they were brought before his tribunal, (and he was a man of letters,) had not read any of the books of the *New Testament*, or any other writings of Christians which were unquestionably extant.* If, therefore, the new religion did make its way, it must have been against every possible disadvantage, and history shews that this was the case.

5. In order to secure credit to accounts of miracles, there must be both *opportunity* and *motive* for examining into the truth of the facts. Now, the miracles being numerous, a circumstance on which I have already enlarged, gives opportunity for examination; so also does that of their continuance some space of time, and this was the case with respect to many, I may say almost all the miracles, which have been already mentioned, particularly the several plagues of *Egypt*, none of which were momentary appearances, but all were of some days' continuance. Such, also, was the passage through the Red Sea and the river *Jordan*, one of which took up a whole night, and the other a whole day. The same was the case with respect to the delivery of the ten commandments from Mount *Sinai*, but more especially the miracle of the manna, and the pillar of cloud and fire, which continued forty years.

The cures performed by Jesus, though instantaneous, produced lasting effects, especially his raising of the dead, as of *Lazarus*, which, as we read, excited much curiosity to see him afterwards.† Our Saviour's own appearance after his resurrection, was not like that of an apparition in the

* "We have a collection of Pliny's Letters, many of them written to Tacitus and Suetonius, and other men of great distinction for their learning and ingenuity, and high station, and the offices which they had borne in the Roman empire. Is there any thing in these letters relating to the Christian religion, or the Christians, its honest professors? Not one word: there is total silence upon that subject throughout! Do any of them ask Pliny whether he could inform them concerning the Christian philosophy, which had made such progress in the world in a short time? Or does Pliny ask any of them whether they had examined the pretensions of those people, and considered whether there was not somewhat extraordinary in this new sect? No; there are no inquiries of this sort sent by Pliny to any of his learned and honourable friends; nor to him by any of them, so far as appears! They are all well satisfied in the ancient way. They hesitated not to proceed in the observation of all the idolatrous rites and ceremonies practised by their ancestors. If they would not inquire, how should they know? And if they did not know, how should they act wisely, as the circumstances of things might require?" *Lardner*, VII. p. 343.

† See *John* xii. 9, Vol. XIII. p. 276.

night, but always in the day-time, and frequently repeated. His first appearance was when his disciples had no expectation of any such thing, so that they could not have been deceived by their imaginations; and afterwards by particular appointment, so that they had time to recollect themselves, and to procure any kind of satisfaction that they wanted; and this continued the space of forty days before his ascension, which appears to have been leisurely, so that they who were present stood gazing some time, while they saw him go above the clouds. He did not leave them in a private manner, and go they knew not whither.

But the best opportunity for examining the truth of any facts, is, when some persons assert and others deny them, and when they are at the same time much interested in the event of the inquiry, as by having what is most dear to them depending upon it. And this was remarkably the case with respect to the resurrection of Jesus. With respect to his miracles, and also those of the apostles, there does not appear to have been any dispute about them, by those who were then in the country. They only ascribed them to a false cause. But Jesus not appearing to all persons after his resurrection, and especially not to his enemies, but only to his friends, though in numbers abundantly sufficient for the purpose, his enemies denied *that fact*.

The fact, however, was of so very important a nature, that we cannot doubt but that it must have been thoroughly investigated, much more so than any other fact in all history, because infinitely more depended upon it, than upon any other fact whatever. For, in a very short time such was the rage of the rulers of the Jews against the rising sect, that not only were the peace, and the property, but the lives of the Christians, at stake, and these they would not give up for an idle tale. At the same time their persecutors, who were the men in power, stimulated by hatred and opposition, would leave nothing untried to refute the story. This state of things began immediately after the resurrection of Jesus, and continued about three hundred years, during all which time the Christians, though exposed to grievous persecution, kept increasing in number, till at the time that *Constantine* was advanced to the empire, it was not only safe, but advantageous to him to declare himself a Christian.* We may therefore be satisfied, that the great fact of the resurrection of Jesus, on which the truth of Christianity

more particularly depends, underwent a more thorough investigation than any other fact in history.

This rigorous scrutiny began while the event was recent, and when there was, accordingly, the best opportunity of examining into its truth or falsehood. *Paul*, who says that Jesus at one time appeared to more than *five hundred* persons, says that the greater part of them were then living,* and of course liable to be interrogated on the subject. Now, had Jesus appeared as publicly after his crucifixion as he did before, and of course the whole Jewish nation had become Christians, we should now have been without this most satisfactory argument for the truth of the fact.

It would, in this case, have been said, that the Jews, always a credulous nation, (though this has appeared to have been the reverse of the truth,) had, for some reason or other, which it is now impossible to ascertain, changed their religion, or rather made some addition to what they professed before, and that as no person objected to it at the time, there is no evidence now before us that the facts, or reasons, on which it was founded, were properly scrutinized; and that it is impossible to do it at this distance. And thus Christianity might have spread no farther than Judaism.

6. To ensure the credibility of miracles, it must appear that the accounts of them were written while the facts were recent, so that an appeal might be made to living witnesses, and this was never in ancient times questioned with respect to the principal books of the *Old* or the *New Testament*. Besides, the internal evidence of the books ascribed to *Moses*, having been written by him, or by some person under his direction, which to every impartial reader of them, must appear stronger than the evidence of any other books having been written by any other persons whose names they bear, the fact was never doubted by the *Hebrew* nation, the only proper witnesses in the case, from the earliest times to the present; and nothing stronger than this can be said in favour of the authenticity of any writings whatever.

This argument is peculiarly strong with respect to the writings of *Moses*, on account of the reluctance with which those writings, and the whole history of that nation, shews that they received his instructions. If those of the *Israelites* who were addicted to the religious rites of the neighbouring

* See 1 *Cor.* xv. 6, Vol. XIV. p. 110.

nations, and who were frequently the majority of the people, could have shewn that the books ascribed to Moses were not written by him, or by his authority, would they not have done it, and thereby have had the best reason for continuing in the religion they preferred? And what motive could any man have to forge books which would be sure to give the greatest offence, and could not fail to be rejected with contempt and indignation?

The account of the death of *Moses*, in the last chapter of the Book of *Deuteronomy*, could not have been written by himself. But what was more natural than for some person of eminence, acquainted with the fact, perhaps *Joshua*, or the high-priest at the time, adding this account to the writings of Moses, and its being afterwards annexed to them? Also notes, by way of explanation of certain passages, were, no doubt, first inserted in the margin, as has been the case with many ancient books, and afterwards added by transcribers, in the text. But such circumstances as these, are never thought to affect the genuineness of any ancient writings. Judicious criticism easily distinguishes the casual additions, from the original text.

The internal evidence of the authenticity of the writings of *Moses* is peculiarly strong. No other than a person actually present at the transactions could have related them in the manner in which we find his narratives written, with so many particulars of persons, times and places, and with so natural an account of the impression that was made on the minds of men by the events that he relates. †

* See Vol. XI. p. 302.

† That additions may be made to books, and even such as the writers disapprove of, we have a remarkable instance of in the First Part of Mr. Paine's *Age of Reason*. In the Second Part, just published in this city, he says, p. 84, "The former part of *The Age of Reason* has not been published two years, and there is already an expression in it that is not mine. The expression is, *The book of Luke was carried by a majority of one vote only*. It may be true, but it is not I that have said it. Some person, who might know of that circumstance, has added it in a note at the bottom of the page of some of the editions printed either in England or in America, and the printers, after that, have erected it into the body of the work, and made me the author of it. If this has happened within such a short space of time, notwithstanding the aid of printing, which prevents the alteration of copies individually, what may not have happened in a much greater length of time, where there was no printing?" He adds, "and when any man who would write, could make a written copy, and call it an original by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John?" But though this might easily happen with respect to slight circumstances, according with the rest of a book, well known to exist, the fabrication of *whole books*, which were not known to exist at all, and imposing them on the world, when the belief of their contents drew after it the sacrifice of every thing dear to a man in life, and often of life itself, was not so easy.

The insertion Mr. Paine complains of, being a recent thing, and all the editions

It should also be considered, that books were not forged till men were practised in the art of writing, and many books had been written, so that considerable advances had been made in the art of composition and of criticism. We may therefore conclude with certainty, that the books ascribed to *Moses*, which are unquestionably of as great antiquity as any in the world, except perhaps the Book of *Job*, and a very few others mentioned by *Moses*, are no forgeries. Otherwise, the art of forging historical writings, the most difficult of all others, was brought to the greatest perfection all at once, a supposition that cannot be admitted. Indeed, there does not appear to have been the least suspicion of the forgery of any books till after the time in which all those of the *Old Testament* are well known to have been extant. There cannot, therefore, be any reasonable doubt but that the books ascribed not only to *Moses*, but those to the prophets *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel* and *Daniel* are genuine, except so far as they may have suffered by transcribers.

The objection of *Porphyry* to the Book of *Daniel*, that it was written after the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, (for which it does not appear that he had any other evidence than the exact fulfilment of some part of his prophecies in the events,) is certainly not to be regarded.* It can derive no more weight from the time in which he wrote, than if it had been first advanced at this day, because it is only an argument from what appears on the face of the book itself, which is before us, as it was before him. And at that time the evidence of the whole *Jewish* nation, which had always received that book, and in fact that of the *Samaritans* too, who, as far as appears, never objected to it, was against him.

It is moreover self-evident, and indeed never was denied, that the Books of the *Old Testament* were written by different persons, and at different times. That any number of them should have been written by the same person, or a combination of persons, and imposed upon a whole nation as written in former times, and by different persons in those times, (especially considering the many ungrateful truths contained in these books,) is an *hypothesis* which no person will say is even possible. Consequently, the

of his book not very numerous, may be traced to its author, and it behoves him, or his friends, to do it; but this cannot be done with respect to books written two or three thousand years ago. (P.)

* See Vol. XII. p. 309.

references to particular books from others, may safely be admitted as an evidence of their genuineness, which is the principal argument for the age and the genuineness of all other ancient writings. Now it appears from the Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, that *Isaiah* lived in the time of *Hezekiah*, and from the same that *Jeremiah* lived at the time of the siege of Jerusalem by *Nebuchadnezzar*, which is abundantly evident from his own writings. The narrative part of the Book of *Jeremiah* is remarkably circumstantial, so as to render its internal evidence unquestionable. I do not even think it possible for any person of the least degree of judgment in these matters, to entertain a suspicion of its being a forgery of a later time. *Jeremiah* is also mentioned in the Book of *Daniel*. Such too is the internal evidence for the genuineness of the Book of *Ezekiel*, who makes mention of *Daniel*;* of that of *Daniel* too, and of all the other prophetic books, in which there is any mention of or allusion to historical facts.

A circumstance which adds to the authenticity of the writings of Moses, is, that the solemn customs and religious rites of the Jews, such as their public festivals, and especially the observance of the Passover, were coeval with them, so that they, as it were, vouch for each other. The Passover was a solemn custom, expressly instituted in commemoration of the deliverance of the *Israelites* from their bondage in *Egypt*, and began to be observed at the very time; so that, accompanied as it is with the written account of it, it is the most authentic of all records. No other event in history is so fully authenticated as this, except that of the death of Christ, by a similar rite, viz. that of the *Lord's Supper*.

The early existence of the sect of the *Samaritans* affords a proof that the books of Moses have not undergone any material alteration from before the time of the *Babylonish Captivity*. If *Ezra*, who collected the books after that event, had made any material alteration in them, the *Samaritans*, who were then extremely hostile to him, and to all who resided and worshipped at Jerusalem, would, no doubt, have exposed it. But in our Saviour's time, they had the same respect for the books of Moses, that the Jews themselves ever had, and this they have at this very day. It is probable too, that they had the same respect for the writings of the Prophets, though they did not make use of them in their religious worship, and therefore had no copies of them;

* See *Chap.* xiv. 14, xxviii. 3, Vol. XII. pp. 273, 287.

for they appear (*John* iv. 25) to have expected a *Messiah*, of whom there is no account, but in the writings of the prophets.*

There is similar evidence, internal and external, that the principal books of the *New Testament*, by which I mean the historical ones, and also that the epistles of *Paul*, were written while the events were recent, and that they were received as such, by those who were most interested in their contents. This was never questioned by any unbeliever, within several hundred years of the time of their publication. It was admitted by *Celsus* and the emperor *Julian*, both of whom wrote against Christianity, and did not even question the truth of the greater part of the miracles recorded in those books.† And yet Mr. Paine, ignorant of this, asserts,‡ that “there is not the least shadow of evidence who the persons were that wrote the books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, that none of the books of the *New Testament* were written by the men called apostles, and that there was no such book as the *New Testament* till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived,” that is, about the time of *Constantine*. On this supposition, how stupendous a miracle must have been the overthrow of *Heathenism*, and the general reception of *Christianity* in the *Roman* empire at that period! This would have been far more extraordinary than all the miracles recorded in the Scriptures. But to this obvious consequence of his *hypothesis*, Mr. Paine had certainly given no attention. In the same manner, he alone, of all unbelievers, says, that none of the books of the *Old Testament* were written before the *Babylonish* Captivity. He might, with as much plausibility, say, that the whole Bible was a publication of the last century.

Facts so interesting to thousands, recorded in this manner, in books universally received as genuine, by those who must have known whether they were so or not, have the testimony not of the writers only, but of the age in which they were published. In reality, the authenticity of the facts recorded in the *New Testament*, does not at all depend on the authenticity of the books; for Christianity had existed, and had made a considerable spread, long before any of the books were written. The books were not the *cause*, but the *effect* of the belief of it. The authors of these books

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 58, 59.

† See *Lardner*, VIII. pp. 10, 15, 18, 40, 394—411.

‡ In the Second Part of his *Age of Reason*, p. 83. (P.)

were not writers by profession, but only wrote when necessity, in a manner, called for them, that is, when those who were best acquainted with the facts, were about to quit the stage, and other persons solicited their testimony to them, and this was not till about thirty years after the death of Christ, when there were Christians in all parts of the *Roman* empire. The epistles of *Paul* were written before that time; and in them we find allusions to the state of things, at the time of his writing, and their exact correspondence to the history, would be a strong confirmation of it, if such confirmation were wanting.

7. In the last place, the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, produced a great and permanent effect, corresponding to their extraordinary nature, which abundantly proves that they were believed by those before whom they were exhibited, or who had the best opportunity of informing themselves concerning them. Those which were wrought in *Egypt*, effected the deliverance of the Israelites, from their state of servitude in that country, though they were then the most unwarlike, and their masters perhaps the most warlike people in the world, and exceedingly desirous to detain them.

But what was much more than this, addicted as the *Israelites* were to the religious rites of the *Egyptians*, and fond of similar rites, in the religions of all the neighbouring nations, such an impression was made upon them by the miracles wrought in their favour, and especially the delivery of the Law from Mount *Sinai*, that they actually adopted a very complex system of religion, the reverse of any thing of the kind to which they had been accustomed, and which they were far from being predisposed to like, or to receive; and in all their apostacies afterwards, it does not appear that they ever disbelieved the facts. They only thought they might join the worship of other gods with that of their own, at least with the acknowledgment of the truth of their own, which was then the prevailing sentiment of all nations, who scrupled not to admit the pretensions of other gods along with their own, and to join in their worship, especially in the countries supposed to be under their immediate protection, which was the case with respect to the modes of worship, to which the Israelites so often revolted. On the other hand, it appears, that the neighbouring nations entertained the greatest respect for the God, and the religion, of the Israelites, though they did not conform to it. This was the case with the *Philistines*, the *Syrians*, the *Babylonians*,

and the *Persians*; as it would be easy to shew by facts in their history.

The effect produced by the miracles recorded in the *New Testament* was still more evident, because more extensive. Many thousands of the Jews became converts to Christianity on its first promulgation, notwithstanding their extreme aversion to receive any scheme of the kind, from their attachment to their ancient religion, which they thought to be incompatible with the new, especially after the admission of the *Gentiles* into the Christian church. From this time, indeed, *Jewish* converts were much less numerous than before, this circumstance shocking their prejudices in a peculiar manner. Many of those who were already Christians were exceedingly offended at it.

But the most extensive effect of the miracles wrought by Christ and the apostles was the reception of Christianity by the *Gentiles*, attached as they were to the rites of their ancient religions, which were enforced by the laws, and recommended by all the learning and philosophy of the age, and notwithstanding the preachers of the gospel laboured under the greatest disadvantages, being Jews, generally illiterate, and destitute of any talent of public speaking or writing, and having nothing to promise their converts but happiness in another world, with persecution in this. Yet with all these disadvantages, in a reasonable space of time, and exceedingly short, considering the magnitude of the event, a complete revolution was effected in all the *Roman* empire, which, at that time, comprehended almost all the civilized part of the world; the Heathen religion which had prevailed from time immemorial, being every where discredited, and new rites and customs the reverse of them, adopted.

No revolution produced by force of arms can be compared to this, which was effected without arms, by the mere force of truth, the evidence of which must have been invincibly strong to have prevailed as it did. Incredulous as unbelievers now are, thousands as incredulous as they, and more interested than they can be, to discredit Christianity, became converts to it; and, therefore, though they now give little attention to the evidence, which does not force itself upon them, as it did upon those who lived nearer to the time of the transactions, had they lived in those times, they might, with the same indisposition to this religion, have been unable to resist the evidence with which the publication of it was accompanied. To do themselves and the

question justice, they should put themselves in the place of their predecessors, consider how the evidence stood in their time, what was then objected to Christianity by men as quicksighted and as prejudiced as themselves, and say whether they would abide by their objections. They certainly would not, because they go upon quite different principles, and such as all modern unbelievers would reject, and even with more contempt than they reject Christianity. Will they now ascribe the miracles of Christ and his apostles to the power of magic?

The state of the argument very near to the promulgation of Christianity is easily ascertained, and certainly ought to be particularly attended to. All that the ancient unbelievers objected to Christianity has been carefully collected by Dr. Lardner, in his excellent work on *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, and a summary view of the whole may be seen in the Second Part of my *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*. [Vol. IV. pp. 517—534.] But *inattention*, joined to *aversion*, to any subject will account for any degree of incredulity with respect to it. Several among the most considerable unbelievers in *France* will not admit that there ever was any such person as Jesus Christ; when with more reason they might say, there were never such persons as *Alexander the Great*, or *Julius Cæsar*.

But the greatest effect produced by the miracles recorded in the *New Testament*, an effect far more difficult to be accomplished than any change of *opinion*, or speculative principles, is from vice to virtue; which, however, was produced in thousands. For this, we have the testimony of all history. “Be not deceived,” says the apostle *Paul*, (1 *Cor.* vi. 9,) “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God,” that is, by the power of Christianity and its evidences, commonly called the gift of the Spirit.

If we compare the evidence of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures with that of any that are mentioned by Heathen writers, we shall soon be convinced of the superiority of that of the former. Mr. Hume says, that the cure of the blind and the lame man, said by *Tacitus** and *Sueto-*

* *Hist. L. iv.* See *Gordon*, 1753, Ed. 3, III. pp. 353, 354.

*nus** to have been performed by the emperor *Vespasian*, at *Alexandria*, is "one of the best-attested miracles in all profane history,"† and he meant, I doubt not, in any history. But this boasted miracle is not related by any person who was present; the oldest account we have of it, being written about thirty years after the event. It was not exhibited before enemies. Such cures as these might easily have been pretended, by persons prepared beforehand. The Heathens were very credulous with respect to things of this kind, and the report of these might be very useful to procure credit to the new emperor. There was no scrutiny into the truth of the fact at the time. Indeed, such scrutiny would have been discountenanced, and not have been very safe. And, lastly, the pretended miracles do not appear to have produced any effect. It is even almost certain, that the historians themselves did not believe them. What then must have been the force of prejudice in a man who could think that these miracles were better attested than those of the Scriptures?

Such, my brethren, is the outline, for it is nothing more, of the evidence of the credibility of the miracles recorded in the *Old* and *New Testament*. It is readily acknowledged, that though the great truths to be proved by them, have nothing in them incredible, but on the contrary, are of such a nature as to be both desirable in themselves, and probable, *à priori*, (considering the state of vice and ignorance in which the world was involved, when destitute of that light, and considering the benevolence of our common Parent, who, indeed, permits all evils, but only for a time, and makes them subservient to good,) they yet require much stronger evidence than ordinary facts, in proportion to their want of analogy to such events as fall under our daily observation. But notwithstanding this, the evidence for them is abundantly sufficient for the purpose. The miracles, as I have shewn, were sufficiently numerous; they were performed on the largest scale; they were, from their nature, free from any suspicion of trick and imposition; they were exhibited in the presence of persons the least predisposed to believe them, or to be influenced by them; they were subjected to the most rigorous examination at the time, and while they were recent, the written accounts of them were of the same age with the events themselves, and they actu-

* *Vespasian*, C. vii. See *Lardner*, VII. pp. 73—75.

† *Hume's Phil. Ess.* x. 1750, Ed. 2, p. 192.

ally produced the most extraordinary effects ;* which proves that they were fully assented to at the time, by those who had the best opportunity of inquiring into the truth, and the strongest motives for doing so.

More than this it is not in the power of any person to require, and, therefore, it is all that is necessary to the most complete satisfaction ; I mean of the candid and attentive. For, there is a state of mind in which no evidence can have any effect, as we see every day, and we must not expect that miracles will now be wrought for the conviction of any persons, and least of all miraculous changes in the dispositions of men's minds. Indeed, such miracles as those do not appear ever to have been wrought. All miracles were external, and the reflection on them produced its natural effect on the minds of those who gave due attention to them, and who were suitably impressed with them.

As to the proper time for working miracles, and making this or that age the witnesses of them, and of course the vouchers of their reality to others, it is a question which we must acknowledge we are not able to answer. But neither does it concern us to answer it, any more than to assign a reason why it pleased the Divine Being to create the world, or men and other animals, at one time rather than another, or why he did not make more or fewer planets to attend the sun, &c. &c. Of every thing of this nature, he alone is the proper judge. It is enough for us if we be satisfied, on sufficient evidence, that miracles have been wrought at any time, and if we have been informed of the purpose for which they were wrought. If they were actually seen by others, though at ever so great a distance of time, they ought, in reason, to have the same effect as if seen by ourselves, and we are as inexcusable if we be not as much influenced by them. And if God has spoken, it cannot be a matter of indifference whether we will attend to his voice or not. In this case I may say, after our Saviour, [*Matt. xi. 15.*] "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

* "The miracles of the New Testament, in particular, have many circumstances attending them, and which lay us under indispensable obligations to give the evidence for them a fair and patient examination.—The excellence of the end for which they were wrought ; the myriads of mankind which they brought over to piety and goodness, and the amazing turn they gave to the state of religion, by destroying, in a few years, a system of idolatry which had been the work of ages, and establishing on its ruins the knowledge and worship of the one true God.—We see here an occasion worthy of the use of such means, and a probability that, if ever since the creation there has been any interposition of superior power, this was the time." *Price's Dissert.* (iv.), pp. 438, 439.

DISCOURSE XI.

THE PROOF OF REVEALED RELIGION FROM PROPHECY.

ISAIAH xlvi. 5 :

I have, even from the beginning, declared it unto thee. Before it came to pass, I shewed it thee, lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image; and my molten image hath commanded them.

THERE is not, perhaps, any thing more exclusively within the province of the Supreme Being than the foreknowledge of future events, depending on the volitions of men. For, though all things future may be said to exist in their causes, which are present, those causes are not apparent, and their operations and combinations are such as no human intellect can trace; so that to us they are as contingent and uncertain as if the causes did not exist. They who know mankind in general, and even particular persons, the best, can only *conjecture* how they will act in given circumstances, and are often mistaken; but how they will act in *future time*, when it cannot be known in what circumstances they will then be, is what no man will pretend to, and this still less with respect to persons then unborn. A prediction of a future and distant event, depending on the voluntary actions of men, has, therefore, the effect of a miracle of the most indisputable kind. Now many such are recorded in the Scriptures, and, consequently, ought to be enumerated among the clearest proofs of their divine authority, and of the truth of the religion they contain. For this reason, I shall make them the subject of this Discourse, shewing, from the circumstances of the predictions, that they are not liable to any just suspicion of imposture; that, in this respect, they were the reverse of the oracles of the Heathens, and that they have been clearly verified by the events.

There were two ways in which the knowledge of future events was communicated to the *Hebrews*. One was by consulting the *oracle*, as it may be called, when answers to particular questions were given to the high-priest; and the other by prophets, who were raised up, from time to time,

to speak to the people, in the name of God. I shall consider the circumstances of both.

1. The regular method of consulting the divine oracle, called *inquiring of the Lord*, was by the chief magistrate attending in the sanctuary along with the high-priest, in his proper vestments, directing him what questions to put, when the answers were equally heard by them both. Thus, when *Joshua* was appointed to succeed *Moses*, it is said, *Numb.* xxvii. 21, "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim, before the Lord." From this it is obvious, that it was not in the power of the high-priest to impose upon the country what he thought proper, as a divine oracle. It does not even appear that he ever went of his own accord to consult the oracle, but only when required to do so by the civil magistrate, who attended along with him, and heard the answer as well as himself.* Of this we have several examples in the course of the Scripture history. Indeed, it is evident from the whole history of the *Hebrews*, that neither by this, nor by any other means, was it in the power of the priests to acquire any more authority than was given them in the original constitution.

If this had been the case, they would always have preserved their superiority over any occasional prophet, whose claim to respect interfered with theirs. How, for example, could it be supposed that the old high-priest *Eli* would easily have acquiesced in the divine communications made to the child *Samuel*, which contained the heaviest denunciations against himself and his family? But instead of contradicting them, though delivered by a mere child, he, with the greatest resignation, replied, [*1 Sam.* iii. 18,] "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Surely here was no priestcraft. Neither under the judges, nor under the kings did any high-priest acquire the smallest addition to his civil power, or to his emolument.

2. The *Hebrew* oracle appears to have been accessible at all times alike, which was not the case with the oracles of *Greece*. That at *Delphi* could only be consulted during one particular month in the year, which was in the spring; and, as it should seem, only on a few stated days in that month.† At other times, as we are informed, the greatest princes could not, by any means, obtain an answer.‡ This certainly

* See Vol. XI. pp. 261, 262.

† See *Potter* (B. ii. Ch. ix.), l. pp. 278, 279.

‡ *Ibid.* (Ch. vii.), p. 263.

gave the Heathen priests a better opportunity of knowing what questions were likely to be proposed, and of being prepared with the answers.

3. No expense attended the consultation of the *Hebrew* oracle, so that the priests could not derive any emolument from it; whereas, the consulting of the *Grecian* oracles was so very expensive, on account of the sacrifices that were to be offered, and the presents that were expected on the occasion, that only the great and the wealthy could have access to them.* The riches of which the Temple of *Delphi* was possessed, from the donations of opulent princes, such as *Cræsus*, king of *Lydia*, were immense; † but it does not appear that either the Tabernacle or the Temple of the Israelites gained any thing by this means.

4. Nothing was done to overawe the persons who consulted the *Hebrew* oracle, or to affect their imaginations, so as to prepare them to receive whatever answers the priest, who directed the oracle, might suggest, which was the case, more or less, with all the *Grecian* oracles, but especially that of *Trophonius*. The person who consulted this oracle went into a cavern, and not immediately on his presenting himself, but after much solemn preparation. ‡

Such were the marks of terror and melancholy with which persons usually came out of this cavern, that, when any per-

* *Potter* (B. ii. Ch. vii., ix.), I. pp. 263, 279.

† See *Herodotus*, B. i. Sect. xlvi.

‡ In this time all his food was the remains of sacrifices, and he was not permitted to bathe. After this he was washed by boys of thirteen years of age, and when this was done, he drank of two waters, one of oblivion, and the other of remembrance; and before he entered the cavern he was brought to a certain statue, before which he made some prayers. Being then conducted to the mouth of the cavern, he descended by a ladder, which he brought with him for the purpose. At the bottom of this descent he came to a narrow passage, through which he was required to thrust himself with his feet foremost; but during this he was forcibly dragged along till he came to the place where he was to wait for his answer, which was sometimes given in words, and sometimes only by appearances of various kinds. After this, which sometimes detained him more than a day, he returned through the narrow passage in the same manner as before, viz. with his feet foremost. The priests then placed him on a kind of throne, and inquired of him what he had heard or seen, and they made the report to others, who then carried him, commonly in a state of stupefaction, with terror and astonishment, to the chapel of good genius and of good fortune, where, after some time, he recovered his senses and cheerfulness. This account is given by *Pausanias*, an eminent Greek writer, who says that he had himself consulted this oracle.

Another person, of whom *Plutarch* gives an account, was detained two days and nights in this cavern; and when he came out he gave an account of many strange sights that he had seen, and frightful sounds that he had heard, resembling the yellings and howlings of wild beasts, as well as a discourse that was delivered to him. Who does not see that it was in the power of the priests to conduct all this machinery just as they pleased, taking advantage of the terror which was unavoidable in these circumstances? (P.) See *Potter* (B. ii. Ch. x.), I. pp. 290—293.

son was unusually dejected, they said he looked as if he had been consulting the oracle of *Trophonius*.*

5. The answer of the *Hebrew* oracle was always delivered in an articulate voice, which was not liable to misconstruction; whereas, all the *Grecian* oracles, except that of *Apollo*, gave their answers in a different manner, as by dreams, the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, &c. &c.† At *Pheræ*, a city of *Achaia*, there was an oracle of *Mercury*, where the person who consulted it, after making the proper sacrifices and offerings, proposed his question; and in order to get an answer to it, walked with his ears stopped by his hands, through the market-place, and then removing them, took the first words that he happened to hear, for the answer of the oracle. At another oracle in *Achaia*, the answer was given by throwing dice, inscribed with particular characters, which the priests interpreted. At another place in the same country, the answer of the oracle, which was only given to questions relating to sickness, was given by letting down a mirror into a fountain, and observing the figures and images on its surface.‡

6. There was no ambiguity in the answer given by the *Hebrew* oracle. It was always plain and direct, not capable of two constructions, of which the priests might avail themselves on comparing it with the event, as was remarkably the case with respect to many of the answers returned by the *Grecian* oracles,§ even that of *Apollo* at *Delphi*, which, however, was celebrated for the comparative perspicuity of its answers. || Two of these answers are particularly mentioned by *Herodotus*.

When the *Lacedemonians* inquired of the oracle, whether they should succeed in their attempt to conquer all *Arcadia*, they received for answer, they should not; but that he would give them *Tegea*, which was very fruitful, and which they should measure with a line. On this they had no doubt but that they should gain the possession of it; but being defeated in battle, many of the *Lacedemonians* were made prisoners, and compelled to cultivate the ground for their conquerors; and in doing this, they made use of a line to

* *Potter* (B. ii. Ch. x.), I. p. 293.

† See *ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. vii., xi.), I. pp. 264, 294.

‡ See *ibid.* (B. ii. Ch. xi.), I. pp. 295, 296.

§ "In oraculis, quo ingenio ambiguitates temperent in eventus sciunt Cræsi, sciunt Pyrrhi." *Tertul. Apol. C. xxii.* "In their oracles, what dexterity they have shewed in tempering their responses with a convenient ambiguity for any question, the *Cræsus's* and the *Pyrrhus's* know with a witness." *Reeves's Apologies*, 1709, I. pp. 272, 273.

|| *Potter* (B. ii. Ch. ix.), I. pp. 272, 280, 281.

measure it, which was deemed to be a fulfilment of the oracle. Again, when *Cræsus* consulted the same oracle, on his engaging in a war with *Cyrus*, he received for answer, that if he did, he should overturn a great empire, and that the *Persians* would not conquer him, until they had a mule for their prince. Being conquered, and losing his empire, he sent to upbraid the oracle for deceiving him;* but he was answered, that the empire that was to be overturned was his own, and that *Cyrus* being descended from a *Persian* father and a *Median* mother, was the mule intended by the oracle.

The *Hebrew* oracle never returned such answers as these, but always such as were direct, and perfectly intelligible. The divine oracle subsisted, though in some different manner, before the time of *Moses*; for we read that *Rebecca*, when she found herself with child, and felt a violent motion in her womb, inquired of the Lord, and received the following answer, *Gen. xxv. 23*: “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels. The one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger.”

When the oracle was consulted after the death of *Joshua*, we read, *Judges i. 1, 2*, “that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And *Jehovah* said, Judah shall go up; behold I have delivered the land into his hand.” *David*, in the course of his life, received several answers from the oracle, one of which was very particular. The *Philistines* spreading themselves, as we read *2 Sam. v. 22*, “in the valley of Rephaim,—when David inquired of the Lord,” [*ver. 23,*] he said, “Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be when thou hearest the sound of a *marching* in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.” We have no account of any other answer from this oracle that was not equally plain, and free from ambiguity.

All the directions and predictions that were occasionally delivered by the God of Israel, or by angels commissioned by him, were equally clear and intelligible. Such was the original command given to Abraham, *Gen. xii. 1, 2*: “Get

* *Cræsus* sent also by his messenger the fetters with which he had been loaded, at the command of *Cyrus*, and which, by leave of that prince, he now presented to the god at *Delphi*, as the first-fruits of his splendid promises.

thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation,—and thou shalt be a blessing.” Such was the message to *Hagar* when she fled from her mistress, *Gen.* xvi. 11, 12: “And the angel of the Lord said unto her, behold thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name *Ishmael*.—And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.” A prediction which has been exactly verified in the general character and history of the *Arabs*, who are descended from *Ishmael*, to this very day. All the commands of God to *Moses* were perspicuous, and free from ambiguity; and so were all the Divine communications without any exception.

Sometimes communications were made in dreams, and by means of emblems; but the interpretations were given in the most intelligible language. Thus *Joseph*, in the interpretation of their respective dreams, told *Pharaoh's* baker, that after three days he would be hanged, and that the butler would at the same time be restored to his office; and he told *Pharaoh*, that the next seven years would be years of unusual plenty, but would be followed by seven years of famine. The prophetic dreams of *Nebuchadnezzar* were interpreted with the same distinctness by *Daniel*, and *Daniel's* own dreams by an *angel*.

Besides the regular *oracle*, to which the Israelites had access on particular emergencies, God was pleased to send to that nation a succession of *prophets*, and they all delivered their messages in the plainest language, as became the messengers of God. The greatest, and strictly speaking, the first of these prophets, was *Moses*; and nothing could be more distinct and intelligible than the manner in which he always spake in the name of God, on a great variety of occasions; and he was informed that there would be a succession of prophets like himself. *Deut.* xviii. 18: “I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”

An example of this we have in the message which the prophet *Ahijah* was directed to deliver to *Jeroboam*, of which we have an account 1 *Kings* xi. 29—31, 33—35: “And it came to pass, at that time, when *Jeroboam* went out of *Jerusalem*,” (which was in the reign of *Solomon*), “that the prophet *Ahijah*, the *Shilonite*, found him in the

way ; and he had clad himself with a new garment ; and they two were alone in the field. And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces ; for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee,—because they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtarothe the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. Howbeit, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand ; but I will make him a prince all the days of his life, for my servant David's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes," &c. In the same plain and direct manner, did all the prophets deliver themselves ; as *Elijah* to *Ahab*, *Isaiah* to *Ahaz*,* and *Hezekiah* and *Jeremiah* to *Zedekiah*. With the

* Mr. Paine charges *Isaiah* with being a false prophet in what he announced to *Ahaz*, concerning the invasion of his kingdom by *Rezin* king of *Syria*, and *Pekah* king of *Israel*, which was as follows, *Isa.* vii. 1—7 : “ And it came to pass in the days of *Ahaz*, the son of *Jotham*, the son of *Uzziah*, king of *Judah*, that *Rezin* the king of *Syria*, and *Pekah* the son of *Remaliah*, king of *Israel*, went up towards *Jerusalem* to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of *David*, saying, *Syria* is confederate with *Ephraim*. And his heart was moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then said the Lord unto *Isaiah*, Go forth now to meet *Ahaz*, thou and *Shear-Jashub* thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the high way of the Fuller's field. And say unto him, Take heed and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking fire-brands, for the fierce anger of *Rezin* with *Syria*, and of the son of *Remaliah*. Because *Syria*, *Ephraim*, and the son of *Remaliah* have taken evil council against thee, saying, Let us go up against *Judah* and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of *Tabeal*. Thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.” He farther assured him that before a child that was soon to be born could distinguish between good and evil, the countries of his enemies would be “ forsaken of both their kings.”

On this, Mr. Paine says, (p. 47,) “ To shew the imposition and falsehood of *Isaiah*, we have only to attend to the sequel of this story, which, though it is passed over in silence in the book of *Isaiah*, is related in the 20th chapter of 2 *Chronicles*, and which is, that instead of these two kings failing in their attempt against *Ahaz*, king of *Judah*, as *Isaiah* had pretended to foretel in the name of the Lord, they succeeded. *Ahaz* was defeated and destroyed, an hundred and twenty thousand of his people were slaughtered, *Jerusalem* was plundered, and two hundred thousand women, and sons and daughters, were carried into captivity. Thus much for this lying prophet and impostor *Isaiah*, and the book of falsehoods that bears his name.”

Such is the charge, but the defence is extremely easy. The calamity which Mr. Paine, with much exaggeration, describes, was in the beginning of the reign of *Ahaz*, before the prophecy was delivered. For it commenced about the death of *Jotham* his predecessor. After reciting the events of the reign of *Jotham*, the historian says, (2 *Kings* xv. 37, 38,) “ In those days the Lord began to send

same distinctness did our Saviour deliver his prophecy concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, the demolition of the Temple, and the desolation of *Judea*.

Let this be compared with the manner in which the pretended prophets among the Heathens delivered themselves. It was always in a kind of madness, or ecstasy, to give the appearance of some other being than themselves speaking from within them, or making use of their organs. When the *Pythoess* at *Delphi* delivered the oracle, with which she was supposed to be inspired, "she began immediately to swell and foam at the mouth, tearing her hair, cutting her flesh, and in all her other behaviour appearing like one phrenetic and distracted." One of them was at one time so enraged, "that she affrighted not only those that consulted the oracle, but the priests themselves, who ran away and left her; and so violent was the paroxysm, that in a little time after she died."* Others, who were supposed to pry into futurity, lay like dead men, deprived of all sense and motion, and when they returned to themselves, they related what they had seen and heard. For, it was their opinion, that the soul might leave the body, wander up and down the world, visit the regions of the dead, and even converse with gods and heroes. *Plutarch* relates, that while the soul of one *Hermodorus* of *Clazomenæ* was thus out of his body, a woman who had the custody of it, delivered it to his enemies, who burned it.

The delivery of prophecies in a frantic manner, as if the prophet was possessed by some demon, is still practised in several barbarous nations, as in *Tartary*, and among the *Indians* of some parts of *America*, of which travellers give

against *Judah*, *Rezin* the king of *Syria*, and *Pekah* the son of *Remaliah*. And *Jotham* slept with his fathers,—and *Ahaz* his son reigned in his stead."

This calamity, great as it was, by no means extended so far as Mr. Paine asserts. For *Jerusalem* was so far from being plundered, that it is expressly said, (2 *Kings* xvi. 5,) that these two kings "came up to *Jerusalem* to war, and they besieged *Ahaz*, but they could not overcome him." Agreeably to this, *Isaiah* says, they "went up towards *Jerusalem*, to war against it, but could not prevail against it." And so far were they from being able to dethrone *Ahaz*, and set up another king, the son of *Tabeal*, that *Ahaz* reigned sixteen years, and in the fourth year of his reign, *Pekah* king of *Israel* was slain in a conspiracy of his own subjects, (1 *Kings* xv. 30,) and about the same time an end was put to the kingdom of *Syria* by *Tiglath Pileser* king of *Assyria* taking *Damascus*, whither *Ahaz* went to meet him.

Mr. Paine takes advantage of the figurative and no doubt hyperbolical language of the prophet *Ezekiel*, (xxix. 11,) in his account of the desolation of *Egypt* during forty years after the conquest of the country by *Nebuchanezzar*, "that no foot of man or of beast should pass through it." We have no particular account of the state of *Egypt* in this interval, but the civil war between *Apries* or *Pharaoh Hophra* and *Amasis*, which followed the devastation made by *Nebuchadnezzar* must have made travelling particularly hazardous." (P.)

* *Potter* (B. ii. Ch. ix.), I. p. 278.

amusing accounts. In fact, when the *Grecian* oracles were instituted, that nation had as little knowledge as the *Tartars* or *Indians*. At this day the random sayings of idiots, and persons disordered in their senses, are caught up in the *East*, as if they came from the inspiration of some superior being.

But the principal question before us is, not in what manner prophecies were delivered, but whether predictions said to come from God, and, as such, recorded in Scripture, have been verified by the events. And to this the Divine Being himself appeals. When the succession of prophets mentioned above, was announced to *Moses*, he says, *Deut.* xviii. 21, 22, "If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?" it is answered, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is, the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him." And on this subject it is that *Jehovah* challenges the gods of the Heathens:

Draw near, produce your cause, saith *Jehovah*:

Produce these your mighty powers, saith the king of Jacob.

Let them approach, and tell us the things that shall happen:

The things that shall first happen, what they are, let them tell us;

And we will consider them; and we shall know the event.

Or declare to us things to come hereafter:

Tell us the things that will come to pass in later times:

Then shall we know, that ye are Gods.*

This is what no Heathen oracle or prophet could do. But the Scriptures abound with prophecies which have indisputably been verified by the events, and in some cases, at a great distance from the time of their delivery.

There are few prophecies more remarkable than those of *Moses*, which extend even to the present times, and indeed far beyond them. When his nation was in a state little better than that of the wild *Arabs*, wandering in the Wilderness, he not only looked forward to their certainly taking possession of the land of *Canaan*, then inhabited by a warlike people, who had horses and chariots of iron, and whose cities are said, [*Deut.* ix. 1,] to have been "fenced up to heaven," and who had many years' notice of the intended attack upon them, when none of the *Israelites* had seen war, when they were poorly provided with weapons, and could

* *Isa.* xli. 21—23, *Bp. Lowth.*

only fight on foot, and must have been wholly unacquainted with the method of attacking fortified places; but he foretold their apostacy from their religion, their consequent expulsion from the land of Canaan, their dispersion into all the most distant parts of the world, their cruel sufferings and contemptuous treatment in those countries, of which we, near three thousand years after the prediction, are now witnesses; their subsisting, notwithstanding this, as a separate people, of which also we are witnesses; and likewise their final restoration and re-settlement in their own country, when they are to be the most distinguished of all nations. But I do not enlarge on this subject, because I have done it already, in a *Discourse* which is before the public.*

There is no nation bordering on the land of Canaan, whose future destiny was not foretold by some of the *Hebrew* prophets, and there is no pretence for saying that the predictions were written after the events: for the accomplishment of several of them is quite recent; whereas the books have been extant between two and three thousand years. I shall confine myself to those concerning *Egypt*, *Babylon* and *Tyre*, with some observations on the prophecies of *Daniel*.

1. The *Egyptians* were the first nation that rose to any great degree of power, and they continued in the first rank of warlike people, till they were conquered by *Nebuchadnezzar*. But several years before that conquest, viz. in the tenth year of the captivity of *Jehoiakim*, three years before he undertook the siege of *Tyre*, and fourteen before his invasion of *Egypt*, “the word of Jehovah came unto *Ezekiel*,” (as we read, *Ez.* xxix. 1—9,) “saying, Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt. Speak and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Lo, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, that saith, ‘My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.’† And I will put hooks in thy jaws,—and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers. And I will leave thee in the desert.—To the beasts of the field, and to the fowls of the heavens, I have given thee for food. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am Jehovah; because they have been a staff of reed to the

* See Vol. XV. pp. 281—299.

† This king of Egypt, *Pharaoh Hophra*, (called *Apries* by *Herodotus*,) was remarkable for his pride and impiety. According to this historian, he boasted that it was not in the power of the gods to dethrone him. (*P.*)

house of Israel.—Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Lo, I will bring a sword upon thee, and will cut off from thee man and beast: and the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste, and they shall know that I am Jehovah.”* He then foretels a state of desolation, which was to continue in *Egypt* forty years, after which he says, (*vers.* 14, 15,) “they shall be there a low kingdom: it shall be the lowest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; and I will diminish them, that they rule not over the nations.”†

A short time before *Nebuchadnezzar's* expedition, *Ezekiel* again prophesied as follows (*Chap.* xxx. 10): “Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of *Nebuchadnezzar* king of *Babylon*. He, and his people with him, the terrible of the nations, shall be brought to make the land desolate; and they shall draw their swords against *Egypt*, and shall fill the land with slain. And I will make the rivers dry,‡ and I will sell the country into the hand of evil men; and I will lay waste the country, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I Jehovah have spoken it. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will destroy the idols, and will cause the images to cease, out of *Noph*; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of *Egypt*; and I will cause fear in the land of *Egypt*.”§

The history of *Egypt*, from that time to the present, which is more than two thousand years, corresponds in a remarkable manner to this prediction; that country having been ever since under the dominion of foreigners, viz. the *Babylonians*, *Persians*, *Macedonians*, *Romans*, *Saracens*, *Mamluks* and *Turks*.|| And judging from appearances, it is not at all probable that the *Egyptians* will ever recover their liberty, and have a king of their own. Indeed, *Egypt* has been so often conquered and enslaved, so many persons of foreign extraction have settled in it, that it must be hard to say who of the present inhabitants are of the stock of the ancient *Egyptians*. But it is not probable that any native of the country, of whatever stock, will ever have the sovereignty of it.

2. *Isaiah* lived “in the days of *Uzziah*, *Jotham*, *Ahaz*,

* *Newcome.*

† *Ibid.*

‡ This is a figurative expression, denoting probably that the river, of which this king made so great a boast, should not avail him when he was invaded by his enemy. It should be as easily passed, as if its channel had been dry. (*P.*)

§ *Newcome.*

|| See *Newton on Proph.* (*Dissert.* xii.), l. pp. 217—227.

and Hezekiah, kings of Judah," [*Chap. i. 1,*] about one hundred and fifty years before the conquests of *Nebuchadnezzar*, and more than two hundred before those of *Cyrus*, while the kingdom of *Babylon* was inferior to that of the *Assyrians*; yet he foretold the fall of the *Babylonian* empire, in language peculiarly emphatical, and his predictions have been verified by the events in a most remarkable manner, some of the particulars not having taken place till many ages had elapsed.

And Babylon shall become, she that was the beauty of kingdoms,

The glory of the pride of the Chaldeans,

As the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah by the hand of God.

It shall not be inhabited for ever;

Nor shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation:

Neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there:

Neither shall the shepherds make their folds there.

But there shall the wild beasts of the deserts lodge;

And howling monsters shall fill their houses:

And there shall the daughters of the ostrich dwell;

And there shall the satyrs hold their revels.

And wolves shall howl to one another in their palaces;

And dragons in their voluptuous pavilions.

And her time is near to come;

And her days shall not be prolonged.*

He also says,

For I will arise up against them, saith Jehovah God of Hosts:

And I will cut off from Babylon the name, and the remnant;

And the son, and the son's son, saith Jehovah.

And I will make it an inheritance for the porcupine, and pools of water;

And I will plunge it in the miry gulph of destruction, saith Jehovah God of Hosts.†

The prophet even mentioned the nations, then in their very infant state, by which *Babylon* would be conquered, when he said, (*Chap. xxi. 2,*) "Go up Elam," (that is, *Persia,*) "besiege, O *Media,*" for they were the *Medes* and *Persians* in conjunction, that overturned the *Babylonian* empire.

Jeremiah, who lived in the reign of *Nebuchadnezzar*, at the time when the *Babylonian* empire was in its greatest strength and glory, prophesied to the same purport with *Isaiah*:

For, behold, I am about to raise up,
And will bring against Babylon,

* *Isa. xiii. 19—22, Bp. Lowth.*

† *Isa. xiv. 22, 23, ibid.*

An assembly of great nations from the north country ;
 And will array them against her, whereby she shall be taken.
 Because of the wrath of Jehovah she shall not be re-established,
 But she shall be desolate altogether ;
 Every one that passeth by Babylon shall be astonished,
 And shall hiss because of all her calamities.
 Because it is the land of graven images,
 And in idols do they glory,
 Therefore shall wild cats with jackals dwell,
 The daughters of the ostrich also shall dwell in her ;
 And she shall not be re-established any more for ever,
 Neither shall she be inhabited from generation to generation.*

This prophet also mentions the names of the future enemies of Babylon,

Jehovah hath roused up the spirit of the kings of Media ;
 For his purpose is against Babylon, to destroy it.†

The duration of the captivity of his countrymen by the Babylonians, *Jeremiah* exactly foretold. After mentioning the conquests of this nation, he proceeds thus (*Chap. xxv. 11, 12*): “ These nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, I will visit upon the king of Babylon, and upon his nation, saith Jehovah.”‡ *Chap. xxix. 10* : “ For thus saith Jehovah, Surely when seventy years have been completed at Babylon, I will visit you, and I will perform towards you my good promise, in bringing you again to this place.”§

The prophecies concerning the desolation of *Babylon* were not fulfilled in their full extent, till long after the time of our Saviour. Babylon was taken by *Cyrus* exactly seventy years after the conquest of *Judea* ; but it was not reduced to the state mentioned in these prophecies but by slow degrees. *Cyrus* having taken the city by turning the river which flowed through it, out of its channel, all the neighbourhood became marshy and unhealthy. *Diodorus Siculus*, who wrote a little before the time of our Saviour, says, that the buildings of Babylon were then decayed, that only a small part of it was inhabited, and that the rest of the inclosure was employed in tillage. *Pliny*, who wrote in the first century after Christ, says that Babylon was then reduced to solitude, being exhausted by the neighbourhood of *Seleucia*, which was not far from it. *Pausanias*, who wrote about the middle of the second century, says, that “ of Babylon,

* *Jer. l. 9, 13, 38, 39, Blayney.*

† *Blayney.*

§ *Ibid.*

† *Chap. li. 11, ibid.*

the greatest city that the sun ever saw, there was nothing remaining but the walls ;” and *Lucian*, who wrote about the same time, says, that very soon it would, like *Nineveh*, be sought for, and not be found. In the time of *Jerome*, who lived in the fourth century, the whole inclosure of the walls of Babylon was actually converted into a place for keeping wild beasts, and was used for that and no other purpose by many of the kings of *Persia*. At length, even the walls of this great city, so much celebrated for their height and thickness, were demolished, but by whom, is not known. About seven hundred years ago, *Benjamin*, a Jew, found some remains of the ruins of Babylon, but people were afraid to go among them on account of the serpents and scorpions with which it swarmed, and at present it is not agreed among travellers, in what place the great city of Babylon stood.* In this case, surely, there cannot be any pretence for saying that the prediction was subsequent to the event, and yet no event was ever more distinctly described.

What is perhaps, however, more remarkable still, *Isaiah* mentions *Cyrus* by name, as the conqueror of Babylon, and the person who was destined to favour the people of *Israel*, by ordering the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, though in his time they were both standing.

Thus saith Jehovah, thy redeemer ;
 Even he that formed thee from the womb :
 I am Jehovah, who make all things :
 Who stretch out the heavens alone ;
 Who spread the firm earth by Myself :
 Who sayeth to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited ;
 And to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built ;
 And her desolatèd places I will restore :
 Who sayeth to the deep, Be thou wasted ;
 And I will make dry thy rivers :
 Who sayeth to Cyrus, Thou art my shepherd !
 And he shall fulfil all my pleasure :
 Who sayeth to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built ;
 And to the Temple, Thy foundations shall be laid.

Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed ;
 To Cyrus, whom I hold fast by the right hand ;
 That I may subdue nations before him ;
 And ungird the loins of kings :
 That I may open before him the valves ;
 And the gates shall not be shut.
 I will go before thee ;

* See Vol. II. pp. 172—175.

And make the mountains level:
 The valves of brass will I break in sunder;
 And the bars of iron will I hew down.
 And I will give unto thee the treasures of darkness,
 And the stores deep hidden in secret places:
 That thou mayest know that I am Jehovah;
 He that calleth thee by thy name, the God of Israel.
 I have surnamed thee, though thou knowest me not.
 I am Jehovah and none else;
 Beside me there is no God:
 I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me.
 That they may know, from the rising of the sun,
 And from the west, that there is none beside Me:
 I am Jehovah, and none else;
 Forming light, and creating darkness;
 Making peace, and creating evil:
 I Jehovah am the author of all these things.*

3. Not less remarkably have the prophecies concerning *Tyre*, received their accomplishment. In the eleventh year after the captivity of the *Jews*, which was before the siege of *Tyre* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Ezekiel* says, (*Chap. xxvi. 1—5*), “The word of the Lord came unto me, saying: Son of man, because *Tyre* hath said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha, she is broken; the merchandise of the people is turned unto me; she that was full *is become* desolate;’ therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Lo, I *am* against thee, O *Tyre*; and I will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up: and they shall destroy the walls of *Tyre*, and throw down her towers: and I will scrape off her earth from her, and I will make her *like* the top of a rock. She shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord Jehovah. And she shall be for a spoil to the nation.”† It is added, (*ver. 14*), “Thou shalt be built no more.”

When this prophecy was delivered, *Tyre* was in its glory, probably the most wealthy and the strongest city in the world. It was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar*, but not till it had sustained a siege of thirteen years. That city was never rebuilt, but another on an island, at the distance of half a mile from the shore, which in time became as flourishing, and as powerful as the former. This, however, was taken by *Alexander the Great*, and it never recovered itself. It is now a heap of ruins, visited, not inhabited, by a few fishermen. A traveller [*Parvillerius*] who, about a century ago,

* *Isa. xlv. 24, 27, 28, xlv. 1—7, Bp. Lowth.*

† *Newcome.*

gave an account of it, says that when he approached the ruins of *Tyre*, he found rocks stretched out into the sea, and great stones scattered up and down on the shore, made clean smooth by the sun, the waves, and the wind, and of no use but for the drying of fishermen's nets, many of which were at that time spread upon them;* so that the full completion of this prophecy, delivered above two thousand, three hundred years ago, did not take place till within the last two or three centuries.

4. The prophecies of *Daniel* relate to the most distant times, even those which we have not yet reached; but some of the great events indicated in them by emblems, and afterwards explained in words, have so evidently come to pass, that for this, and no other reason, (which is merely taking the question for granted, against the strongest evidence, internal and external,) it has been said, that they must have been written after them.

To *Nebuchadnezzar* (*Chap. iv.*) was revealed in a vision of a great image, consisting of different kinds of metal, overturned by a stone, which afterwards became a great mountain filling the whole earth, the succession of four great monarchies, of which his own was declared to be the first, and of which the last can be no other than the *Roman*, terminating in ten kingdoms, which now exist, after which is to come what is called *the kingdom of heaven*, which will continue for ever, and this, according to many other accounts of it, is to be the reign of peace and righteousness.

In another vision seen by *Daniel* himself (*Ch. vii.*) four great empires, and no doubt the same with the former, are represented by *four great beasts*, the last of which had ten horns, succeeded by the appearance of one like to the Son of Man, [*ver. 13.*] to whom "was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom," which should be universal and *everlasting*. The first of these empires being the *Babylonian*, it is impossible not to interpret the succeeding ones to be the *Persian*, the *Macedonian*, and the *Roman*, divided at last into ten kingdoms as before.

Farther than this, another power is described as arising among the ten kingdoms, in which the last of the four empires terminates, and by this it is almost impossible not to understand the *Papal*. "I considered the *ten horns*," says *Daniel*, (*Ch. vii. 8.*) "and behold there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of

* See Vol. II. p. 176.

the first horns plucked up by the roots: and behold in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." *Vers.* 21, 22: "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." In the interpretation of this, the angel says, (*vers.* 24—26,) "The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise; and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times, and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." The history of the Popes, though I cannot now enter into the particulars, corresponds in a wonderful manner with this prediction, delivered unquestionably above a thousand years before the event.

In another vision, (*Ch.* viii.,) a ram with two horns, the one higher than the other, of which the highest came up last, was destroyed by a he-goat, with one great horn *between his eyes*, which being broken off, four others came up in its place. And in the interpretation it is expressly said, that the ram with two horns represented the empire of the *Medes* and *Persians*, of which the latter was more powerful than the former, though it was not so at the first, and that the he-goat represented the kingdom of the *Grecians*; that the great horn was the first king, and that after him four should stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

This vision was in the reign of *Belshazzar*, before the conquest of *Babylon* by the *Medes* and *Persians*, while the *Medes* were much the more powerful nation, and therefore long before the conquest of *Persia* by *Alexander*, on whose death his dominions were divided among four of his generals. The remainder of this vision, and others, which probably relate to times that are yet future, have some difficulty in their interpretation, which time will probably clear up. But if *Daniel* described the empire of the *Greeks* or *Macedonians*, and much more that of the *Romans*, it cannot be questioned but that the events indicated in his writings, were subsequent to the prediction of them, and such as no human sagacity could at that time discover.

We find the clearest marks of a prophetic spirit in the

New Testament, as well as in the *Old*. Jesus, besides foretelling his own death, and that by crucifixion, with all the circumstances of indignity attending it, also his resurrection and ascension, appears, by his parables, to have had a clear foresight of the spread and final prevalence of his religion in the world, of the persecution of his followers, the dissension and mischief of which it would for some time be the occasion, and of the corruption of his doctrine. He also foretold in the clearest language, without any figure or parable, the destruction of *Jerusalem*, the total demolition of the Temple, and the desolation of the country of *Judea*, with many signs of its near approach in that generation, when no other person of that nation, or any other, appears to have had the least apprehension of such events. The warning he gave his disciples, [*Matt.* xxiv. 16,] to flee out of the country on the approach of these calamitous times, was well understood by them, and was the means of saving them all; no *Christians* being in *Jerusalem* when it was besieged and taken by *Titus*.

The apostle *Paul* forewarns *Christians* of the rise of a power in the Christian church, which would advance higher claims than those of any other earthly potentate; that he would gain his authority by artifice and pretences to miracles; that he would recommend abstinence from certain meats, and discourage marriage; but that he would be finally destroyed at the second coming of Christ. *2 Thess.* ii. 3, 4, 8—10: "Let no man deceive you by any means:" for there must "come a falling away," or an apostacy, "first," that is, before the time of final judgment; "and that man of sin must be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God—whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all *deceitfulness* of unrighteousness." *1 Tim.* iv. 1, 3: "The spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of *demons*—forbidding to marry; and commanding to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving." A farther description of this same power is given in *the Revelation of John*, with the steps by which it rose, and the shocking use that would be made of its authority, in

the persecution of the church. Certainly all these characters are to be found in the *Pope* and the Church of *Rome*, and what probability was there of the rise of any such power, at the time that the prophecies were delivered? This apostle also gives a sketch of the most interesting events of every kind, from his own time to the end of the world. But as, for evident reasons, this prophecy is delivered in figurative language and emblems, its correspondence with the events cannot be expected to be apparent, till after they have taken place; and therefore it is not much for the purpose of my present argument, though I think that, till pretty near to the present times, the correspondence will be sufficiently evident to the impartial and candid.

But without any regard to these predictions, which are acknowledged to be better calculated to confirm the faith of the believer, than to convert unbelievers, the prophecies I have enumerated, though few in comparison of what might have been adduced, will satisfy any reasonable person, that they must have been dictated by a foresight more than human, and therefore that the *Jewish* and *Christian* religions, having the same author, must be of divine authority.

DISCOURSE XII.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF JESUS BEING NO IMPOSTOR.

1 JOHN v. 20:

We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.

BESIDES the evidence of *miracles*, including that of *prophecy*, which is the proper seal of God to any thing that is alleged to come from him, with which we become acquainted by history or tradition, and which is usually called the *external evidence* of divine revelation, there is another kind of evidence properly denominated *internal*, which to those who have a sufficient knowledge of human nature and human life, is hardly less satisfactory. For, knowing what men are, and what men have done, we readily judge what is probable or improbable, possible or impossible, with respect to the designs and actions of men; and if any thing be asserted of a man, and especially of a number of men, which we well know could not be asserted with truth of any

man, or any number of men, with whom we were ever acquainted, or concerning whom we have had any authentic information, we do not hesitate to pronounce it to be highly improbable, and, perhaps, absolutely impossible.

It is, therefore, of the greatest importance, that we apply the knowledge we have of human nature and human life, in our study of the evidences of divine revelation, to attend accurately to the characters and circumstances of *Moses* and the prophets, of *Christ* and the apostles, that we may form a judgment whether what is related of them, on the supposition of their having had divine communications, or of their having been impostors, be probable or otherwise. Having in a former set of *Discourses* considered the circumstances of the history of *Moses*,* I shall in this consider the history of *Jesus*; and I think it will appear, that, if what is and must be allowed concerning him be true, it was absolutely impossible that he should have been an impostor, every thing related of him being perfectly natural, on the idea of his being conscious to himself, or fully persuaded in his own mind of his having a divine mission; but in the highest degree unnatural, and even impossible, on the idea of his having been an impostor. That he was a mere *enthusiast*, and really imagined that he had a divine mission, when he had none, is another question, which I shall consider only incidentally. This indeed was evidently impossible in such a case as this, and will not, I am persuaded, be supposed by any unbeliever; so that if *Jesus* was no impostor, and did not know that he was deceiving his followers and the world, his divine mission must be acknowledged.

1. If we consider the nature and extent of the undertaking of *Jesus*, it must appear highly improbable that it should have occurred to a person of his country, and of his low birth and education. Had his views, whatever they were, extended no farther than his own country, his undertaking any thing that should bring him into notice and advance him in life, (which is all that an impostor can be supposed to aim at,) must have appeared very unlikely to succeed, and, consequently, must have been very unlikely to enter into his thoughts, and have been undertaken by him. With the *Jews*, the place of a man's birth was a circumstance of no small moment, and *Jesus* was of *Nazareth*, esteemed a mean place, in a despised part of the country, so that, on this account, he must have lain under great disadvantage;

* See Vol. XV. p. 221—241.

and his occupation, which was that of a carpenter, without any advantage of education, such as his country afforded, must have made his undertaking much more difficult. In these circumstances, ambition so preposterous as that of Jesus, must have bordered on insanity or infatuation, which must have appeared in his conduct; but nothing of this kind *does* appear in him. Considering the language suited to his undertaking, there was nothing like extravagance in his words or actions. On the contrary, his whole behaviour shewed a mind perfectly composed and rational, and what is more, there was not in him any thing of ostentation, but the most amiable humility and modesty, though accompanied with becoming dignity.

Whatever we may think of a *Jewish* education and Jewish literature, they were highly valued by *Jews*, and must have been necessary to gain general esteem, especially with the higher classes of men, and for the purpose of acting any conspicuous part in that country. Jesus himself could not but have found, and have felt, this disadvantage; and if he had not been deterred by it from his undertaking, he must have had such an immoderate and absurd conceit of himself, as could not but have appeared in his general conduct, and must have exposed him to contempt. Such is always the case if any person in similar circumstances with us attempt any thing above his sphere of life. It frequently happens that men of no education, and even of low occupations, step out of their sphere, and become preachers, but they are seldom attended to, except by persons like themselves, and they generally appear ridiculous in the eyes of others. But such was not the case with Jesus. He was revered and dreaded by the chief persons of his nation; and the contempt they sometimes expressed for him was either affected or conceived before they had sufficient knowledge of him. The manner in which they at length proceeded against him, shews that they were most seriously alarmed, and thought their own credit and safety depended on their destroying him.

Some persons, destitute of the advantages of birth and education, have great natural talents, which supply their place, and give them great influence. But *Jesus* does not appear to have had any advantage of this kind. Like *Moses*, he was neither an orator nor a warrior. He could, indeed, speak pertinently upon proper occasions, and he discovered great presence of mind in critical circumstances. But this is not very uncommon, and there was nothing in

his manner of speaking to captivate an audience by moving the passions. He never attempted any thing of the kind, and the admiration with which his discourses were heard, was excited not by any thing that we call *eloquence*, but by the importance of what he delivered and his authoritative manner of speaking, which a consciousness of a divine mission naturally gave him. It is evident that he avoided as much as possible all occasions of drawing a crowd after him, and when, from the fame of his miracles, this was unavoidable, he always withdrew as soon, and as privately, as he could.

2. If we consider what it was that *Jesus* undertook, we shall find that it was of a nature least of all calculated to strike and captivate the *Jews*. All that we know of them, of their general character and views, make it evident that the only person likely to gain their favourable attention was one who would personate their *Messiah*, who was then expected to make his appearance, to deliver them from the state of subjection they were then under to the *Romans*, and to give them the empire of the world. Except *Jesus* himself, and his forerunner *John the Baptist*, no other person ever gained any considerable number of followers among the *Jews*, who did not flatter their ambition, by advancing that pretension, or in some other form erect the standard of liberty among them. But with these pretensions they never failed to gain many followers in that nation. *Jesus*, however, established a permanent interest in the affections of thousands of that country, all prepossessed with the idea of a temporal deliverer, (at first, indeed, fondly hoping that he was the person,) though he carefully disclaimed all such pretences. And what is more extraordinary, his disciples and followers increased after his death, when every idea of that kind must have been given up.

By setting himself alike against the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, *Jesus* not only rendered himself obnoxious to all the higher orders of persons in the country, but must have been less likely to succeed even with the common people, by whom the *Pharisees* were held in the highest esteem. Indeed, it cannot be said that there was any class or description of persons to whom he paid court, or was at all studious to recommend himself. One of his discourses to the people was of such a nature, that all his audience left him, except the twelve apostles, and yet he was not concerned or discouraged by it; but, turning to the twelve, he calmly said, [*John* vi. 67,] "Will ye also go away?" Of

what kind, then, must have been the ambition of Jesus, which was equally independent of the favour of the great, and of that of the commonalty? What could he have expected but universal contempt?

A *Jew*, whose object had been to draw attention as a prophet, would naturally have assumed the habit and manner of the ancient prophets of that nation, which had in them much of austerity. And by this means *John the Baptist*, who did not pretend to work miracles, was highly and generally respected. But *Jesus*, though with that example before him, adopted a very different manner. He appears to have dressed, and to have lived, like other persons, without any peculiarity whatever. Whenever he was invited, he did not decline being present at entertainments, and his presence does not appear to have been at any time a check upon their innocent festivity. This was so much the case, that his enemies said of him, [*Matt. xi. 19.*] that he was “a gluttonous man and a winebibber,” as well as “a friend of publicans and sinners.”

Besides that, in a civil respect, the appearance and pretensions of *Jesus* were ill adapted to favour any ambitious views, he taught nothing with respect to religion that was likely to recommend him to his countrymen. He did not pretend to teach any doctrine that was properly new; but his exposing the absurd comments of the authorized expounders of the law of Moses, together with their personal vices, was certainly hazardous. The general object of his preaching was to inculcate the strictest and purest morality, such as is found in the ancient prophets. But he drew the attention of his hearers in a more particular manner to a *future state*, much more than had been done by any of the prophets who had preceded him.

The doctrine of a resurrection was at that time the general belief of the *Jewish* nation, as it continues to be at this day.* But what he asserted of himself being appointed to raise all the dead, and to judge the world, must have appeared in the highest degree extravagant and revolting, without the most evident testimonials of a divine authority for such high pretensions. What could an impostor, who must have known that he had no authority for such a claim, if such an idea could have been entertained by him, (which, however, must be confessed to be very improbable,) have expected, but that, on the first hearing of such pretensions, his audience

* See Vol. XII. pp. 485, 495—498.

would have turned from him with derision. His pretending to a kingdom, and a kingdom not of this world, but in another, after he should be dead, was also more likely to expose him to contempt than to procure him respect; and this declaration was made by Jesus when he was before a court of judicature, expecting immediate death. That, notwithstanding these circumstances, Jesus did not appear an object of contempt, but attracted the most respectful attention, and had many disciples while living, and many more after he was dead, has surely in it something very extraordinary, and well deserving to be inquired into; great effects always implying great causes. All these circumstances certainly shew that Jesus was conscious to himself of having advantages sufficient to counterbalance all the disadvantages he lay under, and his success proves that he was really possessed of them.

3. Still more extraordinary was it that such a person as *Jesus* should have extended his views beyond his own country, as it is evident that he did when he directed his disciples [*Matt.* xxviii. 19] to *proselyte and baptize all nations*, and when he foretold the universal spread of his religion, which, though inconsiderable in its rise, like a grain of mustard-seed, or a small quantity of leaven, was destined to embrace the whole world. No other *Jew*, of any rank or character, had talked in this manner before; and, considering the extreme contempt in which the Jews must have known that they were held by other nations, except by the few whom they had proselyted, any Jew must have known that a person of his nation, undertaking any thing considerable, was likely to meet with the worst reception, and nothing more offensive, or more hazardous, could have been undertaken by any man.

The object of the religion of *Jesus* was nothing less than to overturn all the established systems of religion then subsisting in the world; systems always most intimately connected with civil policy, and as such most vigilantly guarded by all the power of the respective states, and, as was then universally thought, with the greatest reason; it being taken for granted, that their temporal prosperity depended upon the observance of the rites transmitted to all nations by their remote ancestors. The philosophers who despised these rites never ventured to hint at the propriety or the safety of discontinuing them; and the few who incautiously spake with disrespect of them, were charged with Atheism, and had been put to death, or banished. We may, and justly do laugh at

the religion of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, and that of the rest of the Heathen world, as systems of the most wretched superstition; but they were serious things with themselves, and, besides their reputed sacredness, and the general dread of a neglect of them, they mixed with all their habits of life.

In all ancient nations, all occasions of joy or sorrow, and almost every transaction of a civil nature, partook of their religion; but more especially was every season of festivity, to which they were most passionately attached, a religious act. Even the theatrical exhibitions of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, calculated to entertain persons of the most refined taste, as well as the festivals of *Bacchus* and *Venus*, which gratified the lowest and most debauched of the vulgar, were equally in honour of their gods. Also all their most admired poems were with them, as with other nations, tinged with their religion; so that, without a knowledge of their religion, it is not now possible to understand them. I cannot, indeed, give a just idea of the extreme difficulty of the undertaking to overturn the religion of the several states of antiquity, without entering into a detail of particulars too long for any discourse. Only persons well acquainted with antiquity, will ever conceive it.

This being the case, to change the religion of a people was, in a manner, to make them over again. To subdue them by force of arms must have appeared much more easy. There is not, indeed, a single instance, in all ancient history, of a nation changing their religion from persuasion or example. It is what the greatest calamities and the approach of extermination has not been able to effect. The case of the Jews is the only exception on record; for they were ever ready to adopt the religion of the neighbouring nations. But then their remote ancestors in *Mesopotamia*, according to *Joshua*, [xxiv. 14,] and themselves in *Egypt*, had been addicted to them. Though the *Egyptians* saw the inability of their gods to save them from a series of the greatest calamities, and though the *Canaanites* found that theirs could not prevent their expulsion from their country, and their almost extermination, both the *Egyptians* and the remains of the *Canaanites* appear to have continued as much attached to their several religions as ever. They would rather suppose that their gods were angry with them, and had for that time deserted them, than imagine that they had not been able to defend them, or that the gods of other nations (whose power they never called in question) had, in that particular, pre-

vailed over theirs. For no Heathen nation, in all antiquity, excluded the agency of superior powers in any event, public or private. The events of battles, though most evidently depending on the conduct of the generals, and the valour of the combatants, were always ascribed to the secret interference of the gods.

The prophet *Jeremiah* expresses, in very emphatical language, the extraordinary case of the *Israelites*, in revolting from their religion :

Pass over unto the countries of Chittim, and see ;
 And send ye to Kedar, and inform yourselves well,
 And take notice, if there hath been such a thing as this.
 Hath a nation changed gods, even those that were no gods?
 But my people hath changed their glory for that which cannot
 profit. *

In those circumstances, such an undertaking as that of *Jesus*, of the magnitude of which it is not easy for us at this day to form an idea, must surely have appeared impossible to a Jewish carpenter. Or if, from ignorance, he had conceived such an idea, he or his followers would soon have found the impracticability of it, without divine aid. *Jesus* himself did not go beyond the bounds of his own country ; but no sooner did the apostles begin to preach to other nations, and appeared to be something different from *Jews*, (whose privileges and customs had been long tolerated, without any serious inconvenience arising from it,) than they found, that if they persisted, it must be at the hazard of every thing dear to them in life, and of life itself. And with these difficulties the preachers of *Christianity* actually struggled about three hundred years ; when the whole system of *Heathenism*, which had prevailed from time immemorial, in the whole extent of the *Roman* empire, having been gradually undermined, gave way, on the conversion of *Constantine* ; and from that time, nothing, as we may say, remained of it, but ruins, which also crumbled away, and disappeared in about three hundred years more. And now nothing more remains of the worship of *Jupiter* and *Juno*, *Apollo* or *Bacchus*, than if it had never existed. These celebrated deities are gone into oblivion, together with *Baal* of the *Canaanites*, *Isis* and *Osiris* of the *Egyptians*, and *Thor* and *Woden* in *Europe*. It is only in history, and the books in which they are mentioned, that the memory of them, and of the horrid and abominable rites with which they were

* *Jer.* ii. 10, 11, *Blayney*.

worshipped, is preserved. What could have accomplished so great a revolution, a revolution far more astonishing than any that has ever been effected by policy or by arms, but a power not less than divine, accompanying Jesus and the apostles?

The revolution produced by *Mahomet* had nothing in it approaching to this. He did not question the divine origin of the *Jewish* or *Christian* religions. He only pretended that his own was derived from the same source, so that he had no occasion to work any miracles. Idolaters, indeed, (who, however, do not appear to have been very numerous,) he subdued by force; but Jews and Christians, unable to treat them in the same manner, he tolerated. When the *Mahometan* power was fully established, and the caliphs of *Bagdat* had long made the greatest figure of any princes in the *eastern* world, and their subjects had attained a high degree of civilization, some *Tartar* nations, emerging from barbarism, adopted their religion; as the Tartars who conquered *China* adopted the institutions of the *Chinese*, and the *Romans*, the literature and philosophy of the *Greeks*. In this there is nothing at all extraordinary. But the *Greeks* and *Romans* changed their religion for the *Christian*, when they were the most learned and civilized, and the *Jews*, in their opinion, the most ignorant and the most despised of all nations, and the preachers of Christianity were at first of the most illiterate of that despised nation. This is a fact that cannot be contradicted: and having no parallel in the history of mankind, is certainly deserving of particular attention.

4. With all these difficulties before him, from the nature of his undertaking, and the people whom he had to gain to his purpose, *Jesus* promised to his disciples nothing at all in this world, but only in another. On the contrary, he frequently apprized them, that if they adhered to him, they had nothing to expect in this life but persecution, and many of them that violent death to which he himself was destined. This is a kind of conduct which must certainly be deemed in the highest degree preposterous and unaccountable in an impostor, who, whatever he gave out, could not have had a view to any thing but some advantage in this life. It must have been to sacrifice himself and his followers, for whom it is evident he had the greatest affection, for no advantage whatever to himself or them, which is what any man must pronounce to be absolutely impossible.

That a great number of persons should deliberately abandon themselves to persecution and certain death, in order to

establish a scheme which they conceived to be favourable to the happiness of mankind, is not to be admitted. That a single person should devote himself to present death, when immediate and great glory would certainly accrue to himself, and an ample recompence to his family, is possible, though examples of it are uncertain and rare. But that many persons should do this, when the prospect of fame to themselves, and of advantage to their families, was distant and uncertain, and when for the present, and an indefinite length of time, contempt would be joined to their other sufferings, it is impossible, while human nature is what we know it to be. Such conduct would be deemed to be nothing less than *insanity*; and that a number of persons should be insane in exactly the same way, and infect thousands with the same species of the disorder, would be most miraculous.

That Jesus *did* expect a violent death for himself, and that he apprized his followers that many of them must expect the same, appears from the whole course of his history. It was not a thought that occurred to him only just before his death, and which he had not time to reflect upon; but it appears that it was what he had steadily in view, so as to have had an opportunity of considering it in all its terrors, and all its consequences, from the very beginning of his ministry, and what he in good time informed his disciples of. Some time before his last journey to *Jerusalem*, it is said, (*Matt. xvi. 21.*) “From that time began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” This, as was natural, staggered his disciples, who at that time expected preferment in the kingdom which they believed he was about to erect; * and *Peter* said unto him, [*ver. 22.*] *This be far from thee, Lord.* But Jesus, so far from palliating the matter, and endeavouring to soften it, and reconcile their minds to it, replied, [*ver. 23.*] “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men;” and turning to his disciples, he said, [*vers. 24, 25.*] “If any man will come after me, let him—take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it.” On another occasion he said, (*Matt. x. 38.*) “He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not wor-

* See Vol. XIII. p. 184.

thy of me." On all proper occasions he clearly apprized his disciples that in this world they had nothing better to expect than the treatment that he himself met with. For when the sons of *Zebedee*, *James* and *John*, applied to him for the chief seats in his kingdom, he said, (*Matt.* xx. 22,) "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And when they said, "We are able," he said, [*ver.* 23,] "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." When he foretold the destruction of *Jerusalem*, he said to the apostles, (*Matt.* xxiv. 9,) "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." By way of encouragement to bear all this, he could only say, and this he did in his first public discourse from the Mount, (*Matt.* v. 10—12,) "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

What could any man expect from this mode of address, from which Jesus never varied, but that his hearers, who looked for nothing but worldly advantage, (which at first was the case of the apostles themselves,) finding that he had nothing of that kind to offer them, would turn from him with indignation and contempt? Disappointed in their fond prospects, what could have kept them with him, but a firm persuasion that he had a divine mission, and, therefore, that it was their duty to follow him implicitly, confident that, in some way or other, of which they had no idea, they would in the end find their account in it? Notwithstanding his persisting in disclaiming all pretensions of a temporal nature, they did not abandon the expectations they had entertained; still flattering themselves that, though he did not acquaint them with it, he would, at a proper time, assume kingly power. But when he was apprehended as a malefactor, which did not at all surprise or disconcert *him*, they all "forsook him and fled;" [*Matt.* xxvi. 56,] while he, with a painful and ignominious death before his eyes, met his dreadful fate with the greatest composure, and went through the whole of the trying scene without giving the least suspicion that he wished to avoid it. Naturally indeed he did, and, therefore, he prayed, [*Matt.* xxvi. 59,] that *the bitter cup*

might pass from him. But, he immediately added, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." Surely this behaviour was very unlike that of an impostor.

This was far from being the conduct of *Mahomet*. Besides promising his followers the enjoyment of every luxury of life, and especially that of women, (free, as he frequently repeats it, from impurity,*) he did not fail to hold out to them something worth fighting for in this world. Neither himself, nor any of his immediate followers, were voluntary martyrs to their religion.

As Jesus did not fail to apprise his followers of the dangers and the inconvenience to which their adherence to him would expose them, he did not conceal the great evils which would attend the propagation of his religion, though it would ultimately be in the highest degree beneficial to the world, and would finally prevail in it. "Think not," says he, (*Matt. x. 34—36*), "that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against the mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." *Vers. 21, 22*: "The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death, and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." Surely such discourses as these were not likely to recommend his religion, or invite followers.

4. An artful impostor would probably have *secrets*, and confidential friends to whom he would intrust what he did not communicate to others, though this is not necessary to every impostor. But Jesus had no secrets, nor does there appear to have been any persons to whom he communicated what he concealed from others. When his audience discovered great perverseness, and a disposition to cavil, he spake to them in parables, but he afterwards explained the meaning of them to his apostles, one of whom was *Judas*, who, as he betrayed him, would, no doubt, have divulged whatever he had known to his prejudice. In the general instructions which Jesus gave his apostles, he directed them to publish to the world every thing that they had heard from him, without exception. *Matt. x. 27*: "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye on the house tops."

* See Sale's *Koran*, 1801, II, p. 412.

The only secret that Jesus had, was not his pretension to a divine mission, (for this he always openly asserted, and appealed to his miracles for the evidence of it,) but to his being the *Messiah* announced in the ancient prophets. But this was only for fear of exciting an alarm which would have done no good, and at a proper time he declared this to all the apostles, and to *Judas* among them. After his resurrection and ascension, this was no secret to any person. He also avowed it, in the most solemn manner, at his trial before the high-priest.

5. Jesus discovered no anxiety about the evidence of his divine mission, which would have been natural to a person who had been conscious to himself that he was unable to produce any that was satisfactory. This anxiety appears through the whole of the *Koran*. Mahomet's assertion of his divine mission, of the chapters in the *Koran* being sent to him from heaven, his denunciations of the wrath of God, and of hell-fire to the unbelievers, are repeated without end, so as to be tiresome in the extreme. What he wanted in evidence he endeavoured to supply by confident assertions, and this, together with the success of the battles that he fought, sufficiently answered his purpose. To these he appealed, and his followers, no doubt, thought that God would not give such success to a mere impostor.

On the contrary, Jesus never, of his own accord, said any thing about his mission, leaving it to those who saw his miracles to make the necessary inference from them. He contented himself with answering objections as they were made to him; and as his miracles were never questioned, he easily shewed the absurdity of every thing that was objected to them, especially that of his casting out demons by *Beelzebub*. [*Matt.* xii. 26.] With great dignity he observed, on one of these occasions, (*John* x. 25,) that *the works which his Father gave him to do, bare witness of him*; and in answer to the clamorous demand of a sign from heaven, he referred them (*Matt.* xxii. 39) to the sign of the prophet *Jonas*, saying, that as *Jonas* had been three days in the belly of a fish, he should remain so long in the state of the dead, and rise again on the third day; which it appears that his enemies well understood, by the precautions they took to prevent any imposition with respect to it.

How natural was this conduct on the supposition of Jesus having been conscious to himself that he had a commission from God, and that the evidence of it, which was constantly before the world, was sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced

person! Had he been conscious that his pretensions were destitute of any solid proof, he would naturally have made the most of any fallacious appearance of evidence that he could produce, as *Mahomet* did of his victory of *Beder*,* and the excellence of the composition of the *Koran*.

6. The piety observable in the character of Jesus is alone a proof, to those who give due attention to the human character, that he was no impostor. That he was actuated by the genuine sentiments of piety, appeared in all his discourses, and the whole of his conduct. He not only always declared that *he came to do the will of God who sent him*, and, (*John* xiv. 10,) that *the Father within him did the works*, which evidenced his divine mission; but it is evident that, as the *Psalmist* said,† “*God was in all his thoughts*,” and that to his will he was at all times resigned. It was, as we read *John* iv. 34, *his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him*. He was frequent and earnest in *prayer*, and taught his disciples to pray, to avoid ostentation in prayer, (*Matt.* vi. 6,) to *go into their closets*, and, *shutting the doors, pray to their Father, who, he said, saw in secret*. Such a reverence for God, and devotedness to his will, in life and in death, as Jesus discovered, is absolutely incompatible with false pretensions to a mission from him, whatever might be his object in the imposture. It must have appeared to him as the extreme of arrogance and impiety, such as could not fail to draw after it the Divine displeasure and the heaviest judgments.

No person can read the *New Testament*, and imagine that Jesus was an Atheist, or an unbeliever in a future state of righteous retribution. Indeed, it is not probable that there were any proper Unbelievers among the Jews in his time. Even the *Sadducees* were believers in the being and moral government of God, and in the divine mission of Moses: but Jesus was not a Sadducee. He was, without all question, a sincere believer in the doctrine that he taught. And that he was such an enthusiast as to imagine that he had those supernatural communications to which he pretended, without having them, is even more improbable than the supposition of his having been an impostor. If ever

* See *Koran*, I. pp. 56, 78; *Prideaux's Life of Mahomet*, Ed. 6, 1716, pp. 79, 80. “*Mahomet pretends that God made his army appear to the enemy double to what it was; and that he sent troops of angels, to the number of three thousand, who got him the victory.*” *Reland's Life of Mahomet*, prefixed to *Four Treatises*, 1712, p. 6.

† Rather contrary to what the *Psalmist* said “*of the wicked.*” See *Psalm* x. 4.

man was in his *right mind*, and knew what he was about, it was Jesus. All his discourses and actions discover the greatest calmness and composure, and savour nothing of extravagance, which so egregious an enthusiast could not always have concealed. All his discourses are perfectly rational, and his whole conduct was of a piece with them; so that, if he had no divine mission, he must have been not an *enthusiast*, who had imposed upon himself, but properly an *impostor*, who endeavoured to impose upon the world; and whether this supposition be at all tenable, let any person, at all acquainted with human nature, now judge.

Besides the piety of Jesus, he was evidently a man of great benevolence, and had a strong sentiment of friendship for his apostles and others. And it cannot be supposed that such a person would purposely deceive and mislead his countrymen and friends. Impostors have callous hearts. Intent upon their schemes, they are deaf to every other consideration.

Jesus gave many proofs of the strongest and tenderest affection. When he came within sight of Jerusalem, [*Luke* xix. 41,] "he wept over it," in the prospect of the calamities that awaited it. He wept at the grave of Lazarus,* and his discourses to his apostles, a little before his death, discover the most amiable sympathy and concern, without the least regard to his own approaching sufferings. He was only occupied with the idea of what they would feel when he was removed from them. We see nothing like this in the conduct of *Mahomet*.

Though *Jesus* affected no austerity, he was free from all sensual indulgence, which was by no means the case of *Mahomet*; and he certainly did not aim at temporal power, but resolutely declined several proposals of the multitude to make him a king.† What, then, could an impostor, without

* See, on *John*-xi. 35, Vol. XIII. p. 266.

† "Those mistaken views of temporal grandeur, which the disciples had indulged, their Master industriously corrected.—Jesus called his hearers to repentance, but Mahomet to conquest.—The impostor of Arabia seized the sceptre before it was offered to him; the dictator of Rome rejected a crown, which it was both unsafe and dishonourable for him to wear; and was conscious that he had already obtained the solid power of monarchy, while he reluctantly, though ostentatiously, refused its gaudy appendages. But far different was the conduct of Jesus Christ. He declined as well the reality of dominion which Cæsar possessed, as the appearance of it which Mahomet assumed. He declined them at a time when, by accepting them, he might have gratified the pride of his countrymen, subdued all the prejudices which obstructed the belief of his mission, and averted many of the dangers which threatened his life." *White's* [and *Badcock's*] "Sermons at the *Bampton Lecture*," 1784, Ed. 2, 1785, pp. 230, 231, 145.

ambition, or personal indulgence, aim at? Jesus, being a man, must have had some such objects as other men have; but there was nothing that other men most covet, that his conduct was at all adapted to gain. He must, therefore, have had views of a higher nature. On any other *hypothesis* his conduct is absolutely unaccountable; but on the supposition of his being conscious of having a divine mission, and of a station of honour and power destined for him in a future world, all his discourses, and his whole conduct, are perfectly natural. "For the joy that was set before him," (*Heb. xii. 2.*) he "endured the cross, despising the shame" of that ignominious death: but that he should have done this without having had in view any thing that any other man ever thought worth pursuing, is not to be supposed of him, or of any man.

Let all these circumstances be duly considered, the obscure birth and mean occupation of Jesus, in a distant and despised country; his high pretensions to be the *Jewish Messiah*, without any assumption of kingly power, universally deemed to be most essential to that character; his claim to a kingdom, though not of this world, and to the power of raising the dead and judging the world, when he had nothing but the certain prospect of a violent death before him; his undertaking to overthrow all the religions of the Heathen world, firmly attached as the several nations were to them, religions which had kept their ground, from time immemorial, notwithstanding a long period now boasted of as the most enlightened of any till the present; when there had not been from the beginning of the world an example of any nation voluntarily changing their religion; his holding out to his disciples nothing but persecution in this world and happiness in another; his having no secrets; his discovering no anxiety about the evidences of his divine mission, joined with his calm good sense, his exalted piety, his general benevolence, and the strong affection he always shewed to his friends and followers; let all these circumstances, I say, be considered, and, without attending to his miracles and his success, it must surely be thought impossible that this man could have been an impostor, and meant to deceive the world. This *internal* evidence added to *external*, on which I have already enlarged, viz. from *miracles* and *prophecy*, must be abundantly sufficient to satisfy any reasonable and candid inquirer, with respect to the truth of Christianity, and of revealed religion in general.

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES.

JOHN xiii. 17:

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

IN the *Discourses* which I have already delivered on the subject of the *Evidences of Revealed Religion*, I first endeavoured to shew the value of *religion in general*, then the superior value of *revealed religion*, compared with that which is called *natural*. After this, I gave you a view of the state of the *Heathen* world with respect to religion, and to philosophy also as connected with religion; and the great superiority of the system of *Moses*, which has been most objected to by Unbelievers, in both those respects. I then proceeded to explain the direct or *external* evidence of the *Jewish* and *Christian* religions, from *miracles* and from *prophecy*; and, in the last place, as a part of the *internal* evidence, I shewed, from the circumstances of the history of Jesus, the impossibility of his having been an impostor.

Having thus finished the *argumentative* part of my undertaking, I now proceed to conclude the whole with some observations of a *practical* nature.

1. If revealed religion be *true*, it must be of great *importance*, and demand our closest attention. It may well, indeed, be presumed, that if the Divine Being, the great Author of universal nature, has interposed in so extraordinary a manner as has been represented, in a scheme commencing with our first parents, carried on through the dispensation of Moses, continued by Jesus Christ, and to be resumed at his second coming, the object must be something of the greatest importance to the duty and the happiness of man; and it cannot be without hazard to ourselves if we neglect and reject it.

The most interesting article in the scheme of revelation, is the doctrine of a *future state*. And surely, if there really be a future state for man, if it be of much longer continuance than the present, especially if it is to last for ever, and if our well-being in that state will depend on our behaviour in this, it behoves us to pay much more attention to it than to any thing in this short and transitory life. Did any person now living in this country certainly know that he must soon leave

it, and go to another, for example to France, where he had the prospect of succeeding to a large estate, would he not be thinking of his voyage, and making preparations for it? Would he not be learning the French language, and endeavouring in every other way to provide for his enjoyment of life in that distant country? And would a man be commended for his prudence in this case, and blamed for superstition and folly in another case exactly similar to it? Or would you not think a man insane who should forget a journey he was upon, and take up with his inn; and not think it reasonable that a man who believes he is travelling towards an eternal world, should have his attention fixed upon it, and make light of any inconvenience he met with in his way thither?

Surely, then, it becomes Christians, who profess themselves to be *pilgrims and strangers* here, and *citizens of heaven*, to be thinking of their proper country, and preparing for their removal to it.

Men of the world naturally say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." * This is the great burden of the song with all the Heathen poets. But the Christian as naturally says with the apostle Paul, (*Phil. iv. 5*), "Let your moderation be known unto all men: the Lord is at hand."

To use one example more. If you knew that any particular child would die at a certain age, as at ten or twelve, you would adapt his education, and your whole treatment of him accordingly, and not trouble him with making him learn things which he would have no occasion for till he was a man. But hoping and expecting that your children will grow to man's estate, you reasonably endeavour to qualify them for it, and would be universally blamed if you did not.

Let us, then, believing that we are born for immortality, overlook the transitory enjoyments and pursuits of this uncertain life, and, instead of laying up (*Matt. vi. 19—21*) "treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal," let us "lay up treasures in heaven," where none of these inconveniences happen, and *where our treasure is, there let our hearts be also*.

2. If a life of virtue will alone ensure our happiness hereafter, and vice our misery, it certainly follows, that virtue is

* 1 Cor. xv. 32. Paul has been represented, by a learned biblical critic, as here referring to a tomb of *Sardanapulus*, which is said to have been set up at *Tarsus*, one of the cities which that monarch founded. After recording the prince's genealogy and exploits, it was "thus inscribed: Εσθιε, πινε, παιζε' ως τα αλλα ταυτη εκ αξια. Eat, drink, be merry; for nothing else is worthy of attention." See *Gregorii Posthuma*, 1650, p. 243; Vol. XIV. p. 115.

our greatest good, and vice our greatest evil. Consequently, our principal endeavour through life, should be the improvement of our moral character, to restrain every propensity to the irregular indulgence of our appetites and passions, to cultivate every generous sentiment of equity and humanity to our fellow-creatures, and habitual piety to God. Every thing else should in reason be made subservient to this one great end of human life. To be rich, or to be poor, to be master, or to be servant, to be healthy or diseased, are mere trifles, and wholly insignificant, compared with acting our part in life well, whatever that part be, that of a king or of a beggar, because it is upon our acting the part assigned us *well*, and not at all upon the nature or comparative dignity of it, that our future well-being will depend.

3. In such a world as this, in which it has pleased Divine Providence, and, no doubt, with the greatest wisdom, to place us, a state of trial and of discipline, a state in which temptations to vice and excess of every kind are continually before us, constant vigilance, and the most strenuous exertion, are absolutely necessary. In youth, the love of pleasure, in more advanced years, objects of ambition and avarice, have strong charms for men; and the love of these things cannot be kept within due bounds without the most unremitting attention, till a habit of moderation and self-government be acquired and confirmed. This habit once formed not only takes away all pain of restraint, but converts our duty into pleasure. But, then, such powerful habits as these are not acquired without much reflection and exercise. Restraint of any kind (and all virtue, at first, is such) is necessarily painful, and therefore will not be submitted to without some strong counteracting principle, without a principle of submission to some *authority*, as that of a parent, of a magistrate, of conscience, or of God. This, as I shewed you, is the most certain and the most powerful of all, and it is nowhere so clearly ascertained as in revelation. There we learn in the most intelligible language, what it is that the Lord our God requires of us, in order to live and to die in his favour, so as to secure a happy immortality.

Do not deceive yourselves by imagining that this great prize, of *eternal life*, is to be attained without exertion and labour. Advantages far inferior to this are never secured without them; and can we expect that the greatest of all goods should be obtained so easily? Christianity is, no doubt, the same thing now that it was in the time of Christ and the apostles: and he said, (*Matt. x. 37, 38*), "He that

loveth father or mother," son or daughter, wife or friend, "more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." The apostle Paul frequently compares the life of a Christian to a state of *warfare*, as when he exhorts Christians (1 *Tim.* vi. 12) to "fight the good fight of faith," and (*Eph.* vi. 11) to "put on the whole armour of God." He also compares it to a *race*, as when he says, (1 *Cor.* ix. 24,) "so run that ye may obtain," viz. what he calls (*Phil.* iii. 14) "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Now, both the state of warfare, and the exercises of running and wrestling, as practised in the *Grecian* games, to which the apostle alludes, required great preparation before the contest, and great exertion in the course of it.*

If we be Christians in earnest, we must have the advantages of Christianity, and the prospect of its rewards in a future state, so much at heart, that we shall prefer them to every other consideration, to every thing in life, and to life itself. I do not say that they who cannot do this are no Christians, or are to be numbered with the *wicked*, and consigned to future punishment; but they cannot have any just claim to those distinguished rewards of Christianity, which are promised to those who are said to have *overcome the world*, which implies a contending with great difficulties, and of whom it is said, (*Rev.* iii. 21,) that *they shall sit down with Christ on his throne, as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne*. In the house of God, the kingdom of heaven, *there are many mansions*, and the choicest are reserved for those who, (*Acts* xiv. 22,) "through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." But as we do not content ourselves with low attainments in this world when higher are within our reach, let the same ambition animate us with respect to things of still more value, in another world.

As there are all varieties of characters in men, and all gradations in every character, in this world, there will, no doubt, be a corresponding distribution of rewards and punishments in a future state, though, in a general way of speaking, and in the Scriptures, men are usually divided into two classes, the righteous and the wicked; for *the Judge of all the earth* will, no doubt, do that which is *right*; and, if so, there must be as great a variety of situations in the future world, as there are of characters and deserts of

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 88, 286, 287.

men in this, though we may not be able to form any idea or conjecture in what manner this will or can be effected.

It may, indeed, be said, and with truth, that if we love virtue at all, so as to be justly entitled to the character of *virtuous and conscientious men*, we shall set no bounds to our love of it. For if, in any case, we give other objects and pursuits a preference to it, it is only in some cases, and not universally, that we are disposed to act the conscientious and upright part; whereas God requires that we should give him our whole hearts, we must (*Matt. xxii. 37*) “love the Lord *our* God, with all *the* heart, with all *the* soul, and all *the* mind,” that is, we must be wholly devoted to his will, in doing and in suffering, in life and in death. The apostle *James* (ii. 10) observes, that *he who keeps the whole law, but offends in one point, is guilty of all*. If there be any case in which a man wilfully and habitually offends, he certainly wants the proper *principle of obedience*, that is, a just respect for the Divine authority, which would lead to an uniform and invariable regard to the laws of God. This is a proof that there is some vicious propensity, to which, in his mind, every thing else will give way; and that, had he had as strong a propensity to any other gratification or pursuit, he would have been equally regardless of the authority of God, in that case also; for he only obeys the laws of God and the dictates of conscience, when he feels no strong temptation to transgress them.

In this case no person can properly be said to be *a servant of God*, or *of righteousness*, but only a slave to his own favourite appetite or passion. But we cannot serve God and mammon.

In the present state of things, such as we cannot doubt is the best for a state of trial and discipline, a theatre on which to form great and excellent characters, a proper Christian temper is necessarily a difficult attainment. To form a truly great character there must be many difficulties to struggle with, evils of all kinds, moral as well as natural; for how could the greater virtues of forbearance, doing good against evil, resignation, and trust in God, be formed, but in a world in which men should be exposed to injuries of every kind? Not only could not real virtue be *tried*, and consequently *known*, but it could not even be *formed*, or exist, in other circumstances. And surely the character in which the virtues above-mentioned exist is greatly superior to that of the generality of the world; who, not comprehending its nature or value, will under-rate and despise it. With them

what is commonly called a high spirit, and a promptness to revenge injuries, will be more admired and cultivated than a disposition to pity and befriend the injurious person, which will be reckoned tame and despicable; though certainly it must appear, on a little consideration, that the latter is more truly magnanimous, implying a greater command of passion, and superior reflection. It is no less evident that it is this prevailing *spirit of the world* which fills private life with quarrels, and which, entering into courts, fills the world with wars, the source of unspeakable misery; whereas a truly Christian temper, a humble, meek, and benevolent disposition, would make the intercourse of individuals and of nations, the source of peace and of happiness.

It is, however, no small attainment to get above the censure and contempt of persons whose minds are in a lower and more degraded state than our own, when they are the great majority of the world we live in, and are likely to continue so. In this state of things, great exertion of mind is requisite so far to overcome the world, as to possess our own minds in peace and joy. It can only be done by looking habitually towards a state in which a truer judgment of characters will be formed, and in which those who are really superior here will be advanced to that state of consideration and respect to which they are entitled.

The real difference between a merely nominal believer and an unbeliever is very small, and of little consequence, compared to the difference between the merely nominal and the real Christian. What are the generalities of Christians, in what are called Christian countries? They are, in fact, persons who mind nothing but their business, or their pleasure, without giving any attention to the principles of Christianity at all. It is by no means the subject of their daily thoughts, it supplies no motives to their actions, it contributes nothing to moderate their joys, or to alleviate their sorrows. It neither enables them to bear the troubles of life, nor does it give them any solid hope in death. Whereas the real Christian, as the apostle says, (1 Cor. vii. 30, 31,) *rejoices as though he rejoiced not, and weeps as though he wept not, because the fashion of this world passeth away, and the Lord is at hand.* He is ever "looking, (Tit. ii. 13,) to that blessed hope, *even the glorious appearing of the great God, and his Saviour Jesus Christ;*" and has peace and joy in believing.

4. Christianity is less to be considered as a system of opinions, than a rule of life. But of what signification is a

rule, if it be not complied with? All the doctrines of Christianity have for their object Christian morals, which are no other than the well-known duties of life; and the advantage we derive from this religion is, that the principles of it assist us in maintaining that steady regard to the providence and moral government of God, and to a future state, which facilitates and ensures the practice of those duties; inspiring greater piety towards God, greater benevolence to man, and that heavenly-mindedness which raises the heart and affections above those mean and low pursuits which are the source of almost all vices. But Christian principles not reflected upon, or attended to, cannot be accompanied with any advantage of this kind; and better, surely, were it to make no profession of any principles, than to live without a due regard to them. Better, therefore, were it for any person to be an unbeliever in Christianity, than to be a Christian, and live as if he had not been one. He deprives himself of all apology or excuse for his bad conduct. And it would, I fear, be happy for thousands of professing Christians, if they had been born and lived among Heathens.

We cannot too much impress upon our minds, that religion of any kind is only a *mean* to a certain *end*, and that this end is good conduct in life. Consequently, if this end be not attained, we not only lose the advantage of the means, or instrument, of which we were possessed, but are chargeable with the guilt of such neglect, are guilty of an ungrateful contempt of the means that were afforded us for the greatest and best of purposes; and can we expect that this will go unpunished?

The guilt of *unbelief* does not consist in mere disbelieving; for *opinions* of any kind, as such, bear no relation to *criminality*; but in refusing to consider with due seriousness and impartiality the evidence of Christianity that is laid before men; that refusal arising from, and implying, some vicious prejudice, or improper bias. And if, in any particular case, (and I doubt not there are such,) this refusal does not arise from any vicious prejudice, there is nothing to blame in such refusal. If, for example, any person had no access to the Scriptures, by which he might have had the means of better information, and he was required to believe, as what was contained in them, things that he found it absolutely impossible for him to believe, as, that bread and wine were flesh and blood, or any thing else that appeared to him equally impossible, he must of necessity either be an unbeliever, or give up all pretence to common sense.

No person, however, can be wholly innocent, who does not weigh the difficulties of believing with those of unbelief. Whatever difficulties any person finds, or are thrown in his way, he should consider the general evidence of the great facts on which Christianity is founded; and if that be sufficient, he may be satisfied that, though he cannot, for the present, account for some particular appearances or representations, the difficulties occasioned by this circumstance cannot be insuperable; since all truths are consistent with one another. If it appear, from indisputable historical evidence, that Christ wrought real miracles; if he died and rose from the dead, his religion is unquestionably from God; and then all the absurdities charged upon his doctrine must have arisen from some misconception or misrepresentation, though we may not be able to trace it. But it is no uncommon thing for a difficulty which appears insuperable to-day, to be cleared up to-morrow, as we see in many cases.

The principles of Christianity, however, may be, and no doubt are, of great use when they are not explicitly attended to. They have been the means of establishing such maxims and habits in parents, as are afterwards communicated to their posterity, more by the natural and silent operation of example, than by direct instruction; so that unbelievers, born of Christian parents, and living in a Christian country, may be, in a manner, half Christians, without their knowing it. Also, mere nominal Christians are, no doubt, often restrained from vices and irregularities forbidden by Christianity, without their being aware that the restraint comes originally from that quarter; having acquired habits of decent and proper conduct, which operate mechanically, and without any explicit regard to Christian principles, though originally derived from them.

There are also, all degrees of the influence of Christian principles, from the exalted character of Christ and the apostles, and many others in every age, who had no other object of attention, and all whose thoughts, sentiments, words, and actions, were under the constant influence of them, who lived as the apostle said, (*Heb. xi. 27.*) as if constantly "seeing him who is invisible," "by faith," and "not by sight," (*2 Cor. v. 7.*) as if the great scenes of the future world were present to them; there is a great difference, I say, between such Christians as these, and those of the lowest order, who may, indeed, have read the Scriptures, or part of them, and who retain some knowledge of them, and who entertain no doubt of their truth, but in their

general conduct they give no explicit attention to them. Nevertheless, the knowledge they have acquired has left some favourable impressions on their minds, some latent fear of God, and respect to his providence and a world to come, which prevents the commission of great crimes, and leads to an uniformly better conduct than they would otherwise have been capable of.

5. If we have any value for our religion, thinking it to be an useful institution, and wish well to our fellow-creatures, to whom we are therefore *desirous* to recommend it; we should be particularly careful to exhibit it to proper advantage, in our own dispositions and conduct. It is to *this* that the generality of mankind, inattentive to reasoning, will look, and not unjustly. Our Saviour himself said of pretenders to prophecy, and of men in general, (*Matt. vii. 16.*) "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Indeed, as the only end of good principles is good practice, if the latter be not apparent, the former will not be inferred. On this account we must not confine our religion to our closets, but carry it with us into life, and in the business and bustle of it, discover that superior meekness, benevolence, and disinterestedness, which Christian principles tend to inspire. We should, in all respects, shew a greater command of our passions, and a greater freedom from the influence of a love of sensual pleasure, of ambition, and avarice, and from all those vices which arise from an excessive love of the world, and the things of it, to which a regard to heaven and heavenly things (on which alone our best affections ought to be set) naturally leads.

When this is done, but not before, the world in general will have an opportunity of perceiving the real effect of Christian principles; and if they be not properly influenced by it, the blame will not be ours. There can be no doubt but that, though on some the fairest and most advantageous exhibition of Christian conduct may have an unfavourable effect, since, as our Saviour observed, there are those who (*John iii. 19.*) "love darkness rather than light," and that "the world," which *loves its own*, (*xv. 19.*) will hate his disciples "because *they* are not of the world," this will be the case only with those whose hearts are greatly corrupted. On others the effect must be favourable. As he says, (*Matt. v. 16.*) that *when our light shines before men, they will see the good works of his disciples, and glorify his Father who is in heaven.* What he meant by *glorifying God*, we clearly see from his saying on another occasion, (*John xv. 8.*) "herein

is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," that is, "fruits of righteousness," which the apostle also says, (*Phil.* i. 11,) are "unto the glory and praise of God."

But, on the other hand, if, in the whole tenor of men's lives, there does not appear to be any difference between the Christian and the man of the world, how can those who have no other means of judging, or who will not have recourse to any other, suppose that there is any advantage in the principles of the one more than in those of the other? If the nominal Christian behave just like other men, if he put as little restraint upon himself in indulgences of any kind; if he be as ambitious, as avaricious, and as revengeful, when provoked; if he appear to have no greater regard to God, or love to mankind; shewing itself, as it naturally will, in acts of kindness, generosity, and mercy; if the Christian appear to be in all respects as much attached to the world, and the things of it, as other men are, they will naturally say, that all his pretences to a belief in a future world, a world prepared for the righteous only, are vain, when it is evident from his conduct, that this world has as full possession of his heart as it has of those of other men.

By this conduct, not becoming and adorning, but disgracing his profession, the nominal Christian incurs the *woe* pronounced by our Saviour, (*Matt.* xviii. 7,) "It must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." By this means we not only lose the benefit of Christian principles ourselves, but, by giving others an unfavourable opinion of Christianity, we indispose them to the reception of it, and consequently deprive them of the benefit of it. Instead of being preachers of the gospel, as every Christian in some sense or other ought to be, and which every Christian may be, at least by his example, a person who is only a nominal Christian, but a vicious man, is in fact a preacher of infidelity, and does every thing that is in his power to unchristianize the world. On this account there was great use in the strict discipline of the primitive church, which rejected all such persons from their communion. Vicious men were to them as *Heathen men and publicans*. Being excluded from all connexion with Christians, and being known to be so, the cause of Christianity did not suffer by their misconduct.*

* It has been unfortunate for the cause of Christianity, that ecclesiastical history, like the civil, is, in a great measure, an exhibition of vices and of misery. For these things are always most prominent, and catch the attention of the generality of

6. It will be inquired by what means the influence of the world can be counteracted, or by what means a due attention to Christian principles can be well secured. I answer, the principal means to effect this great purpose, and one that will naturally lead to every other, is a familiar acquaintance with the Scriptures. The zealous Christian will make these books his constant companions. With the pious Psalmist (*Psalm i. 2.*) "his delight *will be* in the law of the Lord, and in his law *will he* meditate day and night."

Be assured that in reading the Scriptures ever so often, you will always find something new and interesting. Many difficulties you will, no doubt, meet with, as may be ex-

observers; while the beneficial effects of religious, as well as of civil institutions, are much less conspicuous. The meek, the humble, and the heavenly-minded, though the benevolent, among Christians, attract little attention, and therefore make no figure in the eye of an historian. Besides, in all cases, virtue is more common than vice; and on this account the latter attracts more attention. The former is like the gentle rain or dew, which though it does infinite good, yet, because it is common, is not so much noticed as the destructive storm or hurricane, which tears up every thing before it, and lays a whole country waste.

Wealth and power will corrupt the hearts of men. It cannot, therefore, be thought extraordinary, if this was the effect of wealth and power in the bishops of the greater sees, and it is the conduct of these men about which ecclesiastical history is most conversant; while the poor, the humble, and laborious teachers of Christianity, and their hearers in lower life, who were really influenced by its spirit, and laid themselves out to do good, hoping for no reward but in heaven, passed unnoticed.

Occasions, however, have frequently occurred, which drew out these men and their principles into public view. I mean seasons of persecution; and then it might be seen what the power of Christian principles really is. And when it is considered what numbers of Christians have suffered for their religion, in the Heathen, the Papal, and even Protestant persecutions, what torture many of them endured, and, what is much more trying, of how long continuance were the sufferings of many of them, in prisons and dungeons, where they lingered out their lives, destitute of every comfort, when liberty, life, honour and wealth, would have been the reward of a simple renunciation of their faith, it will be evident that there is in Christianity something that has great power over the hearts and lives of men.

But the principal circumstance to be attended to in the histories of persecutions, is not the greatness or the duration of the sufferings of the martyrs, but the temper of mind with which they suffered; their piety, their patience, their meekness, their benevolence, their freedom from the spirit of revenge, and the good-will which they shewed even to their enemies and persecutors. This is an attainment of a truly extraordinary nature, which it is in vain that we look for among the Heathens. This is not the disposition with which the North-American Indian bears his torture.

Should persecution again arise, Christian principles being the same that they ever were, would, I doubt not, produce as great and as extensive effects. But I am far from wishing for an experiment of this kind. We are directed not to court, but to shun persecution, if we can do it with integrity and honour; from which, however, we are never to swerve. And perhaps Christian principles undergo a trial no less severe in prosperity than in adversity. It is commonly said, and with truth, that if adversity has slain its thousands, prosperity has slain its ten thousands. A season of persecution forces an attention to Christian principles, and unites numbers in the same cause; but in prosperity we must of our own accord, and without any external impulse, give attention to Christian principles: and this the obtrusion of wordly objects too often prevents. (P.)

pected in books of such great antiquity, written, many of them, in a language which is but imperfectly understood, and abounding with allusions to customs, with which we, in this part of the world, are unacquainted, and which, being in many respects the reverse of ours, will of course appear unnatural. But new light is thrown upon things of this nature every day. Many difficulties are already cleared up in the most satisfactory manner; and in the mean time every thing of this nature may be safely neglected, or referred to farther consideration, especially if you read for the purpose of moral improvement; the greatest part of the Bible being perfectly intelligible to every capacity, and in the highest degree useful and edifying.

A familiar acquaintance with the Scriptures will preserve upon the mind a lively sense of God and his moral government. It will continually bring into view, and give you a habit of contemplating the great plan of providence, respecting the designs of God in the creation of man, and his ultimate destination. You will by this means have a clearer view of the Divine wisdom and goodness in the government of the world, even in the most calamitous events, as in the corruption of true religion, as well as in the reformation of it. You will perceive signs of order in the present seemingly disordered state of things, and will rejoice in the prospect of the glorious completion of the scheme, in universal virtue and universal happiness. Such views of things as these, which will be perpetually suggested by the reading of the Scriptures, have the greatest tendency to ennoble and enlarge the mind, to raise our thoughts and affections above the low pursuits which wholly occupy and distract the minds of the bulk of mankind; they will inspire a most delightful serenity in the midst of the cares and troubles of life, and impart *a joy which the world can neither give nor take away*.

By the frequent reading of the Scriptures, we shall be unavoidably led to the exercises of meditation, constant watchfulness and prayer, and every other means of virtuous improvement, whatever has any tendency to repress what is vicious and defective, and promote what is most excellent in the human character.

The study of the Scriptures, which contain the history of the transactions of God with men, and which furnish topics of discussion proper for the exercise of the greatest genius, is equally interesting to the lowest and the most improved of the human race. Sir Isaac Newton, whose reputation as a philosopher stands higher than that of any other man,

devoted almost the whole of his time, after he was turned forty, (and he lived to the age of eighty-four,) to theology;* and from my personal knowledge, I can say, that some persons now living, and lately living in England, who had greatly distinguished themselves in mathematical and philosophical pursuits, declared that, as they advanced in life, they had the most satisfaction in theological ones. Nor can this be thought extraordinary, when it is considered, that these are subjects of infinitely more moment than any others to rational beings, born for immortality.

Let us, then, my Christian brethren, whatever be our situation or employment in life, whether our pursuits relate to agriculture, manufactures, commerce, natural philosophy, or any of the learned professions; though we should be employed in the more immediate service of the public, in any civil or military capacity, let us not forget that we are *men* and *Christians*; and, without neglecting the immediate and necessary business of this life, attend chiefly to what is of infinitely more importance, viz. our destination to *another*, and accordingly be solicitous to act such a part, and to cultivate such habits, as will be our best preparation for it; that, whenever we come to die, the great business of life may be done, and we may be like servants constantly looking for the return of their lord, that, *when he shall return*, and “take an account of his servants,” [*Matt.* xviii. 23;] we “may be found of him,” as the apostle says, (*2 Pet.* iii. 14,) “without spot, and blameless,—and not be ashamed before him at his coming;” [*1 John* ii. 20;] but at *the great day*, emphatically so called, before the consideration of which every thing else should vanish like a shadow, we may hear the joyful sentence, (*Matt.* xxv. 21,) “Well done, good and faithful *servants*, enter *ye* into the joy of *your Lord*.”

* Sir Isaac Newton published his *Principia* in 1687. His “Account of Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture” was written, according to *Porson*, between 1690 and 1700. See Vol. II. p. 464, *Note* *; Vol. IV. p. 315, *Note* †; Vol. XIV. p. 433, *Note*. The “Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse” were not published till 1733, a few years after the author’s death. See a remarkable passage in the latter, on the general corruption of the Christian religion, Vol. XIV. p. 469, *Note* ¶.

The name of Sir Isaac Newton’s friend and physician, Dr. Mead, may be suitably added, as having, through life, employed much of his leisure in the reading and elucidation of the Scriptures. See his *Preface to Medica Sacra*, written at the age of 75, under a sense of religious obligation, which he thus expresses: “I have determined to pass the short remains of life in such a sort of leisure, as may prove neither disagreeable to myself, nor useless to others. For good men are of opinion, that we must give an account even of our idle hours, and therefore thought it necessary that they should be always well-spent.”

CONCLUSION.*

I HAVE now completed the series of *Discourses* which I proposed to deliver *on the Evidences of Revealed Religion*, and, at the request of many of my hearers, they will very soon be published. In the two first of the Discourses, and the present, I have endeavoured to shew what is the real *use* and genuine *spirit* of this religion, and, therefore, why it is of so much importance as to be worth contending for. But it will be said by unbelievers, that Christians are much divided among themselves. To what sect must we be converted? I answer, that all the sects of Christians, numerous as they are, are agreed with respect to every thing that is really fundamental, and that has any great influence on the tempers and conduct of men. They all agree in the belief of the being, the providence, and the righteous moral government of God; in the divine mission of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles, and also in the authority of the Scriptures of the *Old and New Testaments*; and, what is of more consequence than these, and to which these articles of faith are themselves subservient, they all believe in a state of righteous retribution after death. To whatever denomination of Christians, therefore, those who are, or have been unbelievers, may choose to join themselves, or whether they think proper to join no existing sect at all, but form a new division of themselves, I receive them as brethren. They are possessed of the great means and motives of virtue here, and, if these have their due influence upon their dispositions and conduct, they will be happy hereafter.

But many Christians, who ought to know better, are much alarmed at the idea of great danger from the spread of certain opinions, especially those of the Unitarians, with whom it is known that I class myself. I therefore think it may not be improper (and I know it to be the wish of many persons) if I give you one Discourse on that subject. And I am willing to hope that, if it be heard with candour, without which no true judgment can be formed of any thing, the consequence will be, that, whatever may be thought of the *truth* or *erroneousness* of the doctrine, what I shall observe

* With this "Address to the Congregation" the Author concluded these *Discourses* in 1796, though, for an obvious reason, it was not then printed with them, but in the Preface to "Unitarianism explained and defended."

may be the means of lessening the horror that some worthy persons have conceived of it,* and of promoting that mutual candour among Christians of different denominations, the want of which is one of the principal objections to the whole scheme, which many unbelievers, who, without considering what Christianity itself is, judge of it by the effect that it has on those who profess it, and who are more particularly shocked at the animosity which some Christians entertain for others. This Discourse, therefore, will not be without some relation to the defence of Christianity, in recommending it to the acceptance of unbelievers; and if it produce, in any measure, this most desirable effect, it will be the most proper close to all the Discourses that I have delivered, though it will not be printed with them.

* The following representation by Mr. William Bakewell, who arrived at *Philadelphia*, from England, in November, 1794, will serve to shew on very good authority, how this horror had been excited in that city against Dr. Priestley, for his undisguised profession of the *Unitarian* doctrine:

"I went several times to the Baptist Chapel in Second-street, under the care of Dr. Rogers, a man possessing considerable ability in declamation. This man, in the second discourse I heard him preach, burst out and bade the people beware, for a Priestley had entered the land, and then, crouching down in a worshipping attitude, exclaimed, *Oh, Lamb of God! how would they pluck thee from thy throne!* My feelings were excited at this public attack upon Dr. Priestley, and, though differing in my religious sentiments from those he professed, I could not refrain from ejaculating to myself, 'Oh, Priestley! even were thy doctrine true, miracles could scarcely save thee from bonds and imprisonment in every city!' For this indecorous and unmanly conduct, Dr. Rogers was reprimanded in the public prints, and given to understand that such contumelious usage ill became a member of the Philosophical Society. He seemed to feel the impropriety he had been guilty of, and made an acknowledgment of his error." *Mon. Repos.* l. pp. 393, 394.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND VOLUME.

THIS Volume of *Discourses* may be considered as a continuation of those which I delivered and published the last year, as those were of the set that I delivered in England, since they all relate, directly, or indirectly, to *the Evidences of Revealed Religion*; and I flatter myself that they will not be thought less original or useful. All great truths, and systems of truth, have numerous relations to other truths, and it cannot be expected that they should all be discovered by the same person, and still less at the same time. We may, therefore, expect that, if revealed religion be true, various proofs and illustrations of its truth will still be discovered by those who give their attention to the subject; and, in the present state of things, a more important one cannot be imagined. It is to be hoped, therefore, that many learned and studious persons, the friends of Christianity and of truth, will turn their thoughts, and give their time to it. The world will be tired of what any one person, or a few persons only, can do in any way; there will necessarily be so much of similarity in the views, and, consequently, in the writings of the same persons.

Some of the same passages in the evangelists will be found to be quoted in different *Discourses* in this Volume; but it is with different views, and, therefore, it requires no apology. The events in the history of the *Papal* power, quoted in the last of these *Discourses*, are such as are well known, and, therefore, do not require a reference to any original authorities. Many of them were copied from a French work, intitled *Harmonie des Prophéties*, by M. C. de Loys, printed at *Lausanne*, 1774, which I wish were more generally known.

A very valuable illustration of the divinity of the *Mosaic* institutions might be brought from a comparison of them with those of the *Hindoos*, which appear to have been of equal antiquity. This people was famed, in all ages, for their superior wisdom and civilization, and the mythology of the *Egyptians* and the *Greeks* appears to have been borrowed from theirs, or to have been derived from the same source. That of the *Hindoos* is, however, the more systematic and complex. But the institutions of *Moses* need

not to shrink from a comparison with theirs. What absurd notions concerning the origin and constitution of the universe, and what a complicated *Polytheism* are the foundation of it! How horrid were some of the rites of the Hindoo religion, and how abominable and disgusting were others of them! It is much more irrational, and no less unfavourable to morals, than the ancient religions of the western part of the world, of which some account was given in the former set of Discourses.*

When men of sense shall coolly reflect on these things, and consider how destitute the *Hebrew* nation was of every advantage for forming to themselves so excellent a system of religion, and of civil policy too, as we find in the books of *Mosès*, the great difference between his system and his writings, and those of the *Hindoos*, which are happily now become known to us, cannot but be thought a most extraordinary phenomenon; and the result of a comparison of them must be highly favourable to the supposition of *Moses* having been divinely inspired, and of the authors of the opposite system, whoever they were, having been left to the wanderings of a disordered imagination; they will appear to have been misled by the grossest ignorance into the most absurd superstitions. A detail of the particulars would strike the mind much more forcibly than this general account; and I intend, if I should have leisure and opportunity, to enter into it as far as may be necessary for this purpose.† At present I shall content myself with introducing an extract from the *Voyages of M. Sonnerat*, which throws great light on the phrase *passing through the fire*, so often mentioned in the Old Testament; and noticed, p. 57, of the former *Discourses*.

“The only public festival in honour of *Darma-Raja* and *Drobédé* is that of *Nerpou-Tirounal*, or the *feast of fire*, because they walk on that element. It continues eighteen days, during which they who make a vow to observe it must fast, abstain from women, lie on the ground without any mat, and walk over burning coals. On the eighteenth day they repair to the place, to the sound of musical instruments, their heads crowned with flowers, their bodies daubed over with saffron, and follow in cadence the images of *Darma-Raja* and *Drobédé* his wife, which are carried in procession. When they approach the hot coals, they stir them, to make them burn more fiercely. They then rub their foreheads

* See *supra*, pp. 40—56. † See the Author's *Comparison*, 1799.

with some of the cinders ; and when the deities have made the circuit of the fire three times, they walk faster or slower, according to the ardour of their devotion, on the burning coals, which cover a space of about forty feet in length. Some carry their children in their arms, and others lances, sabres, and standards. The most devout walk over the fire several times.*

From the present set of *Discourses* it will appear that the deviation from the system of revelation, by *Mahomet*, possessed as he was of many natural advantages, was far from being any improvement upon it. On the contrary, it leads the mind from its excellent moral maxims, and favours an acquiescence in mere superstitious observances, though not so very absurd and debasing as those of the *Heathens*. The same is the effect of the corruptions of Christianity by the *Catholics*. It will therefore appear, that the wisest men cannot do better than revert to the original maxims and precepts of pure revelation, either with respect to good sense and true philosophy, or useful morality. Whatever men have done in this business, has been ill done, and all that is fundamentally good, has been immediately from God.

No unbeliever has as yet entered into any discussion of this kind, though so evidently to the purpose. What the principal of them have done may be seen in the third edition of my *Observations on the Increase of Infidelity*, which has just been published in this city. This work also contains some remarks on the writings of several of the more distinguished of the modern unbelievers, shewing the spirit with which they generally write ; that, for the most part, their works consist of sarcastic wit, popular declamation, and vague, intemperate railing at priests and priestcraft, without any regard to historical truth. This is a very different thing

* “ La seule fête publique en l’honneur de *Darma-Raja* et de *Drobédé*, est celle de *Nerpou-Tirounal*, ou *Fête du Feu*, parce qu’on marche sur cet élément. Elle dure dix-huit jours, pendant lesquels ceux qui font vœu de l’observer, doivent jeûner, se priver des femmes, coucher sur la terre, sans natte, et marcher sur un brasier. Le dix-huitième ils s’y rendent au son des instrumens, la tête couronnée de fleurs, le corps barbouillé de safran, et suivent en cadence les figures de *Darma-Raja* et de *Drobédé* son épouse, qu’on y conduit processionnellement : lorsqu’ils sont auprès du brasier, on le remue pour ranimer son activité ; ils prennent un peu de cendres dont ils se frottent le front, et quand les Dieux en ont fait trois fois le tour, ils marchent plus ou moins vite, selon leur dévotion, sur une braise très-ardente, étendue sur une espace d’environ quarante pieds de longueur. Les uns portent leurs enfans sous le bras, les autres des lances, des sabres et des étendards. Les plus fervens traversent ce brasier plusieurs fois.” *Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à La Chine*, 1774—1781. Par M. *Sonnerat*, 1782, (à Paris,) I. pp. 247, 248. See *Plate* lxvii.

from calm discussion, and requires but superficial talents, and very little knowledge of human nature, or of facts.

In the Preface to the former Volume of Discourses, I introduced some curious particulars in confirmation of the *Mosaic* history, from the third Volume of *Asiatic Researches*;* and having been favoured with the perusal of Sir Laurence Parson's "Observations on the Bequest of Henry Flood, Esq.," with a "Defence of the ancient History of Ireland," I shall here observe, that from it, it appears to me exceedingly probable that some of the inhabitants of *Ireland* were a colony from the northern parts of *Phœnicia*; that they first emigrated to *Egypt*, and settled on the borders of the Red Sea, at the time that the Israelites passed through it, which their records say was at *Caperhiroth*, called by Moses *Pihahiroth*; (the former signifying the *town* of *Hiroth*, and the latter the *mouth* or *harbour* of the same;) that some time after this, they returned to their native country; that they again emigrated to some part of *Spain*, and at length settled in *Ireland*.† For the proofs of these particulars, and many more concerning the same people, I must refer my readers to the work itself, which is well deserving of attention. Every early tradition of this nature is certainly entitled to it, both by believers and unbelievers in revelation, and I mention it with a view to engage this attention to so curious a circumstance in history.

Philadelphia, March, 28, 1797.

* See *supra*, pp. 11, 12.

† See Vol. XI. p. 150.



A

VIEW

OF THE

*EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION.***DISCOURSE I.**

THE MORAL DESIGN OF REVELATION.

PSALM xix. 7—9 :

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

PART I.

IF we estimate the value of any thing by its tendency to promote happiness, nothing will appear to be of so much importance to man, as virtue, or the due regulation of his appetites and passions, and, consequently, his moral conduct in life. The health of his body, the peace of his mind, the good state of his circumstances in a variety of respects, and the welfare of society, in an eminent degree, depend upon it; and the more civilized men are, and the more they are connected with each other in society, the more important is virtue to their common happiness. Having it more in their power to contribute to each other's comfort, it is the more desirable that they should have a disposition to do it.

No parent, attentive, as all parents ought to be, and naturally are, to the happiness of their offspring, will neglect this article of instruction in his care of his children. He will endeavour to educate them in such a manner as to inspire them with an abhorrence of vice and a love of virtue; and his whole system of discipline respecting them, every thing that he proposes in the form of rewards or

punishments, will have this for its principal object ; because in no other way can he lay so good a foundation for their success and happiness in life. They will then be prepared to conduct themselves in the most proper manner, so as to derive the greatest advantage from all the circumstances in which they can be placed. Adversity will give them the least pain, and prosperity the greatest enjoyment. They will be happy in themselves, and be most disposed to contribute to the happiness of others, which, by reflection, will most eminently contribute to their own.

But this great object is not to be attained without attention and labour. Naturally every man, like every other animal, wishes to gratify the present appetite, whatever it be ; and it is only some inconvenience arising from it, or apprehended to arise from it, that leads any person to refrain from immediate indulgence. And in the power of forbearing to indulge the natural appetites, with a view to avoid future evil, or secure future and distant good, consists the great superiority of men over brutes, and of some men over others. This is the difference between the wise man and the fool, the virtuous and the vicious. All persons, therefore, who attend to the proper education of their children, endeavour, as much as possible, to give them the benefit of their own experience, and of the knowledge they have by any other means acquired in this respect ; and thus some persons enter the world with much greater advantage than others. They have less to learn from their own experience, the teaching of which is often dear bought, and frequently comes too late ; the evils in which they have involved themselves being irremediable.

We may, therefore, take it for granted, that, if the Divine Being, the true parent of mankind, vouchsafe to give them any instruction at all, he will attend to this most important object in the first place, and that every thing in a system of truly *divine revelation* will be made subservient to this ; so that this consideration furnishes no unfair test of the truth of such a revelation.

Accordingly, we find that, whereas the Heathen religions had no connexion with *morals*, and were rather calculated to encourage the worst vices that men are subject to, it appears to have been the primary object of the religion taught in the Scriptures to guard men against vice, as the greatest of evils, and to inculcate the principles of moral virtue, as the greatest good of man ; while every thing of a ritual and ceremonial

nature in it is always represented as a thing of secondary consideration, and only subservient to this. And as it may be useful to us, both to confirm our faith in divine revelation, and to impress our minds more strongly with a sense of the importance of virtue, I shall take a review of the general plan and object of revelation with respect to this subject. In this retrospect the same considerations will frequently come before us, but such repetitions will not be without their use. What the Divine Being did not think too much to teach, and to repeat, giving, as the prophet says, (*Isaiah* xxviii. 10,) "line upon line," and "precept upon precept," we cannot think too much to learn, and give repeated attention to.

The first moral lesson, and the most necessary of all others to a child, is that of obedience to its parents, and submission to all proper authority; for they are capable of understanding the *reasons* but of very few things. And this we find, in the history of our first parents, whatever there may be of fable or allegory in the account, was the first lesson that was taught them, viz. by the prohibition to eat of the forbidden fruit, and at the same time they were apprized of the inconvenience that would follow their transgression of the command of their Maker.

In the history of *Cain* and *Abel*, mankind were taught not only an abhorrence of the crime of murder, (though in that state of things it was not punished with death,) but, in general, that if they behave well, they will be accepted of God, and that if he frown upon them, or punish them, it is always on account of sin. God says to Cain, (*Gen.* iv. 7,) "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." After the murder, God said to him, [*vers.* 10—12,] "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." So much was Cain affected with this sentence, that he said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

The Divine approbation of virtue was signified in the most emphatical manner in the translation of Enoch. *Gen.* v. 24: "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." This would, at the same time, give men

to understand, that there was a reward for virtue in another state than this, into which men might be removed.*

In the history of the deluge we see in the strongest light, the Divine abhorrence of wickedness in general, when we are told that for that reason alone he destroyed the whole human race. *Gen. vi. 5, 7*: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.—And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth.” At the same time the Divine Being shewed how pleasing virtue was to him, when, on that account, he spared *Noah* and his family. *Vers. 8, 9*: “But *Noah* found grace in the eyes of the Lord.—*Noah* was a just man and perfect in his generation, and *Noah* walked with God.” Accordingly, when the ark was built, he says to him, [*Ch. vii. 1,*] “Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”

When, after the flood, God gave permission to eat animal food, it was with a prohibition to eat the blood, as the seat of life, accompanied with a stronger prohibition to shed the blood of man. *Gen. ix. 4—6*: “But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require.—At the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” †

The destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* by fire from heaven, was an event hardly less instructive than that of the old world by the deluge, as it was declared to be on account of the wickedness of the inhabitants; because, as God said to *Abraham*, (*Gen. xviii. 20,*) “the cry of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* was great, and because their sin was very grievous.” *Abraham* pleading for *Sodom*, in which city *Lot* then resided, said, [*vers. 23, 25,*] “Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?—That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked.—Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” By his intercession he prevailed so far that the place would have been spared, if so few as ten righteous had been in it; but that number not being found, it was devoted to destruction.

* See Vol. XI. p. 53.

† See *ibid.* pp. 56, 57.

The angels who had the commission to execute the sentence, being entertained by *Lot*, said to him, (*Gen. xix. 12, 13,*) "Whatsoever thou hast in the city bring out of this place; for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxed great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." The next day *Abraham*, (as we read, *vers. 27, 28,*) "gat up early in the morning,—and looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." What a striking and instructive lesson must this have been to all who were acquainted with it, and so great an event as this, must have been remembered a long time.

Though it was the wise intention of the Divine Being to distinguish one particular nation, in which to preserve the knowledge and worship of himself, when mankind were universally falling into idolatry, not for the sake of that particular nation, but for the benefit of the whole world of mankind, who would derive the most important advantages from that provision, he made choice of a person of the most distinguished virtue for the head of that nation; and to the virtue of *Abraham*, and other excellent characters in that nation, their posterity are always referred when they were abandoned to vice.

Idolatry, which it appears to have been the first object of this scheme of revelation to guard against, was by no means, as I have shewn on another occasion, a system of erroneous opinions respecting God, his works, or his providence, but consisted of rites of the most flagitious and horrid kind, which debased human nature, and reduced man to a state worse than the brutes.* Consequently the laws against idolatry, severe as they were, are to be considered as provisions against the spreading of the worst of vices, the most inconsistent with every idea of dignity and moral excellence.

That there must have been something in the religion of the patriarchs favourable to moral excellence, is evident from the history of *Joseph*, (though the same religion had not the same effect on the generality of his brethren,) because it was from religious considerations that he preserved his fidelity to his master in the hour of temptation, when he replied to the solicitations of his mistress, (*Gen. xxxix. 9,*) "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" He evidently considered adultery as highly

* See *supra*, pp. 40, 41, 48

offensive to God, as well as injurious to society. His generosity to his brethren, and the apology he made for their ill behaviour to him, discovers a mind deeply impressed with a sense of the universal providence of God, and the duty of submission to his will, as always wise and good, when he said, (*Gen. xlv. 5.*) “ Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.” We find nothing like this among the *Heathens*; or if there be any thing of the same cast, it is not the result of the same principles, which will lead to an uniformly generous conduct, even against natural inclination.

Joseph's piety, and his confidence in the promise of God, appears in his injunctions to his brethren not to bury him in *Egypt*, but only to embalm him, and put him into a coffin, in order to his being carried with them when they should leave that country, and go to the land of *Canaan*, which God had promised to their ancestors.* To act virtuously, as *Joseph* uniformly did, from a regard to the will, the command, or the providence of God, though the most certain principle of virtue, was altogether unknown to the *Heathen* world, or only slightly mentioned by some philosophers, when, in imitation of the *Christians*, the *Stoics* changed their principle of *fate* for that of *the will and providence of the gods*.

After the time of *Joseph*, it is probable that the *Israelites*, in general, conformed to the religion of their masters, and their minds as well as their bodies were bent to servitude. For though some individuals might retain the faith and the religious principles of their ancestors, no instance of the kind appears in the history. Here, then, commences an entire new dispensation. The whole nation was to be recovered to the acknowledgment of the God and the religion of their forefathers, and a series of miracles was necessary for that purpose. These miracles were wrought, and at the same time effected their deliverance, and compelled them to receive, and conform to, a complex system of religion, to which they for a long time discovered a most extreme aversion.

That the great object of this new dispensation of religion was the practice of moral duty, and that every thing else in the system was intended to be subservient to this, is evident from *the Ten Commandments*, which contain the leading and

* See *Gen. l. 25*, Vol. XI. p. 123.

most important articles of it, delivered by God himself from *Mount Sinai*; since only one of the ten is, properly speaking, of a ceremonial nature, all the rest being purely moral, inculcating such a regard to God, the unity of his nature, and the spirituality of his worship, as is the best foundation of morality; and the rest of the commandments contain the most necessary moral precepts, as the duty of children to parents, the prohibition of murder, adultery, theft, and false witness; hereby giving them such a sanction as they never had before, and precluding all cavils and subtle distinctions on the subject. And the last commandment of the ten is calculated to give them an idea of the necessity of attending, not only to the outward actions, but to the heart and inclinations, where are the first seeds and principles of men's conduct; forbidding not only the actually taking, but even the *coveting*, any thing that belongs to another person.

Intermixed with the rules of civil policy in the *Mosaic* code are many excellent maxims of moral conduct, particularly recommending piety, equity, humanity, moderation, generosity, compassion, and kindness to strangers, and to slaves. Among other precepts we find the following: *Lev.* xix. 2: "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy;" which could only mean freedom from all moral impurity.* *Exod.* xxiii. 2: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." *Vers.* 4, 5: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox-or his ass, going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, thou shalt surely help with him." *Ver.* 9: "Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger; seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."† How much must the frequent attention to such precepts as these tend to humanize and improve the temper, and dispose to every good work! More particulars I need not enumerate. They are all written with the same excellent spirit. Before his death, *Moses* wrote, in the last of his books, called *Deuteronomy*, a recapitulation of the most important of his institutions, accompanied with the most urgent and affectionate exhortations to obedience that is extant on any occasion, in any language; promising his countrymen the Divine blessing in case of obedience, and threatening them in case of disobedience under a clear foresight of every thing that would befall

* See Vol. XI. p. 212.

† See *ibid.* p. 164.

his nation to the end of time; and all that he foretold has hitherto been literally accomplished.

Religious and moral sentiments are generally apparent in the poetical compositions of different nations. From the poems of the *Greeks* and *Romans* it is easy to collect a tolerably complete system of their religion. Let the sentiments, spirit, and moral tendency of *them* be compared with what remains of the *Hebrew* poetry, not one tenth so much in quantity, and see which of them abounds with the more valuable sentiments, and inculcates the best maxims of moral conduct. The religion of the Greeks and Romans, and indeed that of all the Heathen nations, had no relation to morals, and was very consistent with, and greatly favoured, the most shocking indecencies and vices; whereas it is impossible to look even at random into the book of *Psalms*, which is only a collection of miscellaneous poems, such as the *Hebrews* usually composed, (for, excepting *the Song of Solomon*, composed on occasion of his marriage, there are no others now extant,) without perceiving that sentiments of the purest piety were uppermost in the minds of the writers, and that the purest morality was the great object of that piety. It is therefore needless to make many quotations for this purpose, but that we conceive a truer idea from some particulars, than from the fairest general description.

The very first *Psalm* contains a just character of the righteous and the wicked. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff, which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

According to these excellent compositions, the man who is most acceptable to God is the man of the purest virtue. *Psalm* xv.: Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his

neighbour, in whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord; he that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not.—He that doeth these things shall never be moved.” Again to the same purpose we read, *Psalm xxiv.* [3—5], “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully: He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”

David, under a deep sense of guilt, was fully sensible that nothing would avail him in the sight of God, but true and genuine repentance, which implies amendment of heart and life. He pleads for mercy on no other principle. *Psalm li.* 1, 3, 6, 10, 16, 17: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.—For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.—Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts.—Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.—Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”*

The same sentiment, expressed with peculiar energy, occurs in several of the prophets.

Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah?
 Wherewith shall I bow myself unto the high God?
 Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings;
 With calves of a year old?
 Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams;
 With ten thousands of rivers of oil?
 Shall I give my first-born *for* my transgression;
 The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?
 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good:
 And what doth Jehovah require of thee,
 But to do justice, and to love mercy,
 And to be humble in walking with thy God? †

Ezek. xviii. 20—22: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.—But when the wicked shall turn from all his sins which he hath committed, and shall keep all my statutes, and shall do judgment and justice; he shall surely live, he shall not die: All his transgressions which he hath com-

* See, on *ver.* 17, Vol. XII. p. 85.

† *Micah* vi. 6—8, *Newcome.* See Vol. XII. p. 576.

mitted shall not be remembered unto him ; for his righteousness which he hath done he shall live.”*

Such was the persuasion which the pious Hebrews had of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God, of his love of virtue, and his hatred of vice, that the firmest confidence in the favour of his providence never deserted them while they were in the way of well-doing. *Psalm xxv.* 10 : “ All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.” [*Vers.* 20, 21] : “ O keep my soul, and deliver me, let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee.” *Psalm xxxvii.* 1—9 : “ Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity ; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he will give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.—Cease from anger, and forsake wrath, fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evil-doers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.” *Psalm lxii.* 1, 2 : “ Truly my soul waiteth upon God : from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock, and my salvation : he is my defence ; I shall not be greatly moved.” *Psalm xlii.* 11 : “ Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” *Psalm xlv.* 1—3 : “ God is our refuge and our strength, a present help in trouble. Therefore will we not 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, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”

I might transcribe a great part of the book of *Psalms*, and other portions of the *Old Testament*, if I were to collect all the passages of this excellent moral tendency, which express the confidence of good men in the favour of God, and the protection of his providence, together with his displeasure at vice, and the certain and ultimate destruction of the

wicked. It is in vain that we look for such excellent and animated sentiments as these, in any Heathen writings. The ideas they had of their gods, and of their intercourse with men, could not possibly suggest them.

The book of *Psalms*, and the writings of the prophets, give us such an idea of the character of the Supreme Being, as could not fail to have the best moral influence; and as I recite the passages which I have collected, which has been almost at random, with very little selection, on this subject, do you compare them with any you can recollect concerning the character of the Heathen gods, in the best of the Heathen poets. *Psalms* cxlv. 17: "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." *Ver.* 9: "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." *Psalms* ciii. 1—18: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.—The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever.—Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust.—The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children's children: to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." This *Psalms* concludes in the following manner: "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.—Bless the Lord all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul."

When we meet with such ideas as these, of the character and disposition of the God of the *Hebrews*, not only in the book of *Psalms*, but through all the *Old Testament*, we must see that all the objections to it by modern unbelievers, from the history of the extermination of the *Canaanites*, and a few other circumstances, must be mere cavils. The minds of the pious *Hebrews*, who could not but be well acquainted with them all, and, being nearer to the transactions, must have seen them in a truer light than we can do, were, notwithstanding, impressed with the most exalted ideas of the justice and mercy of God, and the maxims of his moral government. The destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* by fire from heaven, and of the *Canaanites* by the sword of *Israel*, gave them no other idea than that of his

abhorrence of vice, and his love of virtue and goodness. They were, in consequence, filled with sentiments of the purest love and reverence, and from their admiration and imitation of his conduct were led to every thing that was amiable and excellent in their own. Compared with this, what was the character of the gods that were worshipped by nations of equal antiquity with the Hebrews? Many of them were of the most flagitious character, and believed to be guilty of the most flagitious actions. The greatest of them were beings, to whom human sacrifices, and the grossest abominations, were most pleasing.

PART II.

THE *Proverbs of Solomon*, no less than the *Psalms*, discover the excellent moral tendency of the religion of the *Hebrews*. *Prov.* i. 7—10, [15: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.—My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.—Walk thou not in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path.” *Ch.* ii. 10—22: “When wisdom entereth into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee; to deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh *perverse* things: who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and they are froward in their paths; to deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words: *who* forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go into it return again; neither take they hold of the path of life; that thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it; but the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.” *Chap.* iv. 1—19: “Hear ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine; forsake you not my law.—Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding.—Take fast hold on instruction, let her not go, keep her, for she is thy life. Enter not into the path of

the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.—For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble.”

There is no small obscurity in the book of *Ecclesiastes*, much of it, probably, owing to a concealed dialogue between a religious and an irreligious person; but we see in the conclusion, particularly addressed to young persons, the real sentiments of the writer. After the fullest view of human life, by one who was well acquainted with it, he says, *Eccles.* xii. 1, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh *in which* thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” [*Vers.* 13, 14]: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” What excellent and seasonable advice is this to young persons, and what unspeakable advantage, with respect to morals, did the *Hebrew* youth enjoy, above those in other countries; and how much more inexcusable were they if they did not profit by it!

How far, how very far, I cannot help observing, was the religion of the *Hebrews* from being, like that of the *Heathens*, a system of mere rites and ceremonies! It had, on the contrary, the greatest of all objects, the perfection of moral character; compared with which every thing else, though required by God, and for the best reasons, is always represented as wholly insignificant, and no sufficient ground of acceptance with him. Nay, punctuality in ceremonials, when morals are neglected, is always said to be an abomination in the sight of God, and spoken of with indignation and contempt. Thus the Divine Being is represented by the prophet *Isaiah*, as expostulating with great justice and severity with the degenerate people of Israel, whom he compares to the people of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*:

Hear ye the word of Jehovah, O ye princes of Sodom!
 Give ear to the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah!
 What have I to do with the multitude of your sacrifices? saith
 Jehovah:
 I am cloyed with the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed
 beasts;

And in the blood of bullocks, and of lambs, and of goats, I have no delight.

When ye come to appear before me,
Who hath required this at your hands ?

Tread my courts no more ; bring no more a vain oblation :

Incense ! it is an abomination unto me.

The new moon, and the sabbath, and the assembly proclaimed,

I cannot endure ; the fast, and the day of restraint,

Your months, and your solemnities, my soul hateth :

They are a burthen upon me ; I am weary of bearing them.

When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you :

Even when ye multiply prayer, I will not hear ;

For your hands are full of blood.

Wash ye, make ye clean ; remove ye far away

The evil of your doings from before mine eyes :

Cease to do evil ; learn to do well ;

Seek judgment ; amend that which is corrupted ;

Do justice to the fatherless, defend the cause of the widow.

Come on now, and let us plead together, saith Jehovah :

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ;

Though they be red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

If ye shall be willing and obedient,

Ye shall feed on the good of the land :

But if ye refuse, and be rebellious,

Ye shall be food for the sword of the enemy :

For the mouth of Jehovah hath pronounced it.*

With equal energy and propriety was this people reprov'd for laying stress on days of fasting, when they were deficient in moral virtue.

Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not ?

Have we afflicted our souls, and thou dost not regard ?

Behold, in the day of your fasting, ye enjoy your pleasure ;

And all your demands of labour ye rigorously exact.

Behold, ye fast for strife and contention ;

And to smite with the fist the poor.

Wherefore fast ye unto me in this manner ;

To make your voice to be heard on high ?

Is such then the fast which I choose ;

That a man should afflict his soul for a day ?

Is it, that he should bow down his head like a bulrush ;

And spread sackcloth and ashes for his couch ?

Shall this be called a fast,

And a day acceptable to Jehovah ?

Is not this the fast which I choose ?

To dissolve the bands of wickedness ;

To loosen the oppressive burthens ;

To deliver those that are crushed by violence ;

* *Isaiah* i. 10—20, Bp. *Lowth*.

And that ye should break asunder every yoke?
 Is it not to distribute thy bread to the hungry;
 And to bring the wandering poor into thy house?
 When thou seest the naked, that thou clothe him:
 And that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?
 Then shall thy light break forth like the morning;
 And thy wounds shall speedily be healed over:
 And thy righteousness shall go before thee;
 And the glory of Jehovah shall bring up thy rear.
 Then shalt thou call, and Jehovah shall answer;
 Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Lo I am here!
 If thou remove from the midst of thee the yoke:
 The pointing of the finger, and the injurious speech.
 If thou bring forth thy bread to the hungry,
 And satisfy the afflicted soul;
 Then shall thy light rise in obscurity,
 And thy darkness shall be as the noon-day.
 And Jehovah shall lead thee continually,
 And satisfy thy soul in the severest drought;
 And he shall renew thy strength:
 And thou shalt be as a well-watered garden, and like a flowing
 spring,
 Whose waters shall never fail.*

On the moral tendency of the religion of the *New Testament* I need not enlarge, because it is impossible for any person to look into that book, and question it. I shall, however, mention a few particulars. *John the Baptist* opened his commission with preaching *repentance*, mentioning also the particular duties of several classes of persons who applied to him. *Luke* iii. 7—14: "Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits therefore worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.— And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages."†

* *Isaiah* lviii. 3—11, Bp. *Lowth*.

† See Vol. XIII. pp. 29, 30.

Jesus himself followed in the same spirit. His first public discourse from the Mount was wholly moral; and the morality which he taught was the farthest from being of a superficial kind. It is seated in the heart, and produces its excellent effects in the life. *Matt. v. 21, 22*: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”* He makes the same just observation with respect to adultery.

To the same purpose he says, (*Matt. xv. 11*), “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” And by way of explaining this enigma, he says, (*vers. 18—20*), “Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands, defileth not a man.”†

Our Saviour’s admonitions with respect to prayer and piety, and virtue in general, are peculiarly calculated to guard against hypocrisy and ostentation, and teach men to have respect to the approbation of God, who sees the heart. *Matt. vi. 1—6*: “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise, ye have no reward of your Father *who* is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, *who* seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, be not as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.‡ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father *who* is

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 75, 76.

† See *ibid.* pp. 172, 173.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 81, 82.

in secret,* and thy Father *who* seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

All the reward that Jesus led any of his disciples to expect for any act of virtue, was not in this world, but in another. *Luke* xiv. 13, 14: “When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”†

He repeatedly assured his followers, that neither any personal relation to himself, nor zeal in preaching his religion, would be of the least avail with respect to his approbation, at the day of judgment. When, he was told, as he was teaching in a house, that his mother and his brethren were standing without, desiring to speak to him, he took that opportunity of saying, (*Matt.* xii. 48—50,) “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother, and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister, or mother.”‡ Referring his hearers to the day of judgment, he said, (*Matt.* vii. 21—23,) “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out demons; and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.”§

The apostles followed their Master in the same spirit, and urged the same just maxims. It plainly appears by their conduct, and their writings, that the great object of Christianity, as taught by them, was the reformation of mankind, and the improvement of their moral character.

The proper use and design of the Christian religion is thus expressed by the apostle Peter, in his discourse to the Jews, occasioned by his curing the lame man at the gate of the Temple, *Acts* iii. 26: “Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” According to him, therefore, there is no other way to salvation, or future happiness, than this, the way of virtue.

According to the apostle *James*, (ii. 14,) “Faith without works,” will avail nothing. “What doth it profit, my

* *Pray in secret to thy Father.* See Vol. XIII. p. 82.

† See *ibid.* p. 245.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 117, 118.

§ See *ibid.* p. 89.

brethren, though a man say I have faith; and have not works? Can faith save him?"* [*Ver.* 20]: "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works, is dead?" [*Ver.* 26]: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."† The same apostle advances the following excellent maxim (*Chap.* i. 26, 27): "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain. Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."‡

A very great proportion of all the apostolic epistles consists of practical exhortations to all the most important duties of life; but I shall only quote a few passages, particularly expressive of the general design of the Gospel. The apostle *Paul*, writing to *Titus*, after reciting many particular duties, adds in general, (*Chapter* ii. 11—14,) "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and *piously* in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."§

"His divine power," says the apostle *Peter*, (*2 Ep.* i. 3—11,) "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness," (that is, a godly, or pious life,) "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of of a divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 390, 391.

† See *ibid.* p. 392.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 389.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 148, 149.

that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

I shall only add one more testimony to the moral design of the Gospel. It is from the apostle *John*: (1 *Ep.* ii. 1:) “My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not.—Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.” *Ch.* iii. 2—8: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law; for sin is a transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him *was* no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

We need no other evidence of what it was that, in the idea of these apostles, *Paul, Peter, James* and *John*, was the principal object and design of the Gospel. It was to make men virtuous, in order to their being happy; whereas none of the *Heathen* religions had any such object. This, therefore, is a considerable and important part of the evidence of the divine origin of our religion, of its having come from a pure and holy God, who intended thereby to make men, who are his offspring, and who were originally made in his image, pure and holy, like himself; proper objects of his favour, and fit heirs of a happy immortality.

While, therefore, we profess this religion, let us be

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 414, 415.

careful to live up to this great end of it; that we may be Christians not *in name* only, but *in deed and in truth*; approving ourselves to be the disciples and friends of Christ, by *doing whatsoever he has commanded us*; that *when he shall return, and take an account of his servants, we may be found of him without spot and blameless, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

DISCOURSE II.

OF THE AUTHORITY ASSUMED BY JESUS, AND THE DIGNITY AND PROPRIETY WITH WHICH HE SPAKE AND ACTED.

MARK i. 22 :

And they were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes.

PART I.

ONE of the most extraordinary circumstances in the history of Jesus, is the great *authority* that he assumed, and the *dignified manner* with which he uniformly spake and acted, exceeding even that of any prophet that had preceded him, accompanied with a perfect propriety in his whole conduct. And if his situation in life be attended to, this alone will furnish a proof that he was no impostor; but acted under a full persuasion that he had a mission from God. On this supposition his whole conduct was natural; but on any other the most unaccountable. His uniform manner of speaking and acting, must have arisen from a consciousness of his being something superior to other men. This naturally gives self-possession, and a sufficient degree of courage, so as not to be intimidated by the presence of those with whom a man converses, and prevents that embarrassment which all men feel in the presence of their superiors, or of great numbers.

Farther, that peculiar dignity with which Jesus always conducted himself was of such a kind, as must have arisen from not only just but also *great* principles, such as are not of common attainment; requiring more comprehension of mind, and extent of view, than the bulk of mankind, even

in elevated stations, attain to ; a greater command of the appetites and passions, a greater freedom from pride and vanity, the greatest patience under reproach and injury, the most generous benevolence, extending even to enemies, and unfeigned piety, or an unreserved submission to whatever is apprehended to be the will of God. Mere impudence may, no doubt, assume authority, and the appearance of dignity ; but with nothing but imposture to support it, it would not fail to betray a man on some occasions into absurdity or meanness. Such an uniform dignity, joined with an uniform propriety of conduct, as we find in the history of Jesus, must have arisen from something else than this. He must have had a full persuasion that God was with him, and spake and acted by him ; and, as the *organ of divinity*, any other man would have acted as he did.

The great authority which Jesus always assumed will appear more extraordinary, when we consider the meanness of his birth, and want of liberal education. Such a person as he might not have been abashed on addressing himself to persons of the same rank in life with himself, living in the same obscure part of the country ; because he would feel himself equal to them ; but without a consciousness of something more than nature or education had given him, his courage would have failed him on coming into the world, and acting in a higher sphere than any that he had ever been used to, especially in the presence of the leading men of his country. No common carpenter, in his or any other country, could have left his mean occupation, and have come at once as Jesus did, into the most public life possible, without exposing himself by some absurdity of conduct. But in these circumstances Jesus acted with uniform propriety and dignity, as feeling himself not only equal, but superior, to every person that he met with.

He also addressed with equal ease the greatest multitudes, and small companies or single persons, though before his appearance in the character of a public teacher, it is probable that he had never spoken to any number of persons of any condition whatever. It is, however, only persons who have themselves been called to speak in public, without having been gradually trained to it, that can feel the full force of this argument. It is evident, from the history of Jesus, that he never felt any of that fear of his audience, and that perturbation arising from it, which we see to be unavoidable even to persons of education, when they first speak in public. *Mahomet*, besides being of a higher rank

in life, began with divulging his pretences to a divine mission to his particular friends and dependants, and did not preach in public till after three years.*

It seldom happens but that if any persons in low life assume authority, they proceed to insolence, and do not treat their superiors in rank or fortune with proper respect. But this was by no means the case with Jesus. He had intercourse occasionally with persons who, by birth, fortune, and education, were greatly his superiors, and among these were both friends and enemies; but he always behaved to them with uniform dignity and propriety. And though, for just cause, he inveighed against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, as bodies of men, in general infamous for their hypocrisy and other vices, he never insulted any individual of them. When he was on his trial before the high-priest, and was treated with the greatest indignity, he never resented it. When he was urged with the most unjust and improbable accusations, he only preserved a dignified silence, allowing to his enemies all the advantage they chose to take of it; but, speaking when it would have shewn contempt not to speak, and saying no more than the occasion required. When, adjured by the high-priest, he acknowledged that he was the *Messiah*, he did not threaten him and his other judges with his future vengeance, when he should be their judge. Though ill-used by his countrymen, especially at *Jerusalem*, where he knew that he was to be crucified, he did not exult over them, on the foresight of the calamities they were thereby drawing upon themselves, but even wept in reflecting upon the approaching scene.

When persons in a lower station are suddenly called into public life, it rarely happens but that, though they may act with propriety for some time, their heads are, as it were, turned at length, by their elevated situation, and they fall into some extravagance, or absurdity of conduct, as was the case with *Rienzi*,† *Masaniello*,‡ and many others. But Jesus preserved the same dignity and propriety of conduct

* See *Prideaux*, pp. 6, 12, 13.

† *Nicholas Gabrino de Rienzi*, a citizen of Rome, of very humble parentage, who, in 1347, assumed the government of the city, under the title of *Tribune*: and, after several vicissitudes of fortune, was murdered during a tumult, in 1354. See *Gen. Biog. Dict.* 1784, XI. pp. 85—91; *Nouv. Dict. Hist.* (Paris,) 1772, III. pp. 3—5.

‡ *Thomas Anello*, a fisherman of Naples, who, in 1646, headed 50,000 persons who rose against the government, under the oppression of taxes. He exercised supreme authority for ten days, when he was assassinated by “four hardy gentlemen.” See *Gen. Biog. Dict.* I. pp. 238—243.

through the whole of his public ministry, shewing the same presence of mind from the beginning to the end of it. He paid no court, either to the great or to the populace, feeling himself independent of them both. Neither popular applause, of which at some times he had his full share, nor popular insult, to which he was likewise exposed, ever betrayed him into any language, or behaviour, that was unworthy of him. We also see in him nothing of pride or vanity, but the greatest gentleness, humility and condescension.

Many persons, conscious of extraordinary powers of any kind, are greatly deficient in sensibility and humanity. Occupied wholly about themselves, they have little feeling for others. But this was not the case with Jesus. His strong feeling for others appears on a variety of occasions, so that his behaviour was equally dignified and engaging. His strong affection for his disciples is seen in his whole behaviour to them, and especially in his discourse to them just before his death; when, without discovering any concern about himself, every thing he said was calculated to comfort and support them under the trying scenes which they had to go through. His particular friendship for the apostle *John*, and also for *Lazarus* and his sisters, is noticed by the evangelists, and several little circumstances, though trifling in themselves, indicate a most pleasing sensibility; as his taking the young children in his arms when he blessed them, his taking the young daughter of *Jairus* by the hand when he raised her to life, his doing the same to the widow's son at *Nain*, and then delivering him to the afflicted mother, and his laying his hands on many of the sick persons, when he relieved them.

But I shall not content myself with this general account of the dignity of Jesus's conduct, but shall review the whole of his history, that we may form a more distinct idea of it, and be properly impressed by it. For this purpose I shall consider, in the first place, his usual style and manner of address in teaching; secondly, the same in his working miracles; and, lastly, his behaviour in general, independent of his teaching or working miracles.

1. That there must have been something uncommonly dignified and authoritative in Jesus's manner of teaching, is evident from the impression which it made upon his audience. After his discourse on the Mount, which was the first of any length that he delivered, we read, (*Matt.* vii. 28,

29,) "And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." * When he had explained to his countrymen in the synagogue of *Nazareth*, a passage in the prophecy of *Isaiah*, which he applied to himself, saying, (*Luke iv. 21*), "This day is *this* Scripture fulfilled in your ears;" † we read, that they "wondered at the *graceful* words" (for so it ought to be rendered) "which proceeded out of his mouth," and expressed their admiration by saying, "Is not this Joseph's son?" But perceiving their cavilling and envious disposition, he replied, [*ver. 24*,] "Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country."

When the officers who had been sent to apprehend him in the Temple returned without doing it, and were reprov'd for it, they said, (*John vii. 46*), "Never man spake like this man." ‡ When the servants of the high-priest were sent for the same purpose to the garden of *Gethsemane*, whither they were led by the traitor *Judas*, he asked them whom they sought, and they saying "Jesus of Nazareth," he replied to them in such a manner, (*John xviii. 6*), that "they went backward, and fell to the ground," and did not venture to lay hands on him till he spake to them again, and voluntarily surrendered himself. §

2. Nothing but a consciousness of great superiority, even to all preceding prophets, could have led Jesus to his singular manner of address, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*; and others in which he speaks with peculiar emphasis in the first person, which frequently occurs in his discourses, as in his very first, (*Matt. v. 21, 22*), "Ye have heard that it *has been* said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever *shall be* angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment." And (*vers. 43, 44*), "Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. || But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." *Ch. vi. 5*: "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray, standing in the synagogue, and

* See Vol. XIII. p. 90.

† See *ibid.* p. 216.

|| See, on *ver. 43*, *ibid.* p. 79.

† See *ibid.* pp. 126, 127.

§ See *ibid.* p. 340.

in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.* Verily I say unto you, they have their reward."

This mode of introducing what he had to say, of particular importance, was usual with Jesus, and so also was his manner of concluding his more important instructions with, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. This was assuming more authority than had been done by any of the former prophets, even by *Moses* himself. He must, therefore, have been persuaded of his superiority to all who had been before him. His manner of working miracles, as I shall shew, proves the same; and yet he was far from assuming any thing to himself, but on all proper occasions ascribed every thing that was extraordinary in himself, to God his Father, who sent him, and acted by him. *John* v. 30: "I can of mine own self do nothing. As I hear I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who hath sent me." xiv. 10: "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father who dwelleth in me he doeth the works."† viii. 28: "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things." *Ver.* 38: "I speak that which I have seen with my Father." xiv. 24: "The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's that sent me." viii. 54: "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing. It is my Father that honoureth me."

3. The manner in which Jesus sometimes spake of his own dignity would be the extreme of arrogance, without a well-founded confidence of his being really superior to all other men; as when he said, that he was greater than *Solomon*, than *Jonah*, or than the Temple. *Matt.* xii. 41, 42: "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of *Jonah*, and behold a greater than *Jonah* is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of *Solomon*, and behold a greater than *Solomon* is here."‡ *Matt.* xii. 5, 6: "Have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath-days, the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place, is one greater than the Temple."§

Speaking of the advantages that his disciples enjoyed, he

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 81, 82.

† See *ibid.* p. 117.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 314, 315.

§ See *ibid.* p. 110.

said, (*Luke* x. 23, 24; *Matt.* xiii. 17,) “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”*

Jesus must have had a high sense of the importance of his mission when he compared himself, as he did, to the light, as *John* viii. 12: “I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”† xii. 46: “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.” From the same sense of the value of his instructions, he compared himself to bread. *John* vi. 35: “I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” The same consciousness of speaking in the name of God led him to say, (*Matt.* xxiv. 35,) “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

Jesus always spake of himself as standing in a peculiar relation to God, as his only proper Son. All good men are called the sons of God, but he calls himself *the Son* by way of eminence, as standing in some nearer relation to God than other good men, or than other prophets. *John* iii. 35, 36: “The Father loveth the Son, and giveth all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life.” *John* v. 19, 20: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself,‡ but what he seeth the Father do;—these also doth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth.”

When he was censured for using this language, as making himself in some sense equal to God, he replied, (*John* x. 35, 36,) that if ever the title of *gods* be given in the Scriptures to magistrates, there could not be any impiety in his calling himself only the Son of God. “If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came,§ say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?” He was far from vindicating this language on the principle of his being naturally equal to the Father. It was the Father who sanctified him, that is, appointed him to his office, and

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 236, 237.

† See *ibid.* p. 165.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 220.

§ See *ibid.* p. 255.

then sent him into the world as his messenger and servant, which he always styles himself.*

Jesus also asserted to himself a peculiar knowledge of God, that is, of his designs and will. *Matt.* xi. 27: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."† Also, knowing himself to have been the object of the Divine counsels respecting the human race, he said in his usual figurative language, (*John* viii. 58,) "Before Abraham was, I am."‡ We find no language approaching to this in the *Koran*. *Mahomet* had no such persuasion or feeling, and imposture could not even imitate it.

Jesus was not wanting in giving due honour to *John the Baptist*, who was his forerunner; but he at the same time asserted his own just superiority, and that of the dispensation which he introduced. *Matt.* xi. 11: "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he."§

4. Jesus was also careful to make a proper distinction between his disciples and himself, yet without superciliousness or arrogance. He says to them, (*Matt.* xxiii. 8, 10,) "Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master even Christ,—and all ye are brethren." On other occasions he calls them his brethren. As when he says to *Mary Magdalene*, after his resurrection, (*John* xx. 17,) "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."|| At the last supper, when he shewed his condescension by washing the feet of the apostles, he said to them, (*John* xiii. 13, 14,) "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."¶ It appears also from the history of the resurrection of *Lazarus*, to have been customary with the disciples of Jesus to call him *Master*; for on his arrival at Bethany, *Martha*, who had seen him first, says to her sister *Mary*, (*John* xi. 28,) "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

In his parables, also, Jesus always makes a great distinction between himself and his disciples. *John* x. 7—9: "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say

* See, on vers. 37, 38, Vol. XIII. pp. 255, 256.

† See *ibid.* p. 144.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 226, 227.

§ See *ibid.* p. 140.

|| See *ibid.* pp. 371, 372.

¶ See *ibid.* pp. 305, 306.

unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me, are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Changing his comparison, he says, (*ver.* 11,) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."* [*Vers.* 14—16]: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." A little before his death, he made use of another parable, in which he preserved the same distinction between himself and his followers. *John* xv. 1, 2: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he *prunes*, that it may bring forth more fruit."† Pursuing the same allusion, he said, [*vers.* 4, 5,] "Abide in me.—As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; but without me, ye can do nothing."

As Jesus always spake of himself as standing in a peculiarly near relation to God, as a *son* with respect to a *father*, he represents his disciples as standing in a similar relation to himself, thus placing himself in an intermediate state between God and them; as when he said, (*John* xv. 9, 10,) "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love;—even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." In his prayer for his disciples a little before his death, he says, (*John* xvii. 18,) "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."‡ [*Ver.* 22]: "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."§ Here it may be asked, how came men, at least equal to Jesus in birth and education, and several of them superior to him in fortune, to bear these airs of superiority, if they had not been convinced that there was a real foundation for it; and that could only be his divine mission, of which, therefore, they must have been fully persuaded.

* See Vol. XIII. p. 234.

† See *ibid.* p. 334.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 320.

§ See *ibid.*

John the Baptist, being the son of a priest, was by birth, and no doubt by education, greatly superior to Jesus, who was only the son of a carpenter; and yet, when John had acquired an established reputation, he acknowledged Jesus, when, according to one account, he had not so much as seen him, and who was then altogether unknown to the country at large, to be his superior; so much so, that he said he was not worthy to stoop down and loose his shoe. [*Mark* i. 7.] If both these men, and the apostles also, were all impostors, (and if any of them were, they must all have been so, since they concurred in carrying on the same scheme,) whence arose this extraordinary deference to a man who was in every natural respect their inferior?

This continued after the death of Jesus, and to the end of their lives, without the least diminution of their attachment to him. They all preached and worked miracles *in the name of Jesus of Nazareth*. Before his death, several of them shewed strong symptoms of ambition, and some seeds of dissension appeared among them afterwards; yet they never swerved from their professed allegiance to their crucified Master; a thing absolutely unaccountable on the supposition of their being in the secret of any imposture of his; and if there had been any thing of this kind, it could not have been concealed from them.

Though Jesus used great prudence and reserve in assuming his highest title, that of the *Messiah*, he did it on several occasions to his disciples, especially as they were going to *Cæsarea Philippi*; when, having asked them what was said of him, and what they thought themselves, and *Peter* had said "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," he said, (*Matt.* xvi. 17,) "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."* But after this he charged his disciples, (*ver.* 20,) "that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." †

PART II.

5. THE peculiarly striking manner in which Jesus often delivered many of his moral precepts added greatly to their force, and at the same time gives us a high idea of his dignity and authority; as when, upon being told of his mother and brethren inquiring for him while he was engaged in

* See Vol. XIII. p. 183.

† See *ibid.* p. 184.

teaching, he said, as quoted in the preceding part of these *Discourses*,* (*Matt.* xii. 48,) “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren: for whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” How would any of the Heathen philosophers have been admired for such an extempore saying as this! Nothing can be well conceived more forcible, or more dignified.

6. Jesus never appeared to be overawed by the presence of any man, but always spake and acted as a superior character. This we see in his conversation with *Nicodemus*, a person of considerable rank in the country, and a member of the *Sanhedrim*. Speaking to such a person as this, himself, we must not forget, a common carpenter, and known to be so, he says, (*John* iii. 5,) “Verily, verily, I say unto thee;” and when he did not understand him, he said, (*ver.* 10,) “Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?”

He preserved the same dignity whether he addressed his friends or his enemies. His instructions to the *Twelve*, and also to the *Seventy*, before their mission, evidently came from great authority; and were peculiarly calculated to give those to whom they were addressed, the greatest confidence in the Divine favour and protection, in consequence of their relation to him. They are not the mere advices of one friend to another, or of a common master to his scholars. *Matt.* x. 14—20: “Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them, and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how, or what, ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”† In the same manner he addressed the *Seventy*. *Luke* x. 10—12: “But into

* See *supra*, p. 217.

† See Vol. XIII. p. 133.

whatever city ye enter, and they receive you not; go your ways into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you; notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city." This was admirably calculated to inspire those to whom it was addressed with the same exalted sentiments from which he himself spake, giving them a strong sense of the great importance of their mission. We see nothing approaching to this in any Heathen whatever. There were no such characters, or instructions, in all profane history. For such great and magnanimous sentiments, and a conduct adapted to them, we must look into the Scriptures, and nowhere else. There is nothing resembling this in the conduct, or the *Koran*, of *Mahomet*.

There is the same mixture of dignity and affection in his conversation with the apostles before his death. *John* xiv. 1: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." [*Vers.* 11—13]: "Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." *Ver.* 27: "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." xv. 17—19: "These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me, before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." xvi. 33: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye *will* have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." It is impossible to peruse this address, of which I have recited but a small specimen, and put ourselves in the place of the apostles, without feeling the peculiar force of it. Such sentiments as these, and such a mode of address, could not possibly have occurred to any person but to one who, like Jesus, was conscious of a divine mission, and of the most important kind; and, consequently, that the solemn and encou-

raging assurances which he delivered, as by authority from God, were well founded.

Jesus, without ever courting the populace, so as to engage any support from them, (for he sometimes gave them great offence,) was so far from being overawed or intimidated, by persons of the highest rank in the country, and who in a very early period of his history appear to have been unfavourably disposed towards him, as they had been to *John the Baptist*; that, without taking any steps to conciliate them, he took every proper opportunity of reproving them in the severest manner, for their hypocrisy and other vices. This could not fail to expose them to the common people, to whom they were very assiduous to recommend themselves, and consequently to exasperate them to the highest degree against himself. Knowingly to do this, when he had no external support whatever, no wealth, no power, no popular favour, at least none of which he would ever avail himself, shews that he was conscious of having something within himself that set him above them, and that authorized him to treat them with so much freedom. As he taught, he also reprov'd, with peculiar dignity, as one who had authority so to do. I shall give a few specimens of his manner of doing it.

When he was dining at the house of a *Pharisee*, who, as the evangelist says, (*Luke xi. 38.*) “ marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner,” and probably shewed a disposition to censure him on that account, he said, [*vers. 39—41.*] “ Ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he who made that which is without, make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you.”* [*Ver. 44.*]: “ Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.” The *Scribes*, or teachers of the law, being offended at this, he, far from courting their favour, instantly replied, (*ver. 46.*) “ Woe unto you also, ye lawyers: for ye lade men with burdens, grievous to be borne; and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.” [*Ver. 52.*]: “ Woe unto you, lawyers; for ye have taken away the key of knowledge.† Ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.”

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 238, 239.

† See *ibid.* p. 240.

When, on another occasion, the Pharisees, in an insulting way, insisted on his shewing them a sign from heaven, he said, (*Matt.* xvi. 2, 3,) “When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red; and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?”*

Addressing the common people in the Temple, when many of the leading Pharisees were present, not long before his death, he said, (*Matt.* xxiii. 2, 3,) “The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not.” [*Vers.* 14, 15]: “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater *condemnation*. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte;† and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” [*Ver.* 33]: “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” This language has the appearance of great severity, and even of rudeness. But, according to *Josephus*,‡ the character of the opulent and leading men of those times was such as justified the censures; and their hostility to Jesus, which was seldom concealed, may obviate the charge of rudeness. But the propriety or impropriety of a man’s behaviour in this respect, depend upon temporary and local circumstances, of which, in this case, we have no account. And as it does not appear that Jesus was censured for rudeness or incivility, at the time, there is no reason for advancing the charge at this day.

After this invective, as it may be called, Jesus gave this following solemn warning [*vers.* 34—36]: “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and Scribes; and some of them ye shall kill, and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth.—Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.” How just was this indignation, and how awful this warning; and with what a mixture of affectionate feeling

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 179, 180.

† See *ibid.* p. 292.

‡ *War*, B. viii. Ch. vii. Sect. i. See *Lardner*, l. pp. 139—142.

and just reproof did he conclude this discourse with an address to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in general! [*Vers.* 37, 38]: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee. How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

7. Nothing but a consciousness of the value of his instructions, and the importance of his mission, could have dictated the peculiarly energetic manner in which Jesus upbraided the cities in which many of his miracles had been wrought. *Matt.* xi. 20—24: “Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes: but I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell. For if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee.”*

After this, with what propriety did he address his heavenly Father, to express the deep sense that he had of the wisdom of his providence, in appointing that the gospel should not be received in the first instance by persons possessed of any worldly advantage, but rather by those who were despised by the rest of mankind. *Matt.* 25, 26: “At that time, Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”† What comprehension of mind, what piety, what submission to superior wisdom, and consequently what true dignity of sentiment, do we see in all this! This language marks a character of an extraordinary and superior kind, to any that history, profane, or even sacred, holds out to us. Such sentiments, and such language as this, could only proceed from a strong sense of a near relation to God; but Jesus being persuaded of his constant presence and

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 142, 143.

† See *ibid.* pp. 143, 144.

support, he would naturally assume more authority, and a more dignified manner of speaking, than any other man. In this we find an adequate cause for so great an effect; but without it, the existence of such a character would have been impossible.

Secondly, Jesus was greatly original in working miracles, and his manner peculiarly authoritative, more so than that which was used by any preceding prophet; which could not arise from any thing but a consciousness of a superior and more important mission. Of this I shall give a few examples.

1. When the nobleman from *Capernaum* met him at *Cana*, on his return from the first passover at *Jerusalem*, to request that he would go with him to *Capernaum*, to cure his son; who, he said, lay "at the point of death," he, after some other discourse, said, (*John* iv. 50,) "Go thy way; thy son liveth." With equal authority he said to the *demoniac* in the synagogue at *Capernaum*, who had cried out, [*Mark* i. 24,] "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth, art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God;"* [*ver.* 25;] "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." In neither of these cases did he use any introduction, as that of prayer, or any address to the persons present, by way of preparing them for the event. His manner was equally authoritative, when he cured the man who had the withered hand, who was brought to him in the synagogue, on the *Sabbath*; when some *Pharisees* who were present shewed a disposition to cavil with him for working miracles on that day. After expostulating with them on the subject, and shewing the inconsistency of their own conduct, who did not scruple to lift a sheep out of a pit on that day, he said to the man, (*Matt* xii. 13,) "Stretch forth thine hand;" when, as we read, "he stretched it forth, and it was restored, *sound*, like the other." Also to the impotent man at the pool of *Bethesda*, he said, (*John* v. 8,) "Take up thy bed, and walk." The former of these miracles, you will observe, as well as the greater part of those wrought by Jesus, was performed in the presence of his most inveterate enemies, and the most malicious attentive to his conduct.

Jesus' stilling a tempest by merely speaking, would perhaps be more striking than removing a disorder in the same manner, especially as he was suddenly awaked out of a

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 69, 70.

sound sleep, when it was apprehended that the ship would sink. On being awaked in these circumstances, he said, (*Matt.* viii. 26,) “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.” After this, it is no wonder that, as we read, [*ver.* 27,] “the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”* In the same manner he behaved when he was “walking on the sea,” while his disciples were in a ship, “tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary.—When the disciples saw him,—they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.” But when he “spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid; Peter said, Lord, if it be thou,† bid me come unto thee on the water; and he said, Come.” But when he had left the ship, and was walking towards Jesus, seeing “the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me; and immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” [*Matt.* xiv. 24—31.]‡ With this authoritative manner he appeared to peculiar advantage when he raised to life the three persons mentioned in the gospel history. To the daughter of *Jairus* he said, (*Mark* v. 41,) “Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.” To the widow’s son, (*Luke* vii. 14,) “Young man, I say unto thee, arise;”§ and at the grave of *Lazarus*, “he cried with a loud voice,” (*John* xi. 43,) “Lazarus, come forth.”

With the same authority with which he performed these benevolent miracles, he pronounced a curse on the barren fig-tree, as an emblem, no doubt, of the approaching fate of the Jewish nation. For, finding nothing on it but leaves, he said, (*Matt.* xxi. 19,) “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.”||

2. Jesus having this power of working miracles, as far as appears, at pleasure, (though we learn from the account of the resurrection of *Lazarus*, that it was in consequence of prayer to God, who, he says, *heard him always*,¶) he was not afraid to exert it sometimes in a manner that shocked the prejudices of his countrymen, and therefore must have given much offence; which, if there had been any trick or imposition in the case, he would have been careful to avoid; for

* See Vol. XIII. p. 99.

† Since it is thou. See Vol. XIII. p. 155.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 156.

§ See *ibid.* p. 96.

|| See *ibid.* p. 280.

¶ See, on *John* xi. 42, *ibid.* p. 266.

this would naturally excite suspicion, and lead to a stricter examination of his conduct.

Besides curing diseases on the *Sabbath-day*, which he frequently chose to do, though it never failed to give offence, and excite a strong indignation against it, he sometimes declared the cures, in language that shocked his audience. When a paralytic person was brought to him as he was teaching in a crowded house, or court, so that they were obliged to go to the roof of the house, and thence let the sick man down to him,* instead of saying, as he sometimes did, *Rise up and walk*, or use any other expression simply indicating the removal of his disorder, he said, (*Mark ii. 5.*) "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." He used the same language, though without working any miracle, to a woman who had probably been a prostitute, who from deep contrition fell at his feet, and bathed them with her tears, at the house of a *Pharisee*.†

On both these occasions the *Pharisees* who were present were much offended; but he was far from endeavouring to conciliate his enemies by making an apology for the language he had used, in whatever manner he might have explained it. On the former occasion, when the *Scribes*, who were present, said that he *blasphemed*; he, "knowing their thoughts," as the evangelist says, [*Matt. ix. 4.*] replied, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise and walk? But, that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, *he said* to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." By this he shewed that he was justified in using his former language, and he left them to interpret it as they could. On the latter occasion, when the persons present "began to say within themselves," [*Luke vii. 49.*] "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" he, without directing his discourse to them, only "said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

3. On this, as on other occasions, Jesus took the opportunity to speak in commendation of *faith*, as seeming, through modesty, to intimate, that not any thing done by *him*, but that a steady faith in the power of God, which was manifested by him, was the cause of the happy effect. Thus, when one of the ten lepers, whom he had sent away,

* See, on *Mark ii. 4.*, Vol. XIII. p. 104.

† See *Luke vii. 48.*, Vol. XIII. pp. 146, 147.

after bidding them *shew themselves to the priest*, (as if to ascertain whether they really had the leprosy or not,) finding himself cured, returned to give him thanks, Jesus said, (*Luke xvii. 17—19.*) “Were there not ten cleansed; but where are the nine? There are none found to return, and give glory to God, *except this stranger*” (he was a Samaritan). “And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.”*

When the Roman centurion at *Capernaum* requested that he would cure his servant, who was paralytic; saying at the same time, that it was not necessary for him to take the trouble of going to his house for the purpose, that he was not worthy to receive him, and that he did not doubt but that he had the same authority over all diseases that himself had over his own servants; Jesus, we read, (*Matt. viii. 10.*) when he “heard it, marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.” He then said to the centurion, [*ver. 13.*] “Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so shall it be done unto thee; and his servant was healed *from that same hour.*”†

Having at first, evidently with a view to try the faith and patience of a woman of *Phœnicia*, who applied to him for the cure of her daughter who was a *demoniac*, refused her; saying he was only sent to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and that it was “not meet, to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs;” when she replied, that even “the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table,”‡ (*Matt. xv. 27.*) “Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt; and her daughter was *cured* from that very hour.”

In like manner, when he was going to the house of *Jairus*, whose daughter was at the point of death, and he was met by a person who brought him word that she was actually dead, Jesus said to him, (*Mark v. 36.*) “Be not afraid; only believe.”§ At the same time, when a woman who had had an issue of blood twelve years, and finding no relief from any physicians, thought that, without making herself known to Jesus, she might be cured by only touching his clothes, as he was walking in a crowd, which she accordingly contrived to do, and found the effect she ex-

* See Vol. XIII. p. 208.

† See *ibid.* pp. 93, 94.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 175, 176.

§ See *ibid.* p. 106.

pected; he being aware of it, turned, and said to her (*Mark* v. 34,) " Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."*

Agreeably to this, when the apostles failed to cure a *lunatic*, said to be *grievously tormented*, while Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they, in seeming surprise, said to him, (*Matt.* xvii. 19,) " Why could not we cast him out?" he said, " Because of your unbelief.—Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting;" intimating that on extraordinary occasions, it became them to make particular application to God, the real author of the miracles.†

On no occasion did Jesus lay so much stress on this faith, as when the apostles expressed their admiration of the sudden withering of the fig-tree that he had cursed. *Mark* xi. 22—24: " Jesus answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God.‡ For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." This, however, must refer to a faith supernaturally imparted, in consequence of prayer; assuring them of the Divine approbation of the request, and, like other miracles, must have been confined to the age of the apostles.

4. Sometimes the authoritative manner of Jesus was accompanied with circumstances which shew a pleasing feeling, and compassion for the sufferers. In curing Peter's wife's mother, " he came," (*Mark* i. 31,) " and took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her." When the leper met him on his descent from the mountain on which he had delivered his first public discourse, saying, (*Matt.* viii. 2,) " If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" he " put forth his hand, and touched him, saying," (repeating his own words,) " I will. Be thou clean." And when the " two blind men" near *Jericho* followed him, crying, (*Matt.* xx. 30—34,) " Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David," he " called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?" And they said, " Lord, that our eyes may be opened." The evangelist

* See Vol. XIII. p. 106.

† See, on *ver.* 22, *ibid.* p. 280.

‡ See, on *vers.* 20, 21, *ibid.* pp. 193, 194.

adds, "Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes, and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him."

5. Though this authoritative manner was most used by Jesus, he sometimes departed from it; and in some cases seems to have intended that the miraculous power should not be known, but rather that the effect should be ascribed to an external application; as when he spat on the ground, and made clay with the spittle, with which he anointed the eyes of the man who was born blind; and then bade him go and wash in the pool of *Siloam*. (*John ix. 6.*) He also spat on the eyes of the blind man from *Bethsaida*, (*Mark viii. 23.*) after he had taken him "by the hand, and led him out of the city." In this case the cure was not effected at once, but by degrees. When he first asked the man *if he saw any thing*, he said he saw "men as trees walking." Jesus then "put his hands again upon his eyes, and bade him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."

When he cured the ten lepers, nothing that he did indicated any intention of working a miracle. He only bade them go and shew themselves to the priest, as by the law of Moses they were required to do; but as they were going they found themselves cured. In the same unostentatious manner he converted the water into wine at the marriage-feast at *Cana of Galilee*, only bidding the servants, (*John ii. 7.*) "fill the water-pots with water," and "draw out," and present that liquor, instead of wine.

But in whatever manner Jesus thought proper to work miracles, which he always did so as to be the least liable to suspicion, he appeared to have the fullest confidence of the presence and power of God being with him; and this gave that extraordinary air of dignity to his manner, and impressed all who saw him, with awe. And this would be heightened by the consideration of the meanness of his birth and education, with the other disadvantageous circumstances under which he laboured.

6. It is remarkable that Jesus never voluntarily entered into any discourse about his divine mission, a subject which an impostor would naturally dwell much upon. He betrayed no anxiety on this subject. He worked his miracles, and left those who saw them, to make the necessary inference. But there was a peculiar dignity in his manner of doing this, when *John the Baptist*, then in prison, sent to him to know from himself, whether he was the

Messiah. Instead of returning any direct answer, he only said, having at that time wrought many miracles, (*Matt.* xi. 4—6,) “Go, and shew John again, those things which ye hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.”* Who would not be struck with awe and reverence on hearing a man speak in this manner, after seeing the miracles alluded to? In the whole compass of profane history, there does not occur any scene, or any language, approaching to this. If there be such a thing as the *sublime* in conduct, it is surely this. But the source of this was something more than we ever find in man. It had evidently a higher origin, and the affectation of any thing like it, without the actual presence of God, far from inspiring with awe and reverence, would only have exposed a man to contempt.

7. Jesus having wrought a great number of miracles, in the most public manner, so as to have given abundant evidence of his divine mission, had no occasion to act in the same open manner, at all times. He sometimes shewed his benevolence to afflicted persons, without wishing to have the miracles by which he relieved them known, except to the persons who received the benefit. Thus when he cured two blind men, after raising to life *Jairus's* daughter, he “straitly charged them.” (*Matt.* ix. 30,) “saying, See that no man know it.” Nay, after giving life to the young woman, at which only the father, the mother, and three of his disciples were present, he also “charged them straitly,” (*Mark* v. 43,) “that no man should know it.” When at one time “the Pharisees held a council,” (*Matt.* xii. 14—16,) against him, “how they might destroy him; he withdrew himself from *the place*,” and when “great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all,” he at the same time, “charged them, that they should not make him known,” or discover where he was. This might also be intended to avoid giving unnecessary provocation to his enemies, the proper time for delivering himself up to them, not being come. The conduct of Jesus on these occasions, and his often avoiding the crowds that attended him, shew that he was naturally far from being given to ostentation, but discover

* See Vol. XIII. p. 139.

an amiable modesty; and the reverse of this would have been the case of an impostor.

8. On one particular occasion Jesus pursued a different method. The people of *Gadara*, after the destruction of the herd of swine, and the cure of the demoniac, in those parts, having "besought him," (*Matt.* viii. 34,) "to depart out of their coasts,"* he said to the man whom he had relieved, and who (*Mark* v. 18, 19) "prayed him that he might be with him, —Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." He was then leaving that part of the country, and probably did not apprehend any inconvenience from this publication of the miracle.† Besides, he had wrought very few miracles in those parts, and might think that the people were not sufficiently impressed with them.

PART III.

I HAVE considered several particulars of Jesus's authoritative manner of speaking when he was instructing his audience, and also the dignified manner in which he wrought his miracles; a manner which would have been unnatural and preposterous in an impostor, and absolutely impossible to a common carpenter, but easy and natural to any person conscious of speaking and acting in the name of God, and empowered by him to work real miracles. I shall now bring into view some other particulars in the general behaviour of Jesus, independent of his teaching, or working miracles, which discover the same sense of personal dignity, and such authority, as no other man in the same rank in life could have thought of assuming, or would have been capable of supporting if he had attempted it. And yet this highly dignified character Jesus maintained with perfect ease, propriety, and consistency, through the whole of his history.

1. *Mahomet* could not immediately persuade his own family to believe that he had the supernatural communications that he pretended to, though for three years he had made it his practice to seclude himself from the world, and shut himself up in a cave, in order to favour that idea; and he was careful to endeavour to make converts of his own family and near friends, in the first

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 100, 101.

† See *ibid.* p. 101.

place.* *Jesus*, on the contrary, gave no particular attention to his own family or former acquaintance, but addressed himself to his countrymen at large, who knew nothing more of him than they then saw, and his mean parentage, of which they would soon be informed; and yet he appears not only to have had numerous disciples as soon as ever he began to shew himself, but to have commanded whom he pleased to be his constant followers.

Immediately after the first Passover, at which he worked some miracles, at *Jerusalem*, though they are not specified, (after which, and not before, he began to preach,) as he was "walking by the sea of Galilee" and "saw two brethren, Simon and Andrew, casting a net into the sea," (*Matt.* iv. 18—20, *Mark* i. 16—18,) "for they were *fishermen*, he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men; and straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him." It appears from the Gospel of *John*, [i. 35—42,] that these men had been his disciples in *Judea*, and had attended him some short time there; but they had returned to their ordinary occupation, as the disciples of *John* in general probably did; but from this time they never left him.† In the same authoritative manner he seems to have commanded the attendance of all whom he thought proper.

Seeing *Matthew*, a person in a public employment, and evidently wealthy, at his office, (*Matt.* ix. 9,) he only said to him, "Follow me, and he arose and followed him." The next day *Matthew* made, as *Luke* [v. 29] says, "a great feast," when he entertained many of his brother publicans, and other persons, along with *Jesus* and his disciples. When one person made some hesitation, and said, (*Matt.* viii. 21,) "Suffer me first to go and bury my father," he said, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead."‡

With the same absolute authority he chose the twelve apostles, out of his followers at large. *Mark* iii. 13: "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would; and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach; and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out *demons*." No sovereign prince was ever more readily obeyed than this Jewish carpenter.

2. It is not a little extraordinary that a person of *Jesus's*

See *Prideaux*, pp. 12—14; *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* pp. 56, 57.

See Vol. XIII. pp. 65, 66.

† See *ibid.* pp. 98, 99.

mean parentage and occupation, and who appeared without any previous preparation on the public theatre of the world, should, on all occasions, even when the most acute and knowing of his enemies endeavoured to ensnare him, have always perfectly possessed himself, so as never to have been thrown off his guard, but always to have behaved in the most proper and dignified manner, and to have made the most pertinent replies to the questions they put to him; so that no advantage could be taken of him, though their questions were prepared before hand, and his replies were extempore.

What could such a person as Jesus have seen, even of his own country, in a carpenter's shop? And yet, when he left it and came into the world, he clearly penetrated into the characters and designs of the ablest men that he met with, and confounded the most subtle of his enemies with his superior sagacity and magnanimity. Whenever he did not choose to speak plainly to his hearers, he was never at a loss for some pertinent *parable*, which sufficiently intimated his meaning, without giving any handle against him. This never-failing presence of mind, and readiness in making pertinent replies, certainly indicates either a character of a very superior kind, or some advantage of a still more extraordinary nature. But it will be proper to mention some particulars.

When Jesus was reproved for eating with publicans and sinners, he said, (*Matt.* ix. 12, 13,) "They that *are in health* need not a physician, but they that are sick.—I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He also replied to the same objection, by telling the admirable parable of the Prodigal Son, that of the pains that a man took in order to find one sheep of a hundred that he had lost, and that of a woman to find one piece of money out of ten; whose solicitude they could not but approve.

When Jesus was in a synagogue, where was a man with "a withered hand," and his enemies "watched him," to see, (*Mark* iii. 3,) "whether he would heal on the Sabbath-day, that they might accuse him," he first bid the man to "stand forth," and then said, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days, or to do evil, to save life, or to kill?" When they were silent he asked them, (*Matt.* xii. 11,) whether if a sheep fell "into a pit on the Sabbath-day," they would help it out.* When they were unable to make any answer, he bade the man *stretch forth his hand*, and

* See Vol. XIII. p. 111.

it was restored sound like the other. Could any person have conducted himself in a more striking and dignified manner, in those circumstances?

Being charged with casting out *demons* by the help of *Beelzebub*, the supposed "prince of the *demons*," he said, (*Matt.* xii. 25,) "Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation; and every city, or house, divided against itself, shall not stand." What answer more intelligible, or more forcible, could have been made by a person who had studied ever so long to do it?

When Jesus's townsmen of Nazareth were offended at him, and said, (*Matt.* xiii. 54—56,) "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas; and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" he replied, [*ver.* 57,] in what was probably a well-known proverb, "A prophet is not without honour *except* in his own country, and in his own house."* This question may still be asked: How came *Jesus*, who had no more advantage in point of education than his brothers, † *James*, *Joses*, and *Simon*, to be so much more distinguished a character than they? It behoves every unbeliever to consider what answer can be given to this question, originally, and very naturally, put by the people of *Nazareth*.

Being censured for not washing before dinner, he first "called the multitude" to him, that they, as well as the *Pharisees*, might hear him on the subject, and said to them, (*Matt.* xv. 10,) "Hear and understand. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." This was speaking in a manner very likely to make an impression, and to be remembered; and in explaining it, he gave the most excellent moral instruction, well calculated to counteract the superficial maxims of the *Pharisees*.‡

When the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* brought to him a woman taken in adultery, that they might ensnare him, either by his passing sentence upon her, as a judge, or by acquitting her; he for some time paid no attention to them, but "stooped down," and seemed to be amusing himself with writing something "on the ground."§ At length, being

* See Vol. XIII. p. 124.
See *ibid.* p. 172.

† "Probably his cousins." *Ibid.*
§ See, on *John* viii. 6, *ibid.* p. 219.

farther importuned by them, he raised himself up, “and said unto them,” (*John* viii. 7,) “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And having said this, he stooped down again,” and when he raised himself up, he found that they had all left him. By this presence of mind, and judicious conduct, they were effectually disappointed of their aim.*

When Jesus was questioned “by what authority” he taught in the Temple, and did not think proper to give a direct answer, he said, (*Matt.* xxi. 24, 25,) “I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven, or of men?” They not choosing, for prudential reasons, to answer this question, and saying they could not tell; he, being thus at full liberty replied, “Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”† Then, far from shewing any fear of them, he told them the *parable* of the man who “had two sons,” whom he ordered to go and work in his vineyard, when one of them said, “I go, and went not;” and the other at first refused but afterwards went, and concluded with saying, [*ver.* 31,] “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” And he gave them a farther information of their fate, in the parable of the “householder who planted a vineyard,—and let it out to husbandmen;” who, having abused his servants, and killed his son, were miserably destroyed. [*Vers.* 33—41.]

Jesus shewed peculiar presence of mind when, at the last Passover, he was repeatedly attacked by different classes of persons, who endeavoured to find matter of accusation against him. The first question they asked him, was whether it was lawful to pay tribute to the *Romans*. Instead of giving a direct answer, of which he was aware that they meant to take advantage, he asked for a piece of money, and they producing a *denarius*, he asked them whose was the *image* that it bore; and they replying *Cæsar’s*, he answered, (*Matt.* xxii. 21,) “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s,” by which he gave his audience a very intelligible and instructive lesson, without any hazard to himself.‡ How would such presence of mind, and such a ready and pertinent answer, have been admired, if it had

* See, on *vers.* 7, 9, 11, Vol. XIII. pp. 219, 220.

† See, on *ver.* 27, *ibid.* p. 285.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 288.

been found among the *apophthegms* of the ancient philosophers!

When, with the same insidious intention, a lawyer asked him, which was "the great commandment in the law;" with equal readiness he replied, (*Matt.* xxii. 37—40,) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." He added, "And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." With this judicious answer the lawyer could not help expressing his satisfaction. His enemies being thus repelled made no more attempts of the kind, but took other and more effectual methods to gain their purpose of destroying him.

3. There does not appear to have been any thing peculiar in the external appearance of Jesus. He affected no pomp or parade, and all the attempts of the populace to make him a king he resolutely repelled. But when the time of his death drew near, and no end could be answered by keeping any measures with his enemies, he rode in a kind of triumph into *Jerusalem*, and permitted the people to shew their respect, in the usual manner, by acclamations and strewing branches of trees in his way. Among other things they shouted, (*Matt.* xxi. 9,) "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," which was in effect calling him the *Messiah*. Being reproved for this by the *Pharisees*, he said to them, (*ver.* 16,) in a ready and pertinent application of a passage in the *Psalms*, [viii. 2,] "Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise"?

After this he "went into the Temple,—and drove out all them that sold and bought" in the outer court of it; saying, (*Matt.* xxi. 13,) "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." There must have been something uncommonly authoritative in the manner of Jesus, thus to have overawed these people, who had always been allowed by the governing persons to do that business there, without molestation. Had any other man attempted to drive them from that place, they would, no doubt, have made resistance, and have made him repent of the disturbance he gave them. This one fact proves beyond all dispute that Jesus had, by some means or other, acquired greater authority than perhaps any other

person in the country;* and it was an authority that certainly neither his birth, his fortune, nor any civil office, gave him.

4. It is in the view of suffering and of death that men's constancy is most tried; and an impostor, whose schemes must necessarily respect this world only, could have little inclination to adhere to his purpose in such a situation. But on no occasion whatever did Jesus appear to more advantage, than when he had the prospect of suffering a painful and lingering death immediately before him; and so far was he, in those circumstances, from acknowledging any imposture, that his views were then more than ever fixed upon his purpose, and he bore the near approach of the trying scene, in all its stages, with the greatest composure and magnanimity, hardly ever expressing any concern for himself, but only for his disciples, and for his country.

When for the last time he came in view of *Jerusalem*, which he knew to be destined for the scene of his sufferings; and that within a few days; and, therefore, when it might have been imagined, and without any reflection upon him, that his thoughts would be chiefly occupied about himself, "he beheld the city," (*Luke xix. 41—44.*) and even "wept over it, saying, *Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!*† but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in, on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."‡

Arriving immediately after this at *Bethany*, where he was entertained at the house of *Lazarus* and his sisters, when *Mary*, who was one of them, anointed his head with a box of valuable ointment, the expense of which gave offence to *Judas*, Jesus mildly said, (*John xii. 7.*) "Let her alone; against the day of my *embalming*, hath she kept this;" thus giving an easy and pleasant turn to the incident, by way of excuse for her seeming extravagance.§ It shewed, however, that his death was upon his mind, but that he was not dismayed at it. That it was much upon his mind at this time, appears also from several other circumstances.

* See, on *ver. 12*, Vol. XIII. p. 278.

† See *ibid.* p. 273, *Note*.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 273, 274.

§ See, on *Matt. xxvi. 12*, *ibid.* pp. 275, 276.

When he was asked by the *Jews* by what authority he had cleared the Temple, he said, (*John* ii. 19,) “ Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up ;” alluding, as the evangelist says, [*ver.* 21,] though he was not so understood at the time, to his own death and resurrection.*

When, presently after this, some *Greeks*,† who had expressed a curiosity to see him, were introduced to him, as he was in the Temple, he was led by the circumstance to reflect upon the spread of his religion, and of his death as the necessary means of it, and said, (*John* xii. 23, 24,) “ The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a *grain* of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” After the voice from heaven, which was uttered in the course of this conversation, he said, (*vers.* 31, 32,) “ Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world‡ be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This,” the evangelist says, “ he said, signifying what death he should die.” In the same conversation he asserts, what no impostor would have done, the obligation of all his followers to sacrifice their lives as he should do his. “ He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be.” [*Vers.* 25, 26.]

That Jesus had the feelings of other men, and therefore naturally dreaded pain and death, cannot be doubted. He discovered it in the course of this very conversation, saying, (*ver.* 27,) “ Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour ? But for this cause came I unto this hour.” Though it occurred to him as a natural wish to be excused the pain of a lingering and ignominious death, it did not remain with him till the close of the sentence, but was immediately recalled.§ The same apprehension occurred during his agony in the garden, when he prayed, (*Matt.* xxvi. 39,) “ O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” But he instantly replied, “ Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” This was true heroism, and not a stupid or affected insensibility to pain.||

The strong sense of piety that appears in Jesus, on these

* See Vol. XIII. p. 279.

† See, on *John* xii. 20, 21, *ibid.* p. 231.

‡ *The ruler of this world.* See *ibid.* p. 232.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 281, 282.

|| See *ibid.* pp. 338, 339.

and other occasions, is a proof of great magnanimity, and that of the justest kind, and is wholly inconsistent with his being an impostor. What confidence could an impostor have had in the favour of God, on the approach of death? But Jesus shewed it in the most unequivocal manner, in those circumstances. Immediately after what has been just recited, of the conversation in the hearing of the *Greeks* in the Temple, he said, (*John* xii. 28,) "Father, glorify thy name," confident, no doubt, of a favourable answer, which was accordingly returned in an audible voice from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."*

In his solemn prayer, pronounced in the hearing of his disciples, he began with saying, (*John* xvii. 1,) "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that my Son also may glorify thee." [*Vers.* 4, 5.] "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."† He then prayed most affectionately for his disciples. The piety of Jesus appeared in a very conspicuous light as he hung on the cross; the last expression that he uttered being, (*Luke* xxiii. 46,) "Father, into thy hands I *commit* my spirit;"‡ which shews that his confidence in God did not fail him, in his last agonizing moments. If there be any such thing as true greatness of mind, arising from a consciousness of integrity, and acting a part in life pleasing to God, and in obedience to his commands, it appears in this behaviour of Jesus. No other *hypothesis* can account for the facts. Hypocrites may appeal to God, and frequently do so, but not in such circumstances as these, or in such a manner as this.

5. All the time that Jesus was in more immediate expectation of his sufferings and death, he passed in publicly teaching in the Temple, and giving the most solemn reproofs and warnings to the *Pharisees*, his enemies, without taking any measures to soften their resentment, or avert his fate. There is, indeed, a peculiar energy and dignity in all the discourses that he held in these circumstances, superior to any thing that he had shewn before. As he expressed a just indignation with respect to his enemies, his discourse to his disciples the evening before his crucifixion, discovers the most tender and affectionate concern for them, without once adverting to any thing that immediately affected

* See Vol. XIII. p. 282.

† See *ibid.* p. 333.‡ See *ibid.* p. 361.

himself. This was equally a mark of true greatness, and of benevolence. *John* xiv. 1—3: “Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”* The whole of his address is equally affectionate.

With what calmness and deliberation did Jesus institute a solemn rite in commemoration of his death, before it took place, enjoining all his disciples to repeat it in remembrance of him till his second coming, as an assurance of that joyful event! (*1 Cor.* xi. 23.)† In the whole transaction Jesus shewed his fixed purpose to die, and to die for the benefit of the world. In his breaking of the bread, he said, [*ver.* 24,] “Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you;” and in giving the cup, he said, (*Matt.* xxvi. 28,) “This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.”‡ Here we see both magnanimity and benevolence, an union of which forms the greatest of characters. In this we see no dread of death, even in one of its most frightful forms; but a mind wholly engrossed by the great views to which his death would be subservient.

In order to shew his humility, as well as his benevolence, and to recommend that eminent virtue (another ingredient in a truly great character) to others, Jesus at the same time that he instituted his supper, washed his disciples’ feet; which is one of the lowest offices of humanity, and would not by any intreaty be diverted from his purpose. When he had done this, he said, (*John* xiii. 14, 15,) “If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”§ Not to observe how excellently this transaction was calculated to produce its effect, it is impossible not to see in it how much his mind was at ease, and attentive to every thing that it became him to attend to, in so near a prospect of his death; for at that hour the next day, he knew that he would be in his grave. Moreover, after the affectionate address to his disciples mentioned above, which succeeded these transactions, they sung a hymn before they went out: another action which shews alike tranquillity of mind, piety, and magnanimity.

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 313, 314.

† See Vol. XIII. pp. 310, 311.

‡ See Vol. XIV. p. 98.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 305, 306.

Jesus was, indeed, moved exceedingly at the treachery of *Judas*. *John* xiii. 21 : “ He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said,” or spake with peculiar earnestness, “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you *will* betray me.”* But this does not appear to have proceeded from any concern about the consequences of this treachery to himself, but for the traitor, and from his being shocked at the great enormity of the crime. For when *Judas* went out, he calmly said to him, [*ver.* 27,] “ That thou doest, do quickly.” When, soon after this, he came with the servants of the high-priest, and, in order to shew them who he was, went up to him, and kissed him, he only said, (*Luke* xxii. 48,) “ *Judas*, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss,” a seeming mark of friendship and familiarity?†

There must have been something the reverse of perturbation, something even more than calm and intrepid, in the behaviour of Jesus on this most trying occasion. It overawed, as I have observed, the persons sent to apprehend him. For, on his asking them whom they sought, and telling them that he was the person, “ they went backward,” (*John* xviii. 6,) “ and fell to the ground.”‡ Had he been so disposed, he might, no doubt, have withdrawn from them; but he rather encouraged them to proceed in their purpose, voluntarily surrendering himself to them, and forbidding any defence of him; the last miracle that he wrought being the healing of the ear of the servant which Peter had struck off. After this, which shewed a calm presence of mind, as well as benevolence, he said to *Peter*, (*John* xviii. 11,) “ Put up thy sword into the sheath. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” This was surely the language of magnanimity, as well as of piety.

Do we admire *Socrates* for refusing to attempt his escape after his condemnation, when, as he observed, he was an old man, and could not have long to live; and not admire the similar, but greater, magnanimity of *Jesus*, a young man, who therefore had a prospect of enjoying life much longer, and who was not then condemned, or even apprehended? *Socrates* very nobly gave up his life in obedience to the laws of his country, *Jesus* did the same in obedience to the command of God, whose will he knew it was that he should

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 307, 308.

† See, on *Matt.* xxvi. 49, *ibid.* p. 339.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 340.

die in the manner that he did, and a death far more painful and ignominious than that of Socrates.*

PART IV.

6. Whatever dread of death, or of torture, Jesus occasionally discovered before his apprehension, every thing of this kind vanished afterwards, and he went through the whole of his trial, all the insults to which he was exposed, all the preparation for his execution, and all the particulars of his sufferings, with the greatest composure. In the whole of his behaviour, in these most trying circumstances, he shewed the most perfect meekness and patience, the strongest affection for his friends, and the most entire resignation to the will of God; dispositions which must be allowed to constitute the greatest of characters. Nothing that he said, or did, shewed the least degree of impatience, of terror, or of a desire of revenge. His feelings (and no symptoms of any constraint appears) were all of a very different and superior kind. It will be worth our while to attend to the principal of the particulars, in the order in which they took place.

When Jesus was brought before the high-priest, and was interrogated *concerning his disciples and his doctrine*, he, with great propriety, answered, (*John xviii. 20, 21,*) "I spake openly to the world. I ever taught in the synagogues, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me. Behold they know what I said." This judicious answer being considered as too bold and insolent, one of the officers of the court, without being reprov'd for it, rudely struck him in the face. But he, without resenting it, calmly replied, [*ver. 23,*] "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" † Nothing had been proved against him.

The court was then oblig'd to have recourse to some evidence of his guilt, but nothing could be found that was at all to the purpose. For it was only this, that he had been heard to say that, if the Temple was destroyed, he would raise it again in three days. He, therefore, shewed his unconcern about the effect of it, by a dignified silence, though

* See *Rousseau in Socrates and Jesus compared*, 1803, Sect. vii. *ad fin.*

† See Vol. XIV. p. 342.

called upon to answer to the accusation. At length, unable and ashamed to make any serious use of such a charge as this, as affecting a man's life, (and it was nothing less that would answer their purpose,) the high-priest *adjured* him "by the living God," (*Matt.* xxvi. 63,) which was the Jewish method of putting a man upon his oath, to declare whether he was the *Messiah*, or not. And, thus called upon, he hesitated not to say that he was; and added, alluding, no doubt, to their having frequently asked him for *Daniel's sign from heaven*, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

This declaration, delivered, as it appears to have been, in a firm and calm manner, might have disconcerted and overawed persons who were not predetermined to take his life. But upon this "the high-priest," despairing of procuring any sufficient evidence against him, on the pretence of his having "spoken *blasphemy*, rent his clothes," as if to express the horror with which he heard such language, and said, they had then no need of *witnesses* against him, as they had heard from his own mouth what was sufficient for his condemnation:* and as far as appears, they unanimously voted him "guilty of death." After this, without any check from the court, and perhaps encouraged by them, Jesus was treated by the officers and the attendants in general, with the most shameful indignity, spitting in his face, buffeting, or kicking him, smiting him on the face, probably after blindfolding him, and saying, (*Matt.* xxvi. 68,) "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ; who is he that smote thee?" During all this, as Peter testifies concerning him, (*1 Ep.* ii. 23,) "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."† Both his presence of mind, and his attention to his disciples during this trial, appeared by his significantly looking at *Peter*;‡ who, as he had foretold, was denying that he knew any thing of him. The effect of this look was such, that "he went out, and wept bitterly." (*Matt.* xxvi. 75.) Not only *Peter*, but all his disciples, attached as they were to him, had forsaken him. [*Ver.* 56.] He alone remained unmoved.

While *Peter* was weeping with shame and repentance,

* See *Wakefield*, on *ver.* 65, Vol. XIII. p. 343, *Note*.

† Perhaps *unrighteously*, (as the *Vulgate*,) meaning his judge. See Vol. XIV. p. 406.

‡ *Luke* xxii. 61. See Vol. XIII. p. 342.

Judas, who had betrayed him, shocked at the consequences, which he had not perhaps expected, or at least reflected upon, brought the money which he had received for his treachery, to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood;" while they, feeling nothing of his remorse, only said, "What is that to us? See thou to that." He, however, left the money with them, and went and hanged himself.* They had gained their point, and after that, were perfectly unconcerned about his guilt, or his innocence, and without any relenting, pursued their purpose.

But by far the greatest trial of the constancy of Jesus was his being carried before *Pilate*, the Roman governor, who alone had the power of life and death; and he was a man who had rendered himself formidable by his severity and cruelty. But, though it is probable that Jesus had never seen the forms of Roman judicature, till he was now brought before it as a criminal, he was not in the least intimidated. His presence of mind never once forsook him, and he answered with the same readiness and propriety, before the governor of the province, as he had done before the high-priest; and when he thought proper, he kept silence with the same firmness of mind; so that, hardened as *Pilate* was, the uncommon behaviour of Jesus, and his evident innocence, moved him in his favour, and he was much disturbed in the course of the trial.†

Being now accused of rebellion against the *Roman* government, (for no other charge that the *Jews* could have brought against him, would affect his life, before this tribunal,) *Pilate* asked Jesus in the first place, whether he was, or pretended to be, "the king of the Jews." But instead of giving any answer, he asked, in return, whether he advanced that charge against him *of himself*, meaning from his own observation of his conduct, by means of his proper officers, *or of others*, meaning the *Jews*; well knowing that he could not have heard of any thing to his prejudice through any other channel; and if his crime amounted to treason against the government, he must have heard of it without the intervention of the *Jews*. Nothing, therefore, could have been more pertinent to his defence. *Pilate*, without being offendéd, answered that he had no information against him except from the *Jews*, his own countrymen;

* *Matt.* xxvii. 4, 5. See Vol. XIII. pp. 344, 345.

† See *Matt.* xxvii. 19; Vol. XIII. pp. 351, 352.

that his was a cause brought before him from the court of the high-priest.

Returning, therefore, to the original question, Jesus acknowledged that he was a king; but, explaining himself, added, that his *kingdom* was "not of this world," and therefore could not interfere with the government of the *Romans*. But it being true that he was a king, and being sent to bear witness to *truth* in general, he would not deny the charge. This explanation satisfied the governor that the accusation had proceeded from envy and malice, and therefore he declared that he found "in him, no fault at all."*

So far the conduct of the governor was judicious and fair, and in this stage of the business, being informed that Jesus was of *Galilee*, he was desirous of removing the cause, to *Herod* the *tetrarch*, or prince of that part of the country, who was then at *Jerusalem*. He therefore sent him to *him*. But before *Herod*, who was desirous of seeing him, chiefly in expectation of seeing some miracle wrought by him, (which implies that he did not doubt the truth of his miraculous power,) he made no defence at all to any thing that was advanced against him, though the evangelist says, they "stood, and vehemently accused him." It is probable the accusation was nothing more to the purpose than what was produced against him before the high-priest. He therefore, with great propriety and dignity, was quite silent; and still less was he disposed to gratify *Herod*, with the exhibition of any miracle. Provoked at this obstinate silence, which, however, would not have procured his acquittal, if any thing of consequence could have been proved against him by sufficient evidence, *Herod* and his soldiers "mocked him," putting on him "a gorgeous robe," and then sent him back to *Pilate*.† This, however, does not appear to have at all disturbed the calm temper of Jesus. He bore this insult, as he had done that at the high-priest's, with perfect composure.

Pilate, seeing that nothing was proved against Jesus, thought to satisfy his enemies with scourging and dismissing him; but nothing short of his death would answer their purpose, and they were clamorous for his crucifixion. At length, their importunity prevailed. But in order to declare his conviction of the innocence of Jesus, he called for water and washed his hands before them, saying, (*Matt.* xxvii.

* See *John* xviii. 38—38; Vol. XIII. pp. 348, 349.

† See *Luke* xxiii. 7—11; Vol. XIII. p. 349.

24,) "I am innocent of the blood of this just person;" to which the Jews replied, [*ver. 25,*] "His blood be on us, and on our children." He then delivered him to the custody of the soldiers for crucifixion, [*ver. 26,*] without his making any defence, or pleading for any remission of the unjust and cruel sentence.

Previous to his crucifixion, Jesus, according to the custom of the *Romans*, was scourged by the soldiers with great severity,* and exposed to much insult by their clothing him in a purple robe, and putting a crown of the herb *acanthus*† (not perhaps of thorns) on his head. Being probably much disfigured by this treatment, *Pilate* hoped that the sight of him would have moved the *Jews*, as no doubt it did himself, to compassion. He therefore produced him before them in that state; declaring once more, that he found no fault in him, and desiring them to take him, and crucify him of their own authority. This, however, they declined, not having any such power. But, in order to induce him to consent to their request with more freedom, they farther said, (*John xix. 7,*) that "by *their* law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."‡ This, which *Pilate* had not heard before, alarmed him; and going again into the judgment hall, he asked Jesus, *Whence he was*. He making no answer, *Pilate* said, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?" Jesus, without being at all intimidated at this, replied, "Thou couldst have had no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above," meaning from God, in consequence of whose counsels it was that he should die in that manner,§ and that the *Jews*, who had delivered him into his power, were more guilty than he; an answer which shewed a consciousness of his innocence, together with a reflecting and a perfectly composed mind, notwithstanding all the shocking treatment he had met with.

His uncommon patience and magnanimity in these circumstances made *Pilate* more than ever desirous to release him. But the *Jews* threatening him with the displeasure of the emperor, in acquitting a person accused of making himself a king, he finally gave a positive order for his crucifixion, [*John xix. 16,*] Jesus making no resistance, and using no intreaty. Never, in all history, do we read of such

* See, on *Matt. xxvii. 26*, Vol. XIII. p. 350.

† See, on *Matt. xxvii. 29*, *ibid.* pp. 352, 353.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 353.

§ See, on *John xix. 11*, *ibid.* p. 354.

a trial as this ; such inveterate malice, on the part of the accusers, such a persuasion of the innocence of the accused person, in the judge, and such steady composure, dignity, and uniform propriety of conduct, on the part of the accused.

As they were conducting Jesus to the place of execution, though he was so exhausted that he was not able to carry his cross,* he was so far from being wholly occupied with the idea of what he was going to suffer;† that, seeing a great company of people, and especially of women, *beating their breasts and lamenting him*, he said, with great affection and strong feeling for them, and for his country, (*Luke xxiii. 28—31.*) “ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in *the green wood*, what *will* be done in the dry?” That is, if I, being innocent, suffer so much, what must they suffer who are guilty ?

Many persons have, with much seeming courage, braved death, and even torture, till they came to the actual feeling of pain, at which their heroism has entirely failed them. But Jesus was far from shrinking at the nearest approach, or the actual experience, of the greatest pain. Being offered, as was usual, a draught of a stupifying potion, he declined it;‡ not choosing to avail himself of any such advantage, whether seeming or real ; and probably at the very time that the soldiers were nailing him to the cross, or elevating it, when he would feel the greatest pain, he uttered that remarkable prayer for them, (*Luke xxiii. 34.*) “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” §

When Jesus hung on the cross, he made no reply to the unbounded insults with which his ungenerous enemies then assailed him ; but seeing his mother standing near his cross, along with his beloved disciple *John*, he affectionately recommended her to his care, as his own mother ;|| and to the penitent thief, who was crucified along with him, he calmly and confidently said, “ To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” ¶

* “The transverse piece” of it. See, on *Matt. xxvii. 32*, Vol. XIII. pp. 354, 355.

† See, on *Luke xxiii. 28*, *ibid.* p. 355.

‡ See, on *Matt. xxvii. 34*, *ibid.* p. 358.

|| See, on *John xix. 26, 27*, *ibid.* p. 360.

¶ *Luke xxiii. 43*, see Vol. XIII. p. 359.

§ See *ibid.* p. 357.

The crucifixion began about our nine o'clock in the morning. At three in the afternoon Jesus began to repeat the 22d *Psalm*, which begins with these words: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" not having any idea of God having really forsaken him; for nothing, surely, can be more improbable than this, when he was then in the act of the most perfect obedience to his will. "Therefore," says he, (*John* x. 17,) "doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life;" but there are many parts of that *Psalm* which described his situation, and to the whole of it he might wish to direct the attention of the by-standers;* perhaps, mentally at least, he went through the whole. The effect of torture being to occasion extreme thirst, Jesus about this time asked for something to drink, and accepted of a sponge dipped in vinegar, after which, and saying, "Father, into thy hands I *commit* my spirit," he expired.

The *Roman centurion* who, as his duty required, attended the execution, was so much struck with these circumstances, that it is said, (*Luke* xxiii. 47,) "he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man," or, as another evangelist reports it, (*Mark* xv. 39,) "Truly this man was the Son of God."†

Such are the particulars of this most extraordinary scene, and certainly they bespeak a character of peculiar greatness, exceeding in real magnanimity all that we read of in any history whatever; an union of every sentiment that can give dignity to human nature, the greatest meekness, patience, fortitude, benevolence, and piety.

After his resurrection, Jesus is represented as acting with as much dignity as before, but rather with less familiarity. When he discovered himself to *Mary Magdalene*, who at first took him for the gardener, but presently after knew him by his voice and manner, she, as was natural, fell at his feet, probably meaning to kiss them. But he checked her, saying, (*John* xx. 17,) "Touch me not. *I do not yet ascend* unto my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God:"‡ and farther, that he would go before them into *Galilee*, [*Matt.* xxviii. 7,] and that they should see him there. How much affection was there in this! Though risen from the dead, and in a new state of being, he was mindful of those

* See, on *Matt.* xxviii. 46, Vol. XIII. p. 360.

† See, on *Matt.* xxvii. 54, Vol. XIII. p. 364.

‡ See Vol. XIII. pp. 371.

to whom he had stood in so peculiar a relation, as he had done to his apostles. He calls them his *brethren*, and informs them, that he was going, though not immediately, to their common God and Father. In the mean time, he appeared unexpectedly to several of his disciples, and to all the apostles; but it is remarkable that Jesus does not seem to have shewn any particular respect to his mother after his resurrection, and, indeed, not much during the whole of his public ministry; and there was the greatest propriety in this. A man of worldly views would naturally have distinguished his own relations, as did *Mahomet*, and most of the *Popes*. But the views of Jesus were not so confined. To him, whoever did the will of God was a mother, a sister, or a brother. There was certainly great wisdom in this behaviour of Jesus to his mother, though he does not appear to have been at all deficient in a proper attention to her. His recommending her to the care of John as he hung on the cross, shews the contrary. Though he took no more than proper notice of her, the veneration in which she was held by Christians, came, in a course of time, to be excessive, and idolatrous in the extreme. What would it have been if Jesus had himself laid any foundation for it?

There is something peculiarly interesting in the account of Jesus's unexpected appearance to the two disciples who were walking to *Emmaus*, when they said, (*Luke xxiv. 32*.) *He made their hearts burn within them*, while he explained to them the Scriptures relating to himself, his death and resurrection, and was afterwards known to them as they were at meat, and immediately disappeared.

Having something of so much importance to communicate, these two disciples naturally hastened to return to Jerusalem, to inform the apostles of it, and while they were telling their story, [*ver. 36*,] Jesus himself appeared among them; and, perceiving them to be greatly terrified as supposing that it was a *spirit*, or apparition,* he, with great calmness, and no doubt in the most encouraging manner, "said unto them," (*vers. 38—40*,) "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet;—handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have;" and then "he shewed them his hands and his feet. And," as the evangelist says, [*vers. 41, 43*,] "while they yet believed not, through

* See, on *Luke xxiv. 37*, Vol. XIII. p. 376.

joy, and wondered, he said, Have ye here any meat? And he took it and did eat before them," after which they could not have any doubt of his resurrection and identity.*

There was something peculiarly condescending and pleasing in his behaviour to *Thomas*, who, not being present at this appearance of Jesus, had said that nothing should convince *him* of it short of putting his finger into the holes made in his hands, and his hand into the wound in his side. For, the next time that he made his appearance, he said to *Thomas*, (*John* xx. 27,) "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

The behaviour of Jesus to *Peter*, who had denied him, but had bitterly repented, was encouraging, but not without an insinuation of reproof, which affected him much. The account, as given of it by *John*, seemingly with great exactness, is interesting. Appearing unexpectedly to several of his disciples as they were in a ship fishing on the sea of *Galilee*, *John*, who first perceived who he was, saying it was Jesus, *Peter* eagerly swam to the shore where he waited for them. After this, when they had dined together, he saith to *Peter*, (*John* xxi. 15—17,) "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again, the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? *Peter* was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." †

After this, he informed *Peter* of some of the circumstances of his death; [*vers.* 18, 19;] but repressed his curiosity about the fate of *John*, saying, [*ver.* 22,] "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." ‡ This interview seems to have preceded his appearing to more than five hundred of his disciples mentioned by *Paul*, § after which he saw his disciples, once more at least, at Jerusalem. There he repressed their curiosity about the time of his re-

* See, on *Luke* xxiv. 37, Vol. XIII. pp. 376, 377.

† See Vol. XIII. p. 382.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 382, 383.

§ 1 *Cor.* xv. 6. See Vol. XIV. p. 110.

storing the kingdom to Israel;* and having given them a solemn charge to preach the gospel to all the world, with an assurance of a miraculous support in so doing, he led them out of the city to the Mount of *Olives*, and in their sight ascended above the clouds; while two angels, who stood by them, said, (*Acts* i. 11,) “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.” †

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared more than once to *Paul*, and must have conversed with him at some length; since he was by this means qualified to be an apostle, or witness of his resurrection, and also sufficiently enabled to preach the gospel, without any instruction from the other apostles. These appearances to Paul also shew that Jesus entertained no enmity towards those who did not believe his divine mission, and even persecuted his followers, provided they were honest men, only blinded by prejudice; which is true greatness of mind, and a proof of his just discernment of characters. And hence we may conclude, that such will be his justice and impartiality, as Judge of all men at the last day; and may be led to expect that many enemies of the gospel will be received with more favour than some of its professed advocates; which agrees with his own repeated declarations to that purpose.

Thus have I given a sketch of the history of Jesus, from which we may form a just idea of his real character; and let those who are best acquainted with human nature say, whether it does not bear every mark of true greatness, even exceeding any that ever existed before or since. Jesus appears to have been free from every human weakness, and to have been actuated by every sentiment that is justly entitled to the denomination of *great*; as being remote from common attainments, and arising from the greatest comprehension of mind, which is only acquired by just and enlarged views of things, respecting alike God and man, this life and another.

To persons of sufficient knowledge and candid reflection, this consideration affords satisfactory proof of the truth of Christianity. The evangelists were not men who were capable of devising such a character as this, or of inventing a series of actions and discourses indicating such a character.

* See *Acts* i. 7, Vol. XIII. pp. 388, 389.

† See Vol. XIII. p. 389.

It is a great *unique*, of which they could not have formed any conception.* And if such, indeed, was the character of Jesus, the question to the philosophical inquirer is, How could it have been formed? For so remarkable an effect must have had an adequate cause. The answer is obvious. It could only have arisen from the firmest persuasion, in the mind of Jesus, of a divine mission, and, consequently, of a great future reward, which would abundantly overbalance all the sufferings of this life.

Such an uniform propriety of conduct, free from all inconsistency and extravagance, equally excludes the ideas of *enthusiasm*, or a heated imagination. If any man was ever in his *right mind*, it was Jesus. No person, in his own right mind, can peruse his history, with the least degree of attention, and think otherwise. The only conclusion, therefore, from these premises, viz. that he actually had a divine mission, must be adopted. On this supposition, every thing in the history, extraordinary as it is, was perfectly natural. With such views and assurances as his history ascribes to Jesus, many other men would have acted as he did. His conduct requires no peculiarity of constitution. They are *situations* that chiefly make all men to be what they are; and the peculiar and extraordinary circumstances in which Jesus was placed, will account for his being that great and extraordinary character which the evangelical history represents him to have been. No impostor could have spoken and acted as Jesus did, and have preserved such an uniform dignity, joined with the truest simplicity of character, through the whole of his public life, and the trying scenes of his sufferings and death. It is not one transaction, but a series of transactions, not one speech, but a series of speeches, intermixed with the events of which the history consists, that are to be explained, and certainly the subject is deserving of the most serious consideration.

* "What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind, what subtilty, what truth in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation? Where could Jesus learn, among his competitors, that pure and sublime morality, of which he only hath given us both precept and example? Shall we suppose the Evangelic History a mere fiction? Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty without obviating it. It is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the Gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero." Rousseau's "Letter to the Archbishop of Paris," 1763, p. 63.

DISCOURSE III.

THE DOCTRINE OF JESUS RESPECTING MORALS.

TITUS ii. 11—14:

The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

PART I.

I HAVE shewn that the great object of the whole scheme of revelation, *Jewish* and *Christian*, was to inculcate good *morals*, or the due regulation of men's passions and affections, with a view to their good conduct in life; that every thing of a positive or ceremonial nature, delivered by *Moses* or by *Christ*, was merely subservient to this great end, being always represented as in themselves of no value whatever in the sight of God; and, that even the holding and professing these religions, on the fullest evidence of their truth, would be so far from being of any avail to men with respect to a future state, that if it do not lead to a virtuous life, it will greatly aggravate their condemnation, since they had been possessed of an important means of improvement, and an incitement to virtue, and had not made the proper use of it.

As, in this set of *Discourses*, I propose to bring into view the most important particulars of the gospel history, I shall now consider the *morality* that Jesus taught, and his manner of teaching it. But I would previously observe, that the instructions of Jesus were not delivered systematically. He did not propose to give regular lectures on the different branches of morals, in any particular order; as for example, respecting God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves, or any other equally formal. All his instructions were drawn from him by the circumstances in which he was. He well knew

how, and what, the people had been taught, and what farther and better instruction they needed; and as particular occasions gave a propriety and force to what he said, he gave it them. And, in general, he was led from some present object or occurrence to say what was most pertinent and striking: a method which was certainly calculated to make the deepest and most lasting impression. This naturally arose from all his teaching being given in the way of conversation, as different persons, or companies, came in his way. And, besides healing the diseases of all who applied to him, he generally took the opportunity of saying what would be useful to them in a moral respect, tending to cure the diseases of the mind, which are infinitely more dangerous than those of the body.

But to give a clearer idea of the excellent morals that Jesus taught, and the stress that he laid upon them, I shall give a comprehensive view of all his instructions on this important subject; beginning with his observations of a more general nature, relating to the whole duty of man, and then proceeding to the consideration of particular virtues, those on which he laid more than usual stress; that we may know both, in general, what is required of us as Christians, and what particular virtues we are more especially expected to excel in.

Jesus having nothing materially *new* to teach, the whole of the moral law having been delivered by *Moses and the prophets*, whose writings contained the purest morality; he, in general, only reminded his hearers of their obligation to attend to *them*. Thus, when the rich young man applied to him to know what he should do to obtain *eternal life*, he replied without hesitation, (*Matt. xix. 17—19.*) “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” Being again asked what commandments, he said, “Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness; honour thy father and thy mother: and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Also, when he was inveighing with just severity against the conduct of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, he nevertheless said, (*Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.*) “The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works, for they say, and do not.”* He did not set himself to oppose their teaching any farther than they cor-

* See Vol. XIII. p. 291.

rupted the doctrine of Moses and the prophets, or set it aside by their traditions.

Jesus makes the keeping his commandments, which were the same with those of God, the evidence and measure of our love to him. *John* xiv. 21 : “ He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him.” *John* xv. 10 : “ If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love ; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” Again, he says, (*ver.* 14,) “ Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Agreeably to this, when he was told that his *mother* and his *brethren* were inquiring for him, as he was teaching the people, he said, (*Matt.* xii. 48—50,) “ Who is my mother, and who are my brethren ?” Then, pointing to his disciples, he said, “ Behold my mother and my brethren, for whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, or sister, or mother.” Also when a woman, struck with admiration of him, exclaimed, (*Luke* xi. 27, 28,) “ Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked ;” he said, “ Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” And when the *Seventy* on their return from their mission, are said to have *rejoiced* ; saying to Jesus, (*Luke* x. 17,) “ Yea, even the *demons* are subject to us through thy name ;” he replied, [*ver.* 20,] “ Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you : but, rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

Speaking, in his *Sermon on the Mount*, of men’s general principles and views, and recommending to his hearers an attention to their interest in a future world, in preference to that in this, he said, (*Matt.* vi. 22, 23,) “ The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single,” or clear, “ thy whole body *will* be full of light ; but if thine eye be evil,” or disordered, “ thy whole body *will* be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !” That is, if men’s moral principles, if conscience, which should be the guide of life, be erroneous, they can never be set right. The two general views and objects of pursuit, the favour of God, and that of man, a treasure in heaven, and upon earth, he observes, are incompatible, and in many cases the one must be sacrificed to the other. For, he adds, (*ver.* 24,) “ No man can serve two masters,” but must “ hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

As an encouragement to the practice of virtue, Jesus, following *Moses and the prophets*, always represented the Divine Being as ready to shew mercy to all the truly penitent. When a woman, who had probably been a prostitute, to shew her contrition, stood at his feet behind him as he was at dinner, (*Luke vii. 38.*) “And began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them,” he said to the Pharisee, who was displeased at his permitting her to do this, [*ver. 47.*] “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven.” And then, turning to her, he said, [*ver. 48.*] “Thy sins are forgiven.” To a woman taken in adultery, who had been brought to him with a view to ensnare him, by the sentence that he should pass upon her, he only said, (*John viii. 11.*) “Go, and sin no more;” implying, that in that case, she would find favour. When he was censured for going to the house of *Zaccheus*, who was a publican, and perhaps (for it is not certain)* had been guilty of extortion, as many of his profession were, but said, (*Luke xix. 8.*) “Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man, I restore him four-fold: Jesus said unto him,” [*vers. 9, 10.*] “This day is salvation come to this house—for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Jesus illustrated this consoling and important doctrine by the fine parable of the Prodigal Son, who, when he returned to his father, after living in great profligacy, and spending all his fortune in riotous living, was most kindly received by him. The father, as soon as he “saw him,” (*Luke xv. 20.*) even “when he was yet a great way off, ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him,” and made great rejoicing on the occasion. Also the willingness of the Divine Being to receive all who come to him with proper dispositions of mind, Jesus illustrated by the parable of the king who made a marriage for his son; who, when those who were first invited, refused to go, bade his servants, (*Matt. xxii. 8, 9.*) to go into the highway, and invite as many as they could find, and refused none but one, who, in contempt of the entertainment, sat dawn without a wedding garment, such being always furnished by the master of the house.

With what liberality the Divine Being will reward those who are faithful and active in his service, Jesus illustrated,

* See, on *Luke xix. 8.*, Vol. XIII. p. 271.

(*Luke* xix. 12,) by the parable of a nobleman who went into a distant country to receive a kingdom, and before he set out, delivered to each of his ten servants a pound, that they might make the best use they could of it against his return ; when, to one of them who had by trading with it gained *ten pounds*, he said, [*ver.* 17,] “ Well, thou good servant : because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities ; ” and to him who had gained *five pounds*, he gave authority over *five cities*.

The patience with which the Divine Being will wait for the improvement that men may make of his gifts, Jesus illustrated by the parable of a man who had a fig-tree, (*Luke* xiii. 6,) which, having yielded no fruit in three years, he had determined to cut down ; but on the intercession of the keeper of his garden, he spared it one year more.

That the most excellent instructions will be lost upon some persons, though they will be improved by others, Jesus illustrated by the *parable of the sower*, (*Matt.* xiii. 3,) some of whose seed fell on the high-way, some upon stony ground, some among thorns, all which produced nothing, and some on good ground, which produced abundantly.

The superior obligation of those who enjoy superior advantages, not only to be virtuous themselves, but to be preachers of virtue to others, Jesus expressed in strong and beautiful figures in his *Sermon on the Mount* ; when, addressing his disciples, some of whom were to be his apostles, he compared them (*Matt.* v. 13, 14) to “ the salt of the earth,” and “ the light of the world ; ” observing, that men did not light candles, and put them under a cover, but on candlesticks, that all in the house might be benefited by the light they gave. In like manner he added, [*ver.* 16,] “ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

2. Jesus did not fail, with great faithfulness, to apprise his disciples of the difficulties of a truly virtuous conduct, especially in times of persecution, such as he foresaw were approaching, and therefore he exhorted them to exert the greatest resolution, watchfulness, and perseverance ; making use, as he frequently did, of very strong figurative language for that purpose. Thus, in his discourse on the Mount, he said, (*Matt.* v. 29, 30,) and also on another occasion, (*Matt.* xviii. 8,) that if a man’s *right hand*, or his *foot*, should offend him, that is, lead him into sin, he should cut it off ; and if it was even his *right eye*, he should *pluck it out* ;

since, though they should never be restored to him, it would be better for him to *enter into life* without them, than to be *cast into hell* with them.

That his faithful disciples would be exposed to the most grievous persecution, Jesus never concealed from them, but he endeavoured to prepare their minds by proper considerations, for it. After he had foretold his own sufferings, and *Peter*, at that time expecting advancement in his kingdom, probably with very little hazard to himself, said, "Be it far from thee, O Lord," Jesus replied, (*Matt. xvi. 23.*) "Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offence unto me. For thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Then turning to his disciples in general, he said, [*ver. 24.*] "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

When he gave his instructions to the twelve apostles, previous to their mission, during his life, but with a farther view to their more important mission, after his death, he said, (*Matt. x. 16, 17.*) "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.—Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye *will* be brought before governors and kings for my sake." [*Vers. 21, 22.*]: "The brother *will* deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and children *will* rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death; and ye *will* be hated of all men for my name's sake."

In his most affectionate conversation with his apostles, a short time before his death, he again said, (*John xvi. 2.*) "They *will* put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service." [*Ver. 20.*]: "Verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice."

To give an idea of the difficulty of a truly virtuous course, especially in such times as were before them, he represented the number of those who would adhere to it in those circumstances, as small, compared with that of those who would desert it. *Matt. vii. 13, 14.*: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat;" but "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it;" the great bulk of mankind being governed by views of present ease, pleasure, or advantage; while the faithful servants of God will forego every thing in life, and even life itself, rather

than disobey his commands, or violate the dictates of their consciences.

But at the same time that Jesus apprized his disciples of the difficulties to which their adherence to him would expose them, he did not fail to administer to them sufficient consolation and encouragement. In his discourse on the mount he said, (*Matt. v. 10—12*), “Blessed are they *who* are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.”

When, in his discourse before their mission, he apprized his apostles of the difficulties they would meet with, he added, (*Matt. x. 22*), “But he that endureth to the end, shall be saved.” In the conversation before his death, he said, (*John xiv. 1—3*), “Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” He further said, (*xv. 18*), “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me, before it hated you.” [*Ver. 20*]: “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” When he told them, [*xvi. 20*], as mentioned before, that *they should be sorrowful*, but that *the world would rejoice*, he added, “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” [*Ver. 33*]: “In the world ye shall have tribulation; but, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Lest encouragement alone should not be sufficient, Jesus endeavoured to overcome one fear by another and a greater. Addressing the apostles previous to their mission, he said, (*Luke xii. 4, 5*), “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear Him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea I say unto you, fear him.” He also said, (*Matt. x. 32, 33*), “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

3. Jesus urged in the strongest manner the necessity of *watchfulness*, as well as of fortitude, especially from the con-

sideration of the uncertainty of the time of his *second* coming, and of the judgment that will follow it, which, with respect to us all, is the same with the time of our death, an event equally uncertain; since between that and the resurrection, nothing will intervene that we shall be sensible of. Having delivered his prophecy concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the end of the world, or the conclusion of the present state of things, when he should return to raise the dead and judge the world, which he represented as what would come very unexpectedly, he said, (*Matt.* xxiv. 42,) "Watch, therefore, for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come." To enforce this exhortation, he added the parable of the faithful and wise servant, who, when his master, after any absence, returned ever so unexpectedly, was always found in his place, ready to receive him, and attend upon him; and also that of the ten virgins, who went to meet a bridegroom, five of whom were wise, and five foolish, not having provided a sufficient quantity of oil for their lamps.

4. Though Jesus urged the greatest fortitude in the cause of truth and of a good conscience, and declared the necessity of men's giving up their lives rather than infringe upon their rights, and he shewed them an example of this heroic conduct in himself, in submitting to a painful death, when it was in his power to have avoided it; he did not act the part of a wild enthusiast, who set no value on life and the enjoyments of it. On the contrary, he recommended to his disciples the greatest prudence in the conduct of themselves, as well as with respect to the propagation of truth. When he sent the Twelve out to preach, he exhorted them, (*Matt.* x. 16,) to be "wise as serpents," as well as "harmless as doves." He bade them [*ver.* 17] "beware of men," and when they were *persecuted in one city*, to "flee to another." [*Ver.* 23.]

When he was apprehended by the officers of the high-priest, he did not insist upon his disciples continuing with him, at the risk of sharing his fate; but advised, and favoured, their escape. For, from his saying to the officers, (*John* xviii. 8,) "If ye seek me, let these go their way," it is not improbable that their orders were to apprehend them as well as him.*

Jesus was so far from being an advocate for the extreme of rigour with respect to moral conduct, that he exposed

* See, on *Mark* xiv. 51, Vol. XIII. p. 340.

himself to censure for the freedom with which he lived; making no scruple to go to entertainments, and neglecting such fastings as the *Pharisees*, and even *John the Baptist*, prescribed to their followers; so that his enemies said he was, (*Matt. xi. 19.*) “a *glutton* and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” He likewise exposed himself to censure for allowing his disciples to pluck ears of corn on the *Sabbath* day, and for performing many of his beneficial miracles on that day.

When he was asked, (*Matt. ix. 14.*) why the disciples of *John* and of the *Pharisees* fasted, and his did not, he said, [*vers. 15—17.*] that it would be time enough for them to fast, when he should be taken from them, and intimated that they were not as yet prepared for such severity; that such rigid conduct would be as unsuitable to their state, as the mending “an old garment” with “new cloth,” or putting “new wine” into “old *leathern* bottles.”

Jesus likewise gave a lesson of prudence to his disciples, when he directed them not to obtrude their instructions where they were not likely to be well received; since they would by that means only expose themselves to insult, without doing any good. This he happily expressed in what was probably a well-known proverb,* (*Matt. vii. 6.*) “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

5. The virtue that Jesus taught was far from being of a superficial kind. According to him, real virtue has its seat in the heart, and then necessarily shews itself in the life and conversation. One of the blessings which he pronounced in his first discourse on the Mount clearly expressed this. *Matt. v. 8*: “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.” When other teachers had contented themselves with forbidding murder, he said, (*ver. 22.*) we must not be angry with our brother “without a cause,” since this might lead to every outrage and even murder itself; and far from committing adultery, men must beware how they look on women, [*ver. 28.*] to lust after them, since that may be said to be committing adultery in the heart; and if indulged, may lead to the outward criminal action.†

According to the excellent maxims of Jesus, if the heart be right, the conduct will be so too. *Matt. vii. 17*: “Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree

* See Vol. XIII. p. 87, Note §.

† See *ibid.* pp. 77, 78.

bringeth forth evil fruit." *Luke* vi. 43: "Of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes." *Matt.* xii. 35: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure" (of his heart) "bringeth forth evil things." When he was censured for not washing before dinner, he said, (*Matt.* xv. 11,) "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man;" and explaining himself on the subject, he said, (*vers.* 18—20,) "Those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands, defileth not a man."

Agreeably to these sound principles, when he was asked what was "the great commandment in the law," he answered, (*Matt.* xxii. 37—40,) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." For, these principles prevailing in the heart will lead to the practice of every virtue.

There is no vice that Jesus more frequently, or more vehemently inveighed against, than that of *hypocrisy*, with which the *Pharisees* were chargeable. In his first discourse he said, (*Matt.* vi. 1—6,) "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven.—When thou doest thine alms,—let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father, *who* seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, be not as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.—But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." In the same discourse he assured his hearers that no personal relation to himself, nor even the power of working miracles in his name, would supply the want of real virtue. *Matt.* vii. 21—23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father *who* is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out demons, and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Jesus's reproaches of the *Pharisees*, for their hypocrisy, even savour of asperity and rudeness. For, on no occasion did he spare them; regardless of the effects of their resentment, which by this means he was sure to incur, provided he warned the people against their vices. He said to them, (*Luke xi. 39*), "Ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." He also said, (*John xii. 43*), "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." He compared them (*Matt. xxiii. 27*) to "whited sepulchres, which appeared beautiful *without*, but are within, full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." He also compared them to *graves*, so concealed that men in walking fell into them. *Luke xi. 44*: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them."

He particularly censured them for preferring their traditions to the positive commands of God; "but in vain," says he, (*Matt. xv. 9*), "do they worship *him*, teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men." But the most severe of his invectives against them was pronounced in the presence of the common people, in the Temple, a few days before his death; when he began with exhorting the people, (*Matt. xxiii. 3—5*), to "observe and do" what they taught from Moses, but not to do "after their works;" for, said he, "they say, and do not. They bind heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers; but all their works they do to be seen of men," loving, [*ver. 7*], "to be called of men *Rabbi, Rabbi*." They "shut up," he said, [*ver. 13*], "the kingdom of heaven against men; neither *going in themselves*, nor *suffering others to go in*. [*Vers. 14, 15*]: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." [*Vers. 23, 24*]: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye

pay tithes of mint, and annise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and *fidelity*.—Ye blind guides, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.” It is not possible to express indignation, which, according to *Josephus*, the Jewish historian of those times, was very just, in a stronger manner than this.

6. The virtue that Jesus more particularly recommended was the reverse of hypocrisy and ostentation, viz. *humility*, or not wishing to appear more than we really are, and as the apostle says, [*Rom. xii. 3.*] *not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think*, but to “be clothed with humility.” [*1 Pet. v. 5.*] In the *Old Testament*, and especially in the *Psalms*, pride and arrogance, leading to a contempt of the laws of God, as well as those of men, is generally mentioned as synonymous to wickedness in general; and meekness and humility, the character opposite to it, as synonymous to righteousness, being connected with, and leading to, almost every other virtue. Jesus began his first discourse with pronouncing blessings on persons of this character, in three different branches or shades of it. *Matt. v. 3—5*: “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.”

The *pride* of the *Pharisees* was as conspicuous as their hypocrisy; and Jesus, in his parable of *the Pharisee* and *the Publican*, who went to the Temple to pray, represented the former, who boasted of his virtues, in an odious light; and the latter, who expressed nothing but self-reproach, in an amiable one. He stood “afar off,” (*Luke xviii. 13.*) and without daring to “lift up his eyes unto heaven,” only “smote upon his breast,” and said, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Jesus concluded this instructive parable with saying to his audience, (*ver. 14.*) “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For,” he added, “every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted;” an observation which it is remarkable he made on several other occasions, as in his invective against the *Pharisees* in the Temple, quoted before, (*Matt. xxiii. 12.*) and again when at the house of a chief Pharisee, he observed, (*Luke xiv. 7—10.*) how the company chose *the chief seats*, and he advised them rather to take the lowest places, when, if they were thought worthy of it, they might be advanced.

Jesus more than once checked the ambition which he

perceived in his apostles, who were desirous of the chief offices in his kingdom. As they were at one time disputing on this subject, (*Mark ix. 35.*) “he called the twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.” He then, [*ver. 36.*] “took a child and set him in the midst of them,” and said, (*Matt. xviii. 3, 4.*) “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” When, after this, the two sons of *Zebedee*, (*James and John.*) requested to have the chief seats in his kingdom, he “called them unto him, and said,” (*Matt. xx. 25—28.*) “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you. But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

He took another opportunity of recommending the unambitious temper and disposition of young children, when the parents of some of them brought them to him, and requested (*Matt. xix. 13.*) “that he *would* put his hands on them, and pray.” His disciples rebuking those that brought them, he said, [*ver. 14.*] “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” In this view did he recommend his own disposition to the imitation of his disciples, when he said, (*Matt. xi. 28—30.*) “Come unto me all ye that are *wearry* and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” He also recommended humility, as well as benevolence, when he washed his disciples’ feet, and said, (*John xiii. 13—15.*) “Ye call me Master, and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”

PART II.

7. Jesus, as I have observed, was far from proposing to discuss at large, or systematically, the whole duty of man. He only made such observations, and gave such instructions

as particular occasions called for. But he had frequent occasion to give very important instructions concerning the two great heads of moral duty, as it respects God and man; and his advices and exhortations on these articles are most important and excellent.

I have already observed that Jesus cautioned his hearers against ostentation in prayer, directing them, when they prayed, to retire into their closets, and, shutting the door, to pray to their Father who seeth in secret. At the same time he cautioned them against the clamorous repetitions of the Heathens, who expected to be heard for their much speaking; saying, (*Matt. vi. 8.*) “Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” He also then gave them a concise and most excellent form of prayer, expressing more especially an entire devotedness to the will of God, and a desire that his kingdom may come, and praying for the forgiveness of our sins, as we forgive others. He recommended, however, perseverance in prayer, and a patient waiting for divine favours, from the parable of the unjust judge, who gave no attention to a poor widow who applied to him for justice, till he was wearied by her importunity; saying, (*Luke xviii. 7.*) “Shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?”

The duty of confidence in God, while we are careful to do his will, Jesus urged in the strongest manner, though what he said on this subject chiefly respected the case of his immediate disciples, who in their mission to preach the gospel might depend upon the extraordinary providence of God, for the supply of all their real wants; but in some degree the observations are applicable to the case of all persons.

Some of the strongest language of this kind occurs in the discourse on the Mount; when he said, (*Matt. vi. 25—34.*) “Take no thought,” or rather, be not anxious, “what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink;” or *wherewithal ye shall be clothed.* “Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.” Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not clothed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not

much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

In the same discourse Jesus bade his disciples ask with confidence for whatever they wanted, assuring them that it would be given to them. *Matt.* vii. 7: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" observing that even an earthly parent will not mock a child, with giving him hurtful things for useful ones. "If ye, then," says he, [*ver.* 11,] "being evil, give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father *who* is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!" In his instructions to the *Twelve* before their mission, he discoursed much in the same strain; bidding them make no provision for their journey, (*Matt.* x. 9, 10,) or even think beforehand, [*ver.* 19,] what they should say when they should "be brought before governors and kings;" that nothing could befall them without the will of their heavenly Father, and that "the very hairs of their heads were all numbered. [*Ver.* 30.]

The true spirit of piety is inculcated by Jesus in the *parable* of the servant waiting upon his master, even after returning from the most laborious works in the field, before he himself sat down to eat; which he concluded with saying, (*Luke* xvii. 10,) "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all the things that *shall be* commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done *only* that which it was our duty to do." We are in no case to lay claim to any *merit* with our Maker, but to acknowledge every thing, both the action and the disposition, to be the gift of God.

The liberality of the Divine Being in bountifully rewarding the services that he requires of us, Jesus teaches us in the *parable* of the householder, who hired labourers for his vineyard, at different hours of the day; when, having agreed with them for a certain sum, he paid them all alike, though some of them had worked only one hour, and others the whole day; at the same time that he reproved the envious disposition of the latter, on account of the seeming inequality in the distribution of the Divine bounty. For when one

of these complained that, though they had borne the burden and heat of the day, they received no more than those who had worked only one hour, their employer answered, (*Matt.* xx. 13, 15,) “Friend, I do thee no wrong.—Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?” It is to be observed that those labourers who had worked the least had stood all day to be hired, though nobody had engaged them, and they went as soon as they were called; so that they had shewn a perfectly good disposition, a willingness to labour, which is all that God looks to.

Lastly, Jesus inculcated a reverence for God, by reproving the practice of light and profane swearing in common conversation, saying, in his discourse on the Mount, (*Matt.* v. 33—37,) “Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is his foot-stool: neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thine head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be Yea, yea, Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.” It is evident from the language here used, and the oaths here mentioned, that the direction only relates to oaths in common conversation. Jesus himself answered upon oath when he was adjured by the living God, to say whether he was the *Messiah* or not.*

8. No person ever taught the duty of *benevolence* to so great an extent as Jesus; so that he was far from making any duty that we owe to God, to supersede that which is due to man. He rather made the one, the evidence and the measure of the other. If he made the first and greatest commandment to be the loving God with all the heart, the next he said was *like unto it*, and this was to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Though Jesus never said any thing to encourage idleness, but recommended labour and industry, and in his *parable* condemned the *slothful servant*; he always represented the helpless poor as proper objects of kindness and charity. When he reprov'd the *Pharisees* for their superstitious observance of ceremonies and traditions, as that of always washing before they ate, he said, (*Luke* xi. 41,) “Give alms

* *Matt.* xxvii. 63. See Vol. XIII. p. 79.

of such things as you have, and all things *will be* clean unto you." When the rich young man asked him what he should do to be perfect, he answered, (*Matt. xix. 21*), "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor—and come and follow me."

He commended generosity on public as well as on private occasions, when he praised "a poor widow" for giving her "two mites" towards the repairs of the Temple. For, seeing (*Mark xii. 43, 44*) "how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich, cast in much," he said to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than they all.—For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she, of her want, did cast in all that she had."

Jesus more than once cautioned his hearers against *covetousness*, and, in preference to our concern for the things of this life, recommended an attention to those of another, to the kingdom of God and his righteousness. He advised to lay up treasure in heaven, and not upon earth. Not that he meant that we should lay up nothing here. For, absolutely to assert one thing, and to deny another, is only a Jewish mode of making a comparison between them, and declaring a preference of one to the other. Thus when God is said to have *loved Jacob* and to have *hated Esau*, the meaning only is, that he gave the preference to *Jacob*, and that only with respect to the things of this world.*

When Jesus was applied to for the purpose of directing a division to be made of an estate between two brothers, which he with great prudence declined, he said, for the general instruction of his audience, (*Luke xii. 15*), "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life," that is, the enjoyment of it, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth:" and to shew them the absurdity of heaping up riches, he added the *parable* of a man whose grounds having yielded a great abundance, proposed to pull down his barns and build larger, and to say to himself, that having goods laid up for many years, he would take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry; when God had determined that he should not outlive that night. *Ver. 20*: "God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy *life* shall be required of thee; then, whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So" added Jesus, "is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."

The great care that it behoves men to take to prevent

* See, on *Mal. i. 3, Rom. ix. 13*, Vol. XIV. p. 285, Note*.

quarrels and animosity, which contribute so much to embitter the cup of human life, Jesus taught in a manner peculiarly emphatical, when, in his first discourse, after speaking of the guilt of being angry with our brother, without a cause, he said, (*Matt.* v. 23, 24,) "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift;" signifying that even the duty we owe to God is to be postponed, when the peace of society requires it.

Candour with respect to the faults of others Jesus taught by a very significant and striking figure, when, in the same discourse, he said, (*Matt.* vii. 1—5,) "Judge not, that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam *that is in* thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote *that is in* thy brother's eye." How pertinent and forcible is this illustration of an important duty, respecting both ourselves and others! With the same view, to promote harmony, and uninterrupted goodwill among men, Jesus, in this discourse, pronounced a blessing on those who should interpose to prevent or remove differences. *Matt.* v. 9: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." And when he foretold, (*Matt.* xviii. 7,) that *offences* would come, he added, "but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

In order to preserve peace and mutual good-will, we must not be inexorable when we have been offended, but forgive, and overlook the faults of others, whenever they shew a penitent disposition. And Jesus was peculiarly copious and earnest in his injunctions on this head. In his first discourse he said, (*Matt.* v. 7,) "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." He even directs us, though the offended party, to take pains to promote the desirable purpose of reconciliation, and to use great prudence and address in doing it; saying, (*Matt.* xviii. 15, 16,) "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go, and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take

with thee one or two more ;” and we are not to renounce all friendship with him, unless he refuse to hear “ the church,” or the public congregation, who shall approve our conduct, and censure his ; which will shew that he was incorrigibly injurious, and not worthy of our friendship.

When *Peter*, alluding probably to some maxims of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, asked Jesus, (*Matt.* xviii. 21,) how often he should forgive an offending brother, whether “ seven times ;” he answered, [*ver.* 22,] “ I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven ;” and upon this he recited the *parable* of the king who forgave one of his servants a debt of “ ten thousand talents ;” but afterwards insisted upon the payment of it, when he heard that this very servant, who had been so greatly favoured, was inexorable to the intreaties of a fellow-servant, who owed him only “ an hundred pence ;” adding, (*ver.* 35,) “ So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his *brethren* their trespasses.” When he taught his disciples how to pray, he laid particular stress, as we have seen, on this circumstance. For when we pray for the forgiveness of our own sins, we are at the same time to express our readiness to forgive those who trespass against us ; and after he had given his excellent form of prayer, he added, as if this had been that part of it which he thought to be of particular consequence, (*Matt.* vi. 14, 15,) “ For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.” The duty of forgiveness, after the example of the Divine compassion to returning penitents, is likewise finely illustrated in the *parable of the Prodigal Son*, that was mentioned before.

Jesus was particularly careful to repress every thing that savoured of a spirit of revenge and persecution. When two of his disciples, *James* and *John*, were provoked at the behaviour of the inhabitants of some village of the *Samaritans*, who refused to entertain them, and proposed to call for fire from heaven to destroy them, he turned and rebuked them ; saying, (*Luke* ix. 55, 56,) “ Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” And when he foretold, in his *parable of the tares and the wheat*, that corruptions would be introduced into his doctrine, he advised forbearance in the correction of them, and to leave all judgment to God, who would administer it at the proper time. For when the servants of the person who had sowed the *wheat* observed the *tares* among it, and asked him

whether they should not go and pull them up, he said, (*Matt.* xiii. 29, 30,) "Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together, first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn."

With a view to enforce the duty of compassion, forgiveness, generosity, and, in short, every social duty, Jesus, in his first discourse, delivered this universal, most excellent and useful maxim, being capable of the easiest application. *Matt.* vii. 12: "All things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." This precept comprehends every branch of the duty that man owes to man.

Though we are not required to *forgive*, except in case of repentance, we are to entertain *good-will* towards all persons, even our declared enemies. This is one of the most sublime precepts of the gospel, and which Jesus enforced by the example of God, the universal Parent. *Matt.* v. 43—48: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies. Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father *who* is in heaven. For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father *who* is in heaven, is perfect."

In agreement with this, Jesus recommended a *passive* disposition as the reverse of a revengeful one, not indeed inviting, but not resisting injuries. *Matt.* v. 38—40: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him take thy cloak also." But that this language, which has the air of a proverbial manner of speaking, was only meant to indicate the general disposition, and was not intended to be understood literally, is evident from our Saviour's own conduct. For when he

was smitten on his trial before the high-priest, he did not invite any farther abuse, but very properly remonstrated with the person who smote him. [*John xviii. 23.*]

If Jesus recommended placability and kindness to enemies, we cannot be surprised that he should recommend to his disciples a peculiarly strong affection for each other, as standing in an equal relation to himself, having common principles, views, and expectations. In his most affectionate discourse to them, a little before his death, he said, (*John xiii. 34.*) "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another;" adding, [*ver. 35.*] "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another." He repeated the same afterwards, (*John xv. 12, 14.*) "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you;" and what command could be obeyed with more satisfaction than this, enjoining mutual love?

Farther, to enforce this duty of mutual love, Jesus represented any act of kindness done to a disciple of his as done to himself, and to God also. *Matt. x. 40*: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." And, in his account of the proceedings of the day of judgment, he considered every act of kindness, or of injury, to a disciple, as done to himself in person. After enumerating various kind offices, which he said the righteous had rendered to him, and their professing their ignorance of them, he says, (*Matt. 25, 40.*) "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye *did* it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye *did* it unto me."

Such, and so excellent, are the morals of the gospel, and surely we must say that they are worthy of a *teacher sent from God*. Nothing so pure, so sublime, or so eminently conducive to human happiness, was ever taught before, at least with so much clearness and force. For all the general maxims, which in reality comprehend all the particulars of the teaching of Jesus, he himself observed were contained in the Law and the prophets, who were before him. It is such instruction as it became the great Parent of mankind to vouchsafe to his rational offspring, who were capable of understanding and applying it; being calculated to advance men to the highest degree of moral excellence, and, consequently, of happiness also; bringing them to a nearer re-

semblance to the all-perfect and ever-blessed God. It is, therefore, such moral instruction as we should expect to come from the wise and kind Parent of mankind, whose views with respect to his intelligent offspring extended beyond the present transitory life, and looked to the most distant futurity. The consideration of it, therefore, furnishes no inconsiderable argument, of an internal nature, for the truth of the revelation which contains it.

Far from finding any such attention to useful morals in the authors of the *Heathen religions*, whoever they were, their customs and rites exhibit the most shocking scenes of indecency, immorality, and cruelty. It was no business of the Heathen priests to teach morality.* There was no provision in any part of the system for instruction of that kind, and when their gods were supposed to be angry, they were to be appeased, if not by human sacrifices, yet by such ceremonies as to all men of sense, must appear perfectly unmeaning, if not exceedingly absurd and ridiculous.†

Mahometanism, though built on the foundation of the Jewish and Christian religions, has nothing of its own to boast of in this or any other respect. Some moral precepts are found in the *Koran*, but they are for the most part of a very general nature, and not particularly dwelt upon; the great object of *Mahomet* appearing to have been little more than to enforce the belief of his own divine mission, for which purpose he promised the rewards of paradise to all who received it, especially if they died fighting in the defence or propagation of it; and threatened the pains of hell to all unbelievers. The former, according to the *Koran*, consist chiefly of sensual pleasures, of the grossest kind, and the latter of literally burning in fire, with other the most

* " 'The priests,' as Mr. Locke observes, 'made it not their business to teach men virtue.'—To the same purpose *Lactantius* observes, that those who taught the worship of the gods, gave no directions as to what related to the regulation of men's manners, and to the conduct of life. *Nihil ibi disseritur, quod proficiat ad mores excolendos, vitamque formandam.* And that among the *Pagans*, philosophy, (or the doctrine of morals,) and the religion of the gods, were entirely distinct, and separated from one another. *Philosophia et religio deorum disjuncta sunt, longèque discreata.* (*Divin. Instit.* Lib. iv. Cap. iii. See also *Augustin. de Civit. Dei*, Lib. ii. Cap. iv., vi. et vii.) *Leland*, C. R., II. p. 35. See Vol. II. p. 82.

† "When the old *Romans* were attacked with a pestilence, they never ascribed their sufferings to their vices, or dreamed of repentance and amendment. They never thought that they were the general robbers of the world, whose ambition and avarice made desolate the earth, and reduced opulent nations to want and beggary. They only created a dictator, (called 'Dictator clavis figendæ causa.' *T. Livii*, L. vii. C. iii.,) in order to drive a nail into a door [of the Temple of Jupiter]; and by that means, they thought that they had sufficiently appeased their incensed deity." *Hume's* "Natural History of Religion," *Dissert.* i. Sect. xiv. 1757, pp. 103, 104. See Vol. II. p. 82.

disgusting circumstances that he could imagine, and that to continue for ever. He saw and represented in a very strong light, the absurdity and impiety of *Polytheism*, both *Heathen* and *Christian*; and his religion has the merit of exposing and overthrowing it in many countries. And, considering the extremely corrupted state of Christianity at the time of its promulgation, it may appear to have had its use. But with respect to *moral instruction*, his system has little merit indeed, and is not to be compared with that of our Scriptures of the *Old* or the *New Testament*.

Since, then, the great object of the religion which we profess is *good morals*; since it is peculiar to it to have this great object; since it holds out the strongest motives to virtue, and the discourses of its Founder contained such excellent instructive lessons on the subject; let it appear by our lives and conversations that we are sensible of this great and singular advantage, and that we are careful to avail ourselves of it. Let us be attentive to cultivate the best dispositions of mind, and exhibit the most exemplary conduct; shewing the most entire devotedness to the will of God, in doing or in suffering, the most unfeigned good-will to men, and the greatest command over our appetites and passions.

More especially professing a religion which has for its more immediate object the revelation of a *future life*, a religion which alone (2 *Tim.* i. 10) brings “life and immortality to light,” let us raise our hearts above this world, and all the vain pursuits of it. Let us be careful to lay up treasure in heaven, where, as our Saviour says, [*Matt.* vi. 20,] “neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal,” and “where *our* treasure is, there *let* our hearts be also.” Let us, as the apostle exhorts, (*Col.* iii. 1, 2,) set our best “affections on things above,—where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;” and may it not be our *condemnation*, (*John* iii. 19,) “that light is come into the world,” but that we have “loved darkness rather than light, because *our* deeds were evil.” Then, having governed our lives by the instructions of Christ, and having copied after his example, when he shall return, and take an account of his servants, we shall be “found of him” (2 *Peter* iii. 14) without spot and blameless,—and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” [1 *John* ii. 28.] Then will he say to us, (*Matt.* xxv. 21,) “Well done, good and faithful *servants*, enter *ye* into the joy of your Lord.”

DISCOURSE IV.

THE DOCTRINE OF A RESURRECTION, AS TAUGHT BY JESUS.

2 TIM. i. 10 :

Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the Gospel.

PART I.

THE most interesting of all subjects to man, who has a sense of the value of his existence, and of the blessings that he enjoys in it, is that of a *future state*; and the most distinguishing circumstance relating to the gospel, is, that in it this great doctrine is taught with the greatest clearness and energy. To announce this doctrine appears to have been the more immediate object of the mission of Jesus, and not that of any of the preceding prophets of whom we have any account.

It can hardly be doubted but that the ancient *Hebrews* were acquainted with the doctrine,* and if so, they must have received it from some particular revelation, though the record of it be now lost; because we find it almost universally believed by the *Jews* in our Saviour's time; and he nowhere intimates that they had embraced it on insufficient authority; for their faith was that of a proper *resurrection of the dead* at some future period, which was very different from that of the Heathen philosophers, who supposed that, strictly speaking, men never die at all; for, that when the body is dissolved, there is another principle, or component part of man, the seat of all his intellectual powers, which remains unaffected by that catastrophe, and which survives not only uninjured, but invigorated; so as to be a gainer by the change; the mortal body having been a real incumbrance and clog to it. And as the whole of consciousness remains with the unembodied spirit, the man, consisting of all his valuable faculties, may be said, according to their principles, to be naturally immortal.

But supposing a man to be properly *dead*, all his powers of body and mind extinct, nothing could have given any

* See Vol. XII. pp. 482—498.

person the least hope of his revival but the assurance of the Great Being who made man. This assurance, therefore, the *Hebrews* must have had in some very early age, though we have not at this time any knowledge of it. And what is very remarkable is, that in the writings of *Moses* and the *prophets*, we find nothing positively asserted on the subject, and few, if any, allusions to it, before we come to the book of *Daniel*, to whom a future life is promised by the angel who interpreted his visions: in one of which mention was made (*Dan. xii. 2*) of a time when "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt." The angel concludes with saying, [*ver. 13,*] "But go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."* This very clear language, considered in conjunction with the knowledge the Jews had of the doctrine of a resurrection, in the time of our Saviour, and also between his time and that of *Daniel*, viz. that of the *Maccabees*, leads us to conclude, I think with certainty, that, though little is said of the doctrine, it was known to the *Hebrews*, in the time of *Daniel*, and, therefore, probably in the times prior to his.

It must, however, be acknowledged to be difficult to account for the few and uncertain references to a doctrine of this practical importance, in the earlier books of the *Old Testament*, when the writers appear to have had their minds strongly impressed with a sense of the being and providence of God, and of his purpose to reward virtue and punish vice.

The mission of *Moses* was confined to legislation, and to prophetic denunciations respecting the fate of his nation, in distant ages. In his writings, therefore, we do not much wonder that we find no mention of a resurrection or a future life, or even any allusion to it. It was a subject, no doubt, highly interesting to all men, but not to his countrymen in particular. The same was, in some measure, the case with the other prophets. They all had their specific commissions, and confined themselves to the proper objects of them. But in such compositions as the *Psalms* we might expect some mention of it, notwithstanding the minds of men were then, even more than now, chiefly occupied with the things of this life; so that, though they might believe in a future state, they gave but little attention to it.

* See Vol. XII. pp. 343, 497.

It is, however, observable, that the possession of the *earth*, and of great happiness in it, was promised to the righteous; when it was evidently impossible that it could take place in this life, and, therefore, we naturally look for the fulfilment of this promise in another life; as, (*Psalm xxxvii. 9.*) “Evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.”* [*Ver. 11*]: “The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” [*Ver. 22*]: “Such as be blessed of him, shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him, shall be cut off.” Since there is no appearance of any thing figurative in this language, it is by no means improbable that it refers to a resurrection. Such too is the natural inference from what both *David* and *Solomon* say of a *judgment*, when men will receive according to their works, as *Psalm xcvi. 11, 13*: “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad,—before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth. He *will* judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.”† *Eccles. xii. 14*: “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”‡

Leaving this difficulty, it behoves us, who are Christians, to give particular attention to what our Saviour, who, with respect to us, first clearly announced this great doctrine, says of it. And it is not a little remarkable, that this doctrine should make so distinguished a figure in our Saviour's discourses, so as to give them a quite different air and turn from any thing that we find in the *Old Testament*. And here, I would observe by the way, that had Jesus been an impostor, and wished to pass with the Jews for a prophet, he would naturally have adopted the manner of their ancient prophets. He would have lived as they had lived, dressed as they had dressed, and have discoursed just as they had discoursed, on the same or similar subjects, and in the same manner. But Jesus was a great original, both with respect to the matter and the manner of his teaching. Both were peculiar to himself. And there was nothing more characteristic of his teaching, than the stress that he laid upon the doctrine of a resurrection and a future state. This was the great burden of his preaching, to which he constantly directed the attention of his hearers.

As the subject is of sufficient importance, I shall, in this

* See Vol. XII. pp. 495, 496; Vol. XIII. (on *Matt. v. 5*) p. 72.

† See Vol. XII. p. 104.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 140.

discourse, collect into one view all that we find in the gospels concerning it; as his express assurance that there will be a resurrection and a future life, that it will be a state of retribution, in which virtue will be rewarded and vice punished; that this will take place at his second coming; the circumstances that shew his own firm persuasion concerning it; his exhortations to virtue founded upon it; and, lastly, such particulars as we are able to collect concerning our condition in it.

1. At what time Jesus received his instructions to preach this doctrine, or his commission in general, of which this makes a principal part, does not appear; but it was probably in the Wilderness, after his baptism, and before his temptation;* though it is also probable that he had intimations, more or less clear, of his being destined to fill some important office, in the former period of his life. But whenever he published the doctrine of a resurrection, it was an event that was to take place at his second coming; and under God, he was himself to effect this great revolution, and of this the Jews certainly had no suspicion.

That the resurrection will be coincident with the coming of their *Messiah*, at the final settlement of the *Israelites* in their own country, in what are called the latter days, is what the *Jews* at this day believe; but that it will be accomplished by the *Messiah*, they do not expect. This, therefore, would be a doctrine entirely new to the *Jews*; and considering in how low and humble a character Jesus appeared, such a pretension must have seemed exceedingly improbable and revolting. It was, therefore, such as an artful impostor would not have made; because it was not likely to obtain credit, or be of any service to his cause. This power of raising the dead, however, Jesus was careful to observe, was not naturally inherent in him, but what was imparted to him by God, as well as his other extraordinary powers.

The first intimation that Jesus appears to have given of the doctrine of a future life, occurs in his conversation with *Nicodemus*, at the first Passover in his ministry, if there be no mistake, (which I sometimes suspect to be the case,) in placing this event so early. To this *master in Israel* Jesus, alluding to his death and the consequences of it, says, (*John* iii. 14—16,) “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 32, 33.

everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Here is an intimation not only that Jesus would be put to death, but in the mode of crucifixion, being raised from the ground, like the serpent in the Wilderness, which was fastened to a pole, and elevated so as to be seen at a distance. It is, however, clearly expressed in this place, that eternal life would be the prerogative of the true disciples of Christ; though we shall find it stated with sufficient clearness, on several occasions, that this great privilege will not be conferred on the mere believers in Christ, but only on those who to faith in the Gospel, add the practice of its precepts.

As much of the language of Jesus to *Nicodemus* is figurative and obscure, it is possible that the latter did not fully understand what was intimated, though the conversation is imperfectly related, and therefore more might have been said on the subject than we find recorded. *Nicomedus* is not said to have made any remark on this part of the discourse, or to have expressed any doubt with respect to it, as he did with respect to the observation concerning being *born again*. The same doctrine, however, was taught by Jesus to all his disciples, in the plainest language, accompanied with an intimation of the obligation they were under to sacrifice their lives, as he should do his, if the profession of the Gospel should require it; the gift of eternal life, (meaning a happy one,) not being to be expected, except by those who, like himself, should be ready to abandon the present life for the prospect of it. *Matt.* xvi. 24—27: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own *life*; or what shall a man give in exchange for his *life*?† For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." To the same purpose he elsewhere expresses himself as follows: (*John* xii. 25:) "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal."

Of the value of the present life every man is sufficiently

* This verse, and to the 22d, may be the words of the Evangelist, and not of Jesus. (P.) See Vol. XIII. pp. 50, 51.

† See, on ver. 26, Vol. XIII. p. 185.

sensible, all enjoyment, as is here intimated, depending upon it; and in this place the consideration of it is made use of to signify the superior value of eternal life. If men cheerfully sacrifice so much as we see they do to preserve a short and transitory life, like the present, what would they not endure to secure a life that will have no end, if they fully conceived the superior value of it, and believed that it was a life of happiness, instead of one that is frequently embittered with disappointment and distress?

That Jesus had in himself the power of conferring eternal life, he signified in figurative language to the woman of *Samaria*. *John* iv. 10: "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." [*Vers.* 13, 14]: "Whosoever drinketh of this water, *will* thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him *will* be in him a well of water, springing up into *eternal* life." He made use of the same allusion, in teaching the same doctrine to the Jews at Jerusalem. *John* vii. 37, 38: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."*

He intimated the same thing in language equally figurative, in his discourse with the cavilling *Jews* in the synagogue at *Capernaum*, using the comparison of *bread* instead of *water*. *John* vi. 35: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me *will* never hunger, and he that believeth on me *will* never thirst." *Ver.* 39: "This is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." [*Ver.* 49]: "This is the will of *the Father* who sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and *that I should* raise him up at the last day."† [*Ver.* 44]: "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day."‡ [*Ver.* 54]: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." [*Ver.* 58]: "This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna

* See the Author's improved *reading*, Vol. XIII. p. 215.

† See *ibid.* p. 159.

See *ibid.*

and are dead. He that eateth of this bread, shall live for ever."

The same important and interesting doctrine he taught, without any figure, to the Jews in general at Jerusalem. *John* v. 21, 22: "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." [*Vers.* 24—29]: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice; and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life,* and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of *condemnation*." On another occasion he said to them, (*John* viii. 51,) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."

Comparing himself to a shepherd, and his disciples to his sheep, he says, (*John* x. 27—30,) "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none *can* pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one;† that is, to attempt to take them from me is in effect to attempt to take them from him.

That the future life to which Jesus will raise his faithful followers will be properly *eternal*, is taught in the last-quoted passage; though the word in the original is of an indefinite signification, and sometimes only expresses a long period. But in the following passage of the conversation of Jesus with the sister of *Lazarus*, he more expressly says that they *shall never die*. *John* xi. 25, 26: "Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me,

* Here it is evident that the word *life* does not mean simple existence, but a happy life. (P.)

† See Vol. XIII. p. 255.

though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

Indeed, if there was any reason why the lives of good men should be renewed at all, there must be additional reason, when they are renewed, that they be prolonged without end. For, it cannot be doubted but that if a man's virtue stand the test of the trials of this life, it will continue unshaken hereafter. He will be in a state of continual improvement, and better qualified to act any part for which his Maker may design him. He will also become possessed of superior and increasing powers of enjoyment, from the greater comprehension of mind, which by so much experience he cannot fail to acquire, and that without limits.

Farther, that the future life will be without end may be inferred, from its being represented as enjoyed by the virtuous disciples of Christ, in the society of Christ himself; there being the same perfect union between them that subsists between his Father and him. This is expressed with peculiar energy in our Lord's solemn prayer before his death. *John xvii. 2, 3*: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."* [*Vers. 20, 23*]: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also *who* shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us. That the world may believe that thou hast sent me, and *that* the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; † that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Again he says, in continuation, [*ver. 24,*] "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me," including, no doubt, all his disciples, "be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

This is more fully expressed with respect to the apostles themselves, when he was endeavouring to comfort them on his temporary separation from them. *John xiv. 1—3*: "Let not your heart be troubled:—believe in God, believe

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 332, 333.

† See *ibid.* p. 334.

also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you.* And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." That Jesus himself will ever cease to exist, though his proper *kingdom* is destined to have an end, will hardly be supposed, and it seems equally certain that the existence of all his faithful disciples will be of the same extent with his own.

I shall conclude this head, with observing, that it is evident from every thing that Jesus said on the subject of a future state, that he did not infer the doctrine by any kind of argumentation whatever. He did not reason like *Plato*, but taught it as one having authority from God so to do. He never advanced any thing concerning the natural reasonableness or probability of the thing; whereas an impostor would have endeavoured to make his new doctrine appear as plausible as he could, and, by every mode of address, to recommend it to his hearers. But in Jesus we see no art of this kind. What he received from the Father, that he delivered unto men, without being at all solicitous about the manner in which they received it.

2. That Jesus not only taught the doctrine of a resurrection with respect to mankind in general, and the part that he himself would have in effecting it, but really expected it in his own case, appears from several circumstances in his history. I have, on a former occasion, shewn that it is evident that, from the very early part of his public ministry, he expected to suffer a violent death; † and it is no less evident, that he did not apprehend that he should long continue in the state of death, but that he should be raised to life again in a very short time; and that, after being removed from his disciples, he should return in power and great glory, to raise all the dead, and to receive his disciples to himself, when they would remain with him for ever.

It is highly probable that the *transfiguration* of Jesus was intended to encourage him in the view of his approaching sufferings, by giving him a foretaste of the glory with which he would hereafter be invested. *Luke* (ix. 30, 31) says, that "Moses and Elias appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;" and as he also appeared in glory aswell as they, *the fashion of his countenance being changed, and his raiment appearing white*

* See Vol. XIII. p. 313, 314.

† See *supra*, pp. 248—250.

and glittering,* he probably felt the same advantageous change in himself, for the time, that those prophets did, and therefore could not entertain any doubt with respect to it.

But before this, he appeared to be acquainted with the exact time that he was to lie in the grave. For, when the *Pharisees* demanded of him the sign from heaven, mentioned in the prophecy of *Daniel*, he replied, (*Matt.* xii. 39, 40,) “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; but there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet *Jonas*. For as *Jonas* was three days and three nights in the belly of a fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”† Also when he had, in an authoritative manner, cleared the Temple of the buyers and sellers, and was asked by what authority he did it, he answered, [*John* ii. 19,] “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;” referring, as the evangelist says, not to the Temple, but to himself, though at the time he was not so understood.

Discoursing, on the subject of his sufferings, with his disciples, as they were on the way to *Jerusalem*, he said, (*Matt.* xx. 18, 19,) “Behold we go up to *Jerusalem*, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death; and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him;‡ and the third day he shall rise again.”

When he alluded to his death, and the manner of it, in his discourse to the *Greeks*, at the last Passover, it is evident that he did not think that he should remain in the power of death, but that it would be his introduction to a state of glory, and necessary to the success of his gospel in the world. *John* xii. 23, 24: “The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

After Jesus had delivered his remarkable prophecy concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, he added, as an event that was to take place some time after it, (*Matt.* xxiv. 30, 31,) “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven;—and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; and he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and

* *Ver.* 29. See Vol. XIII. pp. 188, 189.

† See, on *Matt.* xii. 38—40, *ibid.* pp. 115, 116.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 268.

they shall gather together his elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*

The whole of his discourse addressed to the apostles a short time before his death, was calculated to comfort them on the idea that his separation from them would only be for a time, and that he would return, and take them to himself.

If Jesus had not had the fullest persuasion of his own resurrection, he could not possibly have gone through the trying scene of his sufferings with so much resignation and composure as he did. But with the prospect of the glory that was reserved for him afterwards, he was able to endure the cross, and make light of the shame of that ignominious death. When he was examined before “the high-priest,” and *adjured* “by the living God,” whether he was the *Messiah* or not, he answered that he was; and added, (*Matt.* xxvi. 64,) “Nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter† shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Agreeably to this, when Jesus was ascending, the angels who stood by, said to those who were present on that occasion, (*Acts* i. 11,) “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, *whom ye see* taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye *see* him go into heaven.”‡

When he was examined before *Pilate*, and appeared in a state of the greatest humiliation, being asked whether he was a king, he acknowledged it, but added, (*John* xviii. 36,) “My kingdom is not of this world.”§ When he was going to the place of crucifixion, and some women were weeping and lamenting over him, he said, (*Luke* xxiii. 28,) “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children;” and when he was about to expire on the cross, the last words that he spoke expressed his faith and confidence in the Divine favour. For, *crying* “with a loud voice,” he said, (*ver.* 46,) “Father, into thy hands I *commit* my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”

After his resurrection we cannot wonder at his confidence with respect to his second coming, for the glorious purpose which he had so often mentioned. To this he alluded when he said to *Peter*, who, after being informed of some circum-

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 296, 297.

† See *ibid.* p. 343.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 389.

§ See *ibid.* p. 348.

stances relating to his own death, inquired concerning the fate of *John*, (*John* xxi. 22,) "If I will, that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

This full confidence which Jesus evidently had of his rising after death to a state of immortal life and great glory, is altogether inconsistent with his being an impostor. There is no imaginable ground of this great confidence, but in the fullest persuasion of his having a divine mission, and consequently, that every thing that he had announced would be realised. With this persuasion he was able to bear all the sufferings, and even the torturing death, to which he was destined; but without it he certainly would, if he had been a man like other men, have abandoned any prospect of advantage that an impostor could possibly have had. Admitting that an impostor might, with a view to posthumous fame, (which in the case of Jesus it was impossible that he should have had,) have submitted to a speedy, and not very painful death, as by the axe, or the halter, the feeling of torture and a lingering death, would have had the effect of extorting a confession; and a person might continue a long time nailed to a cross, and yet be recovered on being taken from it. But Jesus never shrunk from any feeling of pain, though he was six hours on the cross, and at length expired in consequence of the torture.

PART II.

3. THE circumstance that renders the consideration of the second coming of Christ to raise the dead of importance to us, is, that the future life to which we shall then be raised will be a state of just *retribution*, in which the righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked punished. This has in some measure appeared in what I have already quoted; but the subject is so very interesting, that it is well worth our while to take a review of all that our Lord said upon it, that our minds may be duly impressed by it; the great business of this life being our preparation for another.

When he was explaining to his disciples "the parable of the tares," he said, (*Matt.* xiii. 39—43,) "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered, and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and

shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

Also, in his explanation of the parable of *the net* that “was cast into the sea,” and took fishes “of every kind,” which the fishermen afterwards separated, he said, (*Matt.* xiii. 49, 50,) “So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

When he was exhorting his hearers to prefer the future life to the present, and, if necessary, to sacrifice the latter to the former, he added as a reason for it, (*Matt.* xvi. 27,) “For the Son of Man *will* come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he *will render to every man according to his works.*”

Of this he gave a much fuller, though more figurative, account, in a discourse which he held not long before his death, in which he represents all mankind assembled before him, when he divides them into two classes, the righteous and the wicked, and pronounces a sentence upon them according to their respective characters and conduct. *Matt.* xxv. 31—34: “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.† And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.‡ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand; but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” But to the wicked he says, [*ver.* 41,] “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” And finally he says, [*ver.* 46,] “These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.”§

The different fate of the *rich man* and *Lazarus*, in the parable, (*Luke* xvi. 19—24,) teaches us the same lesson. In this world the former “was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day,” while the latter lay “at his gate full of sores,” which “the dogs licked.” But after they were dead, the latter “was carried by the

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 123, 124.

† See *ibid.* pp. 300, 301.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 301.

§ See *ibid.* p. 302.

angels into Abraham's bosom," while the former "lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torments,"* and could not prevail upon *Abraham* to send *Lazarus* to dip his finger in water and cool his tongue, then tormented in flame.

The destination of Jesus to return to this world, after leaving it by death, and then calling mankind to account for their behaviour during his absence, he illustrated by several striking parables, as that of a nobleman who "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom† and to return" (*Luke* xix. 12); and that of "a man travelling into a far country," (*Matt.* xxv. 14—30,) who delivered unto his servants, *talents*, in different proportions, according to their several ability, "unto one, five, to another, two, and to another, one;" when, at his return, he "reckoned with them," and rewarded those who had improved their talents, and punished the negligent and "slothful servant."

In order to encourage persons in acts of charity and other good works, Jesus constantly referred his hearers to the state of things at his second coming, and to nothing antecedent to it. When he was at a sumptuous entertainment, where all the guests were probably persons of some distinction, he said, (*Luke* xiv. 13, 14,) "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind;‡ and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."§

With a view to enable his disciples to bear his absence from them, which he foresaw would fill them with consternation and grief, he, in his discourse before his death, led their thoughts to the consideration of his joyful return to them. After informing them, [*John* xiv. 2, 3,] of the mansions that he was going to prepare for them in his Father's house, after which he should return, and take them to himself, he said, (xvi. 22,) "Ye now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

But in proportion as this great event will be joyful to the righteous and the friends of Christ, it will be dreadful to his enemies, and the wicked in general: *Matt.* vii. 21—23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 249, 250.

† See *ibid.* pp. 244, 245.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 272.

§ See *ibid.* p. 245.

in thy name cast out *demons*, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them; I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." *Matt.* viii. 11, 12: "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Upbraiding the cities in which many of his miracles had been wrought, he said, (*Matt.* xi. 22, 24,) "I say unto you; it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon," (and for *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*;) "than for you." The same he observed with respect to those who should reject the *seventy* disciples on their mission. *Luke* x. 12: "I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city."

How awful and alarming, I cannot help observing, are these denunciations; and how careful ought we to be that we do not fall under them! For certainly our advantages, in consequence of the knowledge we have of the Gospel, and the evidences of it, are not upon the whole less than those of the persons who themselves saw the miracles of Jesus, and of the apostles. The evidence of their truth is not diminished, but increased, by time, though it requires more *attention* to be suitably impressed with it. That attention let us give, and certainly nothing can better reward it. No subject can be near so interesting. But let us, in the next place, attend to what Jesus himself says with respect to the practical improvement of this doctrine; for much of his exhortations to virtue is grounded upon it.

4. With great force and justice he urges the preference that in reason we ought to give to a future life, compared to the present, in his discourse from the Mount. *Matt.* vi. 19—21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

In the same discourse he justly observes, that all our anxiety about the things of this life, even those of them that are the most necessary, ought to be abandoned when they come in competition with the things of a future life. *Matt.* vi. 31, 33: "Take no thought, what *ye* shall eat, or what *ye* shall

drink, or wherewithal *ye* shall be clothed.*—But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

According to him, the best use we can make of the riches of this world, is to make them subservient to our happiness in another. *Luke* xvi. 9: "I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." This is the inference that he makes from the parable of the unjust steward, whose prudence and foresight, but not his dishonesty, he recommends to our imitation.

The fatal consequence of the improper use of riches, Jesus shewed in the fate of the rich man in the parable above-mentioned.

In strong, figurative language Jesus shewed the wisdom of making the greatest sacrifices in this world, if they would interfere with our happiness in another. *Matt.* v. 29, 30: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." The same observation he repeats on another occasion, (*Matt.* xviii. 8, 9,) saying, "It is better for thee to enter into life, halt or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire:" and "it is better for thee to enter into life, with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire."

The uncertainty of the time of our Lord's coming is very properly urged as a motive for constant watchfulness. He compares it to the coming of a *thief*, in the night, when persons are most off their guard. *Matt.* xxiv. 42, 43: "Watch, therefore," he says, "for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the *master* of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."

The same is the object of the *parable* of the "ten virgins who went to meet the bridegroom," (*Matt.* xxv. 1—12,) and while he "tarried, slumbered and slept;" but who,

* See Vol. XIII. p. 85.

when, "at midnight, there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him,—arose and trimmed their lamps." Of these, five had not made a sufficient provision of oil, and going to buy more, came too late, and found the door shut against them. And when they cried, "Lord, Lord, open to us," they received for answer, "Verily—I know you not." Jesus concludes this parable with saying, (*ver.* 13,) "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh."

The doctrine of a future state is peculiarly adapted to the encouragement of persons in a state of persecution for conscience' sake; and as it is not distinctly mentioned in the *Old Testament*, no exhortation of this kind is found there, though the behaviour of many *Jews* in the *Antiochian* persecution shews that they were then acquainted with it, and made the proper use of it; bearing persecution unto death with the greatest fortitude.* But as this doctrine makes a distinguished figure in the Gospel, this motive to perseverance in tribulation, and in the view and suffering of death, is most explicitly inculcated.

In his first public discourse, Jesus was so far from flattering the ambitious views of his countrymen, in their expectation of a temporal *Messiah*, that he began with pronouncing benedictions on "the meek," the humble, and especially the "persecuted for righteousness' sake." *Matt.* v. 10—12: "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."†

The power of the greatest persecutors extends only to this life, and therefore Jesus says, (*Matt.* x. 28,) "Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," (that is, wholly to destroy the principle of life,) "but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell;" that is, to put, if he pleases, a final period to your existence.‡

All that we can suffer in this, life Jesus informs his followers, would be abundantly compensated to them in the life to come. *Matt.* xix. 29: "Every one that hath forsaken

* See Vol. II. p. 344; Vol. XII. p. 485.

† See Vol. XIII. p. 73.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 134—136.

houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." To the apostles he observed, (*Matt. xix. 28.*) "Verily I say unto you, that ye *who* have followed me, in the regeneration," (or the new state of things that will take place hereafter,) "when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

Having, however, this great reward in prospect, it is but reasonable that every thing else, which must be of very inferior value, should be sacrificed to it; and, therefore, Jesus says, (*Luke xiv. 33.*) "Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple," and, (*Matt. x. 37, 38.*) "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Also to the young rich man who asked him what he should do to be perfect, he said, (*Matt. xix. 21.*) "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, and follow me."†

5. Having taken a review of the doctrine of a resurrection and a future state, as taught by Jesus, and the practical use that he made of it, I come in the last place to mention such other particulars as we are able to collect concerning it. But since the future life being a state of *retribution*, is all that we are much concerned to be acquainted with concerning it, almost every other circumstance relating to it is wisely concealed from us. Indeed, more exact knowledge would only gratify an useless curiosity; and it is very possible that a full account of it could not be made intelligible, or credible to us. Supposing, what is not impossible, that our condition in a future state will be as different from that of the present, as that of a butterfly is from that of a caterpillar, the difference would be so great, that we should not be able, by any description, to form a just idea of it.

One particular, however, our Saviour had occasion to mention, in answer to some objections of the *Sadducees*, to which the *Pharisees* of his time were not able to reply, and that is, that there will be no difference of sex, or farther propagation of the species, in a future state. For this must be

* See Vol. XIII. p. 260.

† See *ibid.* p. 259.

implied in what he says, (*Matt.* xxii. 30,) "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven." And a difference so considerable as this, will probably be accompanied by other differences in our constitution, perhaps with respect to food and nourishment,* and which may obviate the objection that has been made by some, to the possibility of the subsistence of such numbers as will be raised from the dead, and live upon the earth again. For it will hardly be supposed that we shall be removed to any other planet; the "new heavens and the new earth," of which the apostle *Peter* [*2 Ep.* iii. 13] speaks, probably meaning nothing more than a renewed and improved state of the present system.†

The future body must differ very materially from the present to give any propriety to the apostle *Paul's* calling it a *spiritual* and *incorruptible* body; indeed, its not being subject to death, and of consequence to any disease which can terminate in death, alone implies a great difference in the substance itself, as well as in the arrangement of the parts. "It is sown," says the apostle, (*1 Cor.* xv. 42—45,) "in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.—And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."‡ [*Vers.* 47—50]: "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.§ As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now, this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." By *flesh and blood*, he must have meant such a substance as our present flesh and blood, which we know is necessarily liable to corruption, the source of disease and death.||

The same advantageous change that will take place in the bodies of those who shall be raised from the dead, this apostle informs us, will also take place in those who shall be found alive at the second coming of Christ. *1 Cor.* xv. 51—55: "Behold I shew you a mystery.¶ We shall not all

* See Vol. VIII. pp. 204, 205; Vol. XIII. (on *Matt.* xxvi. 29), p. 311.

† See Vol. II. pp. 361, 362.

‡ See Vol. XIII. pp. 117, 118.

§ See, on *ver.* 47, Vol. XIV. p. 118.

|| See, on *ver.* 50, *ibid.*

¶ See *ibid.*

sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; (for the trumpet shall sound,) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.† O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Christ being called "the first-fruits of them that slept,"‡ and *Paul* saying, (1 *Cor.* xv. 49,) that "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," we seem to be authorized to conclude, that the essential properties of our future bodies will be the same with those of Christ's after his resurrection; but what those were, we have no sufficient *data* from which to draw a certain inference. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to be in all respects the very same that he had been before. He had, as he himself said, [*Luke* xxiv. 39,] "flesh and bones," was capable of being *handled*, and also of eating and drinking. But, then, as he appeared with the wounds in his hands, feet, and side, that peculiar change adapted to his future and permanent mode of existence, did not probably take place till after his ascension, nor till he had been seen by *Paul*; to whom he no doubt appeared as he had done to the other apostles, in all respects the same that he had been before. Indeed, without this, it might not have been possible to identify his person, so that *Paul* could not have been a proper witness of the resurrection, and, consequently, could not have had the requisite qualifications of an apostle. For *Peter*, in his address to the disciples, immediately after the ascension, about choosing a person to succeed *Judas Iscariot*, in the apostleship, says, (*Acts* i. 22,) "One must be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

Besides, it is not in our power to distinguish what was miraculous in the condition of Jesus after his resurrection, from what was natural in that new state of existence. If there was nothing miraculous in his actions after he rose from the dead, he had the power of conveying himself at his pleasure from place to place, without exertion or fatigue, of rendering himself invisible, and of entering a room when the door was shut, and also of ascending in the air without being

* See, on *ver.* 50, Vol. XIV. pp. 118, 119.

† See, on *ver.* 54, *ibid.* p. 119.

‡ 1 *Cor.* xv. 20. See *ibid.* p. 112.

affected by the power of gravitation. But these effects were probably miraculous, and great inconvenience would attend their being natural, and at the command of every person, in any state of being. Besides, Jesus had the power of walking on the sea before his death, which would equally imply his not being affected by the power of gravitation, as his ascension after his death. The one, therefore, was probably as much a miracle as the other, and not any property, or power, natural to him, and exercisable at his pleasure, without supernatural assistance; and so may be the ascension of the disciples of Christ to meet him in the air, of which *Paul* speaks (1 *Thess.* iv. 16, 17): "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

An obvious objection to the doctrine of an universal resurrection, and of all who shall be raised from the dead, living again upon this earth, arises from the idea of the difficulty of their subsisting. And a farther objection to many of them being raised at the commencement of the *millenium*, while the rest of mankind shall continue to live and increase as at present, arises from our difficulty of conceiving how this can take place without some great inconvenience from the interference of persons in such different states, some being mortal and others immortal. But both these objections may be in some measure obviated by the consideration of the present condition of *Christ*, and also of *Enoch*, *Moses*, and *Elijah*, who, we know, either never did die, having been translated, or were raised from the dead, but are now living, it cannot well be doubted, upon this earth, though we have no knowledge where they are, or in what manner they subsist; and though we perceive nothing of their interference in the affairs of living men.

That these four persons are not in any place at a distance from the earth, may be concluded from the consideration of there being no such thing as any local heaven above the clouds, and from their having no conceivable relation to any other system, or to any other planet in this system. And if these persons can subsist, either in the atmosphere, or any where else, in an invisible state, without gross food, so, for any thing that we know, may the greatest numbers, who may also rise from the dead, and exist in the same state, and

their interference with the affairs of mortal men may be as little, or as insensible. That *Moses* and *Elijah* were in this world, at the time of our Saviour, is evident from their appearing at his *transfiguration*; and that Jesus himself continued upon earth after his visible ascension, appears from his having been seen by *Paul*, from his giving him directions in the course of his preaching, and from his communicating to the apostle *John* the particulars of the *Revelation*, and his messages "to the seven churches of Asia," contained in that work.

Besides the transient appearance of *Jesus* to *Paul*, at the time of his conversion, he must, as I have observed, have appeared to him for a considerable space of time when he communicated to him that distinct knowledge of the gospel, which qualified him to be an apostle, without his conferring with any other apostle whatever. After describing the appearances of Jesus to others, he says, (1 *Cor.* xv. 8,) "Last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." When he describes the manner of administering the *Lord's supper*, he says, (1 *Cor.* xi. 23,) that he *received* this information *from the Lord*. When he was at *Corinth*, Jesus appeared unto him in a vision. *Acts* xviii. 9, 10: "Then spake the Lord to Paul, in the night, by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak; for I have much people in this city."

It was *Jesus* who gave to the apostle *John* "the revelation which God gave unto him." (*Rev.* i. 1.) He said to him, (*ver.* 18,) "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death." His messages "to the seven churches," contained in the second and third *chapters* of this book, shew the particular attention that Jesus gave to the state of his churches, and his great concern for them, though there was no other appearance of his interposing in their affairs. Yet we cannot suppose that he, or that *Enoch*, *Moses*, or *Elijah*, are in a perfectly inactive state. If, therefore, these men are now alive, and in a state of action and enjoyment upon earth, the greatest numbers may, for any thing that we know, exist in the same manner, at the same time that the affairs of mortal men shall proceed in all respects as they do now.

There is no small difficulty in reconciling the different accounts of the second coming of Christ, which is expressly said, (*Acts* i. 11,) to be in *the very same manner*, in which he ascended. But whenever he thus comes, it will be to enter upon his proper kingdom. Then will commence his reign

upon earth, commonly called the *Millenium*; and this, we cannot doubt, will be coincident with the flourishing state of the *Jews*, after their return to their own country, and their peaceable and final settlement in it. And yet, in this state of things, there is to be a succession of princes of the family of *David*, and they will have children (*Ezek. xli. 16*) as in former times. Consequently, in this reign of Christ, these princes must be considered as acting under him, as his vicegerents; and the affairs of the world will probably be directed by him, not in a visible, but in some unknown manner. Whether he will always continue visible to men, we cannot tell. In the future state, he said, [*Matt. xxii. 30,*] that we shall be “as the angels of God in heaven,” perhaps in the property of being sometimes visible and sometimes invisible, as they are, as well as with respect to the abolition of all distinction of sex.

Admitting these speculations to be nothing more than random conjectures, I do not see any harm in our indulging them. The apprehension of *Jesus*, as well as of *Enoch*, *Moses*, and *Elijah*, being often present with us, though they give no sensible tokens of their presence, cannot do us any harm. It will certainly be no motive to any bad action; and all speculations of this kind tend to draw off our attention from the world, and the transitory but seducing things of it; to which we are naturally too much attached.

Though all the dead are to rise, it appears, in some measure, from the apostle *Paul*, but more clearly from the book of *Revelation*, that there will be an interval between that of the righteous and that of the wicked. “The dead in Christ,” *Paul* says, in the passage quoted above, [p. 307,] “shall rise first;” but this respects only the other disciples of Christ, who shall then be living, and on whom an advantageous change of constitution will immediately take place. As he says nothing of the resurrection of the wicked, at that time, it may be at a future period. And this is clearly expressed in the *Revelation*, (xx. 4—6,) and said not to take place but after a period of a *thousand years*: “And I saw thrones, and them that sat on them, and judgment was given unto them. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again, till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ; and shall reign with him a thousand years." In this passage mention is made only of the *martyrs* or *confessors*. But, according to *Paul*, all the dead in Christ will rise, and all his virtuous disciples, who shall be then alive, will be changed at his second coming.*

That the earth will be destroyed by fire, though supposed by the apostle *Peter*,† is not, I think, certain; since neither any of the prophets, nor our Saviour, nor the apostle *Paul*, nor *John*, in the *Revelation*, makes any mention of it, though they mention circumstances which must be coincident with it. And as *Peter* does not say that he had any particular revelation on the subject, he might have taken the idea from some tradition, of no sufficient authority, such as appears to have found its way into the Heathen world, as we find in the writings of *Ovid* and others.‡ The knowledge that we

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 501, 502.

† Considering the highly figurative language used by the ancient prophets, and also by our Saviour, when they meant nothing more than to announce great revolutions in the world, it is very possible that the apostle *Peter* might not mean any thing more, when he describes the heavens and the earth melting with heat, antecedent to the formation of the new heavens and the new earth. 2 *Peter* iii. 10: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." *Vers.* 12, 13: "Looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

‡ That the heavens should be on fire and dissolved we know to be impossible, and could not be intended. Why, then, may not the same language admit of a similar interpretation when applied to the earth, in the very same sentence?

Isaiah, (xxxiv. 4,) describing the judgments of the latter day, the same, I doubt not, with those to which *Peter* alludes, makes use of similar language: "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their host shall fall down." Our Saviour, announcing the same events, says, (*Matt.* xxiv. 29,) "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Perhaps *Peter*, having got the general idea of the heavens being dissolved, only meant to extend the amplification of this figurative language to the earth.

In *Rev.* xx. 11, it is said, that "the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them;" after which it is said, (*Ch.* xxi. 1,) "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." It is pretty evident, therefore, that the *dissolving* of the heavens and the earth of *Peter*, and their *passing away* of *John*, previous to the appearance of what they both call *the new heavens and the new earth*, mean the same thing, and, therefore, that in both, the language must be figurative, denoting only great changes in the state of things, especially of kingdoms and empires, antecedent to the second coming of Christ, and the renovation of all things under him. (*P.*) See Vol. XIV. pp. 419, 420.

‡ "The *Stoics* especially, of all other sects among the *Greeks*, have preserved the doctrine of the *conflagration*, and made it a considerable part of their philosophy, and almost a character of their order." As to the *Romans*, "Their curiosity or

now have of the constitution of the earth makes the supposition of its ever being consumed by fire exceedingly improbable, as a very inconsiderable proportion of its parts is combustible.

The only thing of great importance that is absolutely certain, with respect to a future state is, that it will be a state of *retribution*, in which every person will receive according to his works, whether they be good or whether they be evil; when, as our Saviour says, (*John* v. 29,) "They that have done good" shall have *a resurrection to eternal life*, and "they that have done evil," shall *rise to condemnation*; and as *Paul* says, (*Gal.* vi. 8,) *they who have sown to the flesh*, "shall of the flesh reap corruption;" and *they who have sown to the spirit*, "shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Believing this, let us, my brethren, as the same apostle exhorts, (*1 Cor.* xv. 58,) continue "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, *knowing* that *our labour will not be* in vain in the Lord."

emulation in philosophical studies was so little, that it did not make different sects and schools amongst them, as amongst the *Greeks*. I remember no philosophers they had but such as *Tully*, *Seneca*, and some of their poets. And of these, *Lucretius*, *Lucan*, and *Ovid*, have spoken openly of the *conflagration*. *Ovid's* Verses are well known:

'Esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur, affore tempus,
Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque Regia Cœli
Ardeat, et mundi moles operosa laboret.' (Met. i.)

'A time decreed by fate, at length will come,
When heavens, and earth, and seas, shall have their doom;
A fiery doom: and nature's mighty frame
Shall break, and be dissolv'd into a flame.'

"We see *Tully's* sense upon this matter in *Scipio's dream*. When the old man speaks to his nephew *Africanus*, and shews him from the clouds this spot of earth where we live; he tells him, though our actions should be great, and fortune favour them with success, yet there would be no room for any lasting glory in this world; for the world itself is transient and fugitive. And a deluge, or a conflagration, which necessarily happen after certain periods of time, sweep away all records of human actions. As for *Seneca*, he being a professed *Stoic*, we need not doubt of his opinion in this point." *T. Burnet's Sacred Theory*, (B. iii. Ch. iii.), Ed. 5, 1722, II. pp. 20—22. See *Hakewill's Apologie* (L. iv. Sect. iii.), Ed. 2, 1630, pp. 480—482.

Lucan represents *Cæsar*, after the battle of *Pharsalia*, as denying to *Pompey's* soldiers the rites of sepulture, and feasting his eyes on the slaughter-covered ground,

Proud that *Æmathia's* earth he cannot see,

a gratification worthy of a remorseless warrior. The poet adds,

"Hos Cæsar populos si nunc non usserit ignis,
Uret cum terris, uret cum gurgite ponti:
Communis mundo superest rogos, ossibus astra
Misturus." *Pharsalia*, L. vii.

"If now these nations, *Cæsar*, be not burn'd,
They shall, when earth and seas to flames are turn'd:
One fire shall burn the world, and with the sky
Shall mix these bones."

May.

DISCOURSE V.

OF THE PRINCIPLES AND EVIDENCES OF MAHOMETANISM
COMPARED WITH THOSE OF CHRISTIANITY.

I JOHN iv. 5, 6:

They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.—Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

PART I.

As things are set in the clearest light by means of contrast, or a comparison with their opposites, I propose in a series of discourses to compare the conduct of *Mahomet*, with respect to his pretended divine mission, with that of Jesus. And as very few Christians have given much attention to the subject of *Mahometanism*, which, at this distance from the professors of it, does not obtrude itself upon us, it is probable that the difference between the conduct of Mahomet and that of Jesus, being a circumstance but little known, may strike some persons with peculiar force. Unbelievers must see that these two men conducted themselves in a very different manner, and, therefore, that they must have acted on different principles, and have had a different consciousness with respect to their pretensions; and, therefore, that if one of them was an impostor, (as Mahomet, in this part of the world, is universally acknowledged to have been,) the probability is, that the other was not.

All, however, that I would say is, that the consideration of the history of *Mahomet* furnishes a probable argument, of the internal kind, for the truth of the Christian religion; the history of Jesus, with respect to the promulgation of his religion, having been the reverse of that of Mahomet. Also, as but few, either of unbelievers in Christianity, or of Christians, give themselves the trouble to read the *Koran*, I shall produce pretty copious extracts from it, that you may form a better idea of this celebrated work than can be given by any description of it, or any account of its contents in other words than those of Mahomet himself. The translation I

shall make use of is that of Mr. Sale,* which no person will suspect to be unfavourable to the original.†

With respect to the character and disposition of *Mahomet*, very extravagant things have been advanced both in favour of him, and against him; but I think it is not very difficult to hit upon a pretty just medium between them, and one that will account for all the facts in his history. He was evidently a man of considerable natural ability, and had much in his person and address to recommend him. He had also, I doubt not, originally a serious turn of mind, and, for the greatest part of his life, was not addicted to any irregular indulgence. He was never charged with intemperance in eating or drinking; and though at the age of twenty-five he married a widow of forty, he lived with her to the age of fifty without being suspected of any commerce with other women; and all the children he had, except one, was by her. It was not till he had acquired a considerable degree of power, that he yielded to the impulse of lust or cruelty, from which hardly any person of much consequence in the *East* ever was exempt. Had he never attained to this degree of power, he would probably have preserved through life a character for religious austerity and mortification, which seems to have been all that he originally aimed at.

Mahomet was trained both to commerce and the art of war, under one of his uncles; and he learned something of the state of the neighbouring countries, in two journeys to *Syria*, performed in caravans, such as are used for the same purpose to this day. In his second journey he visited, and had some interviews with *Boheira* or *Sergius*, a *Nestorian* monk, who is supposed (but I do not know on what authority) to have given him some instruction in religion, and afterwards to have assisted him in the composition of his *Koran*.‡

It is not at all probable that, as is commonly supposed, he had at that time laid the plan of his imposture, and much less that of the *Saracenic* empire, from seeing the weakness of the *Roman* and *Persian* empires, and the divided state of the Christians, and of the professors of other forms of reli-

* "Who died in 1736.—He had a principal hand in the [*Antient*] *Universal History*, and executed all the Oriental part of it." *Gen. Biog. Dict.* 1784, XI. p. 226.

† "I have endeavoured," says the translator, "to do the *Original* impartial justice; not having, to the best of my knowledge, represented it, in any one instance, either better or worse than it really is." *Koran*, 1801, *Pref.* p. xi.

‡ *Modern Universal History*, 1759, I. p. 30. (P.) See Sale's *Prelim. Disc.* pp. 84, 85.

gion. It was but little that, in the capacity of a merchant, he could see or learn of the state of the *Roman* empire, on the borders of *Syria*; and the state of civil war in which *Persia* was then involved would rather have given him an idea of the difficulty of conquering it. For all history shews that civil wars make nations warlike, by converting great numbers of men into soldiers. And what prospect could a private merchant have had of uniting all the tribes of *Arabs* under one head, divided as they then were, and always had been, into a great number of separate clans, perpetually at war with each other, and professing very different religions; many of them being Heathen idolaters, many Christians, and many of them converts to *Judaism*; and without this union under himself, he could not have expected to make any foreign conquests.

That Mahomet's "retiring for a month in the year to a cave in Mount Hara, near Mecca,"* was originally with a view to any imposture, is far from being certain; and that he was subject to the epilepsy, or falling sickness, and in the fits of this disorder was led to fancy himself inspired,† is not supported by any sufficient evidence; nor does what is known of his history make it probable. But the veneration he would naturally acquire by this retirement, to which he might have been led by real devotion or enthusiasm, might have given him ideas, and opened to his mind prospects which he had not conceived when he first entered it.

He might even imagine that he was destined by God to act some extraordinary part on the theatre of the world; and being a real believer in the unity of God, and being impressed with a sense of the great importance of that doctrine, which he saw to be violated not only by many of his countrymen, the Heathen *Arabs*, but by all the Christians that he had conversed with, or heard of, he might think it to be greatly meritorious to endeavour the extirpation of idolatry in general, *Christian* or *Heathen*. He might also imagine that so great an object would justify some imposture that he thought to be useful for that good end. For that he, or any man, could really imagine that all the chapters of such a work as the *Koran*, a work of such extent, and consisting of so many distinct sections, delivered at different times, as particular occasions called for them, were really delivered to him, as he pretended, by the angel *Gabriel*, cannot be admitted. That he must, therefore, have been a real im-

* Sale's *Prelim. Disc.* p. 52. (P.)

† *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. p. 23. (P.)

postor, though he might begin with being an enthusiast, will not be questioned by any, except *Mahometans*. And that, as a founder of a new religion, he *was* an impostor, may be inferred from several circumstances, in which his conduct forms a remarkable contrast with that of Jesus.

1. The only proper evidence of a divine mission is unquestionably a *visible miracle*, or the doing of such a thing as the Divine Being alone, the author of nature, and the sole controuler of its laws, can do. Accordingly, Jesus said, (*John* x. 37,) “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not;” and, (*John* v. 36,) “The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.” But to this, *Mahomet* did not pretend, though his enemies, as we find by the *Koran*, were continually calling upon him to shew them some miracle, as the only evidence of the truth of his pretensions. “They who know not the Scriptures, say, Unless God speak unto us, or thou shew us a sign, we will not believe.”* “We will, by no means, believe until a revelation be brought unto us like unto that which hath been delivered unto the messengers of God.”† “The infidels say, Unless some sign be sent down unto him from his Lord, we will not believe.”‡

Sometimes we find the unbelievers calling for specific miracles, as that of an angel, such as he pretended brought him the chapters of the *Koran*, being visible to them.§ “They say, What kind of apostle is this? He eateth food, and walketh in the streets, as we do. Unless an angel be sent down unto him, and become a fellow-preacher with him; or unless a treasure be cast down unto him; or he have a garden, of the fruit whereof we may eat; we will not believe.”|| “They who hope not to meet us at the resurrection, say, Unless the angels be sent down unto us, or we see our Lord himself, we will not believe.”¶ They “say, Surely God has commanded us, that we should not give credit to any apostle, until one should come unto us with a sacrifice, which should be consumed by fire.”**

The *Heathen Arabs*, who denied the resurrection, called for the revival of some of their dead ancestors, as a proof of his mission. “Verily these Meccans say, Assuredly our final end will be no other than our first natural death; nei-

* *Koran*, I. p. 23. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 162; II. pp. 4, 55. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* II. pp. 201, 202. (P.)

** *Ibid.* I. p. 88. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 177. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* I. p. 158. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* p. 208. (P.)

ther shall we be raised again. Bring now our forefathers back to life, if ye speak truth."* They also challenged him to inflict some miraculous punishment on themselves. "They will urge thee to hasten the punishing. They urge thee to bring down vengeance swiftly upon them."

In answer to these perpetual calls for miracles, *Mahomet* replied, (and the repetition of this in the *Koran* is endless,) that his mission was confined to preaching and giving warnings. "Do ye profess the religion of *Islam*?† Now if they embrace *Islam*, they are surely directed; but if they turn their backs, verily unto thee belongeth preaching only; for God regardeth his servants."‡ "The duty of our apostle is to preach only."§ "Verily unto thee belongeth preaching only, but unto us inquisition."|| "We send not our messengers but to bear good tidings, and to denounce threats. Those who believe not, dispute with vain arguments, that they may thereby render the truth of no effect: and they hold my signs, and the admonitions which have been made them, in derision."¶ "We have sent thee to be no other than a bearer of good tidings, and a denouncer of threats."** "Signs are in the power of God alone; and I am no more than a public preacher. Is it not sufficient for them that we have sent down into thee the book of the *Koran* to be read unto them? Verily herein is a mercy, and an admonition to the people who believe."†† *Mahomet* also observes, that some other prophets had been sent without signs, and that every person should be satisfied with discharging the duty incumbent on himself, those who preach, and those who are preached to. "If they accuse thee of imposture, say, I have my work, and ye have your work."‡‡

As a farther answer to those who demanded public miracles, *Mahomet* alleged that even those messengers of God who had come with public miracles had been disregarded, and that he was patiently to bear the charge of imposture, as they had done before him. "Apostles before thee have been accounted liars: but they patiently borne their being accounted liars, and their being vexed, until our help came

* *Koran*, II. p. 365. (P.)

† This is the term by which Mahomet designated the religion that he taught, and, which he said, was the same that had been taught by Abraham, and all the preceding prophets. It signifies submission to the will of God. (P.)

‡ *Koran* I. p. 57. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 151. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* II. p. 60. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* II. pp. 120, 121. (P.)

** *Ibid.* p. 207. (P.)

†† *Ibid.* pp. 250, 251. See also to the same purpose, I. p. 151; II. pp. 86, 120, 197, 291, 294, 297, 323, 355, 442, 451, 494. (P.)

‡‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 7. (P.)

unto them.”* “ Say, Apostles have already come unto you before me, with plain proofs, and with the miracle which ye mention :” (viz. that of a sacrifice consumed by fire from heaven :) “ why, therefore, have ye slain them, if ye speak truth? If they accuse thee of imposture; the apostles before thee have also been accounted impostors, who brought evident demonstrations and the Scriptures.”† “ Nothing hindered us from sending thee with miracles, except that the former nations have charged them with imposture. We gave unto the tribe of *Thamud*, at their demand, the she camel visible to their sight; yet they dealt unjustly with her.”‡ An account of the transaction here referred to, will be given hereafter.

Notwithstanding the want of the proper evidence of miracles, to the divine mission of *Mahomet*, the guilt of unbelief is always represented by him as of the most heinous nature, and unbelievers are threatened with the most exemplary punishment. The torments of hell to other sinners are said to be only temporary, but to unbelievers they will be eternal. “ Verily, they behave themselves arrogantly; and have transgressed with an enormous transgression.”§ “ Hell shall surely encompass the unbelievers.”|| “ Ye have already charged his apostle with imposture; but hereafter shall there be a lasting punishment inflicted on you.”¶ The unbelievers having challenged him to hasten the punishment with which he had threatened them, he said, “ Hereafter will I shew you my signs, so that ye shall not wish them to be hastened. They say, When will this threat be accomplished, if ye speak truth?—But the day of vengeance shall come upon them suddenly.”** *Mahometans* have no doubt but that all unbelievers in the divine mission of their prophet, *Jews* or *Christians*, without excepting the most virtuous of them, will be sent to hell; and this is evidently the doctrine of the *Koran*.

As there was so little of the appearance of evidence, for the divine mission of *Mahomet*, he sometimes represents belief in it as the act and gift of God, agreeably to his general doctrine of predestination, and that without this, even miracles would have no effect. “ Verily, those against whom the word of thy Lord is decreed, shall not believe, although there come unto them every kind of miracle; until they see

* *Koran*, l. pp. 161, 162. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 89. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 103. See also pp. 297, 298. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* II. p. 203. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 251. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* p. 209. (P.)

** *Ibid.* p. 156. (P.)

the grievous punishment prepared for them.”* “No soul can believe, but by the permission of God: and he shall pour out his indignation on those who will not understand.”† Upon this subject of the judgments of God against unbelievers, in a future state, *Mahomet* enlarges greatly. It is the great burden of the song, through all the *Koran*. Of this I shall give some idea when I come to mention the particulars of which, according to the *Koran*, the joys of *paradise* and the torments of *hell* consist.

But that *Mahomet*, notwithstanding his disclaiming all *public* miracles, would have been glad to have availed himself of them, may be clearly inferred from his pretending to *secret* ones; and many persons who had a good opinion of his integrity and piety, no doubt believed him with respect to them, on his own word. The principal of these miracles was the revelation of the *Koran* itself, which he said was dictated to him by the angel *Gabriel*, the first portions of it being communicated to him when he was forty years of age. “I have already,” he says, “dwelt among you to the age of forty years before I received it.”‡ On this work he passes the highest encomium. “It is certainly a book of infinite value. Vanity shall not approach it, either from before it, or from behind it.”§ This book was to supply the place of all miracles. “Is it not sufficient for them that we have sent down unto thee the book of the *Koran* to be read-unto them?”||

The evidence of the *Koran* not being *Mahomet's* own composition is his having been illiterate, and therefore incapable of producing it. “Believe in God, and his apostle, the illiterate prophet, who believeth in God and his word.”¶ “Thou couldst not read any book before this; neither couldst thou write it with thy right hand: then had the gainsayers justly doubted of the divine original thereof. But the same is an evident sign in the breasts of those who have received understanding.”**

Mahomet also boldly challenged any man or any genius to produce the like. “This *Koran* could not have been composed by any, except God; but it is a confirmation of that which was revealed before it, and an explanation of the Scripture.”†† “Will they say, *Mohammed* hath forged it? Answer, Bring, therefore, a chapter like unto it, and call

* *Koran*, II. p. 13. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 3. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* pp. 250, 251. (P.)

** *Ibid.* II. p. 250. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 14. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 348. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* I. p. 214. (P.)

†† *Ibid.* p. 6. (P.)

whom ye may, to your assistance besides God.”* “Do they say, he hath forged the *Koran*?—Let them produce a discourse like unto it, if they speak truth.”† “Verily, if men and genii were purposely assembled that they might produce a book like this *Koran*, they could not produce one like unto it, although the one of them assisted the other.”‡

Though perhaps no European, even the best skilled in Arabic, can be a proper judge of the excellence of the style of the *Koran*; yet if we may judge by the general *contexture*, and the *matter*, we must say that, as a composition, it has very slender pretensions to excellence. It bears no mark of genius, such as we perceive in other ancient oriental writings, with the language of which we are about as much acquainted. It is certainly infinitely inferior to the composition of many parts of the *Old Testament*, as the *Psalms*, and the writings of the prophets, especially *Isaiah*, the sublimity of which no translation can conceal.

This argument does not appear to have made any impression on the *Arabs* in *Mahomet's* own time. For, notwithstanding the above challenges and assertions, the complaints of the *Koran's* being a forgery of *Mahomet's* own composition were perpetually repeated, as we learn from the *Koran* itself. And the unbelievers made no scruple of asserting, that they could have composed such a work themselves. “When our signs are repeated unto them, they say, We have heard; if we pleased, we could certainly pronounce a composition like unto this: this is nothing but the fables of the ancients.”§ And not satisfied with any thing that he could say on the subject, they still repeated their usual call for evident miracles. “They said, O God! if this be the truth from thee, rain down stones upon us from heaven, or inflict on us some other grievous punishment.”||

To *Mahomet's* argument from his want of literature, they said, but on what evidence we cannot now judge, that he was assisted by some other person. “Will they say, *Mohammed*¶ hath forged it?”** “They say, Verily, a certain man teacheth him to compose the *Koran*.”†† “The *Koran* is no other than a forgery, which he hath contrived: and

* *Koran*, II. p. 7. See p. 17. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 400. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 108. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* I. p. 228. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* (P.)

¶ Dr. Priestley has always written *Mahomet*; but, in correcting the extracts from the *Koran*, I have restored, in them, the word *Mohammed*, which Mr. Sale had uniformly adopted. Sir W. Jones writes *Muhammed*.

** *Koran* II. p. 266. (P.)

†† *Ibid.* p. 89. (P.)

other people have assisted him therein: but they utter an unjust thing, and a falsehood. They also say, These are fables of the ancients, which he has caused to be written down; and they are dictated unto him, morning and evening.* “The unbelievers will say, This is nothing but silly fables of ancient times.”† “They say of the *Koran*, This is no other than a lie blasphemously forged.”‡

To these frequent charges of forgery, the replies of *Mahomet* are nothing better than positive assertions. “When thou bringest not a verse of the *Koran* unto them, they say, Hast thou not put it together? Answer, I follow that only which is revealed unto me from my Lord.”§ “Will the *Meccans* say, *Mohammed* hath forged the *Koran*? Answer, If I have forged it, on me be my guilt, and let me be clear of that which ye are guilty of.”||

A great part of the fault that was found with the *Koran*, was its containing a number of idle traditions, and this we shall see to have been abundantly true, when I shall enter into some detail concerning them, which, in order to give a just idea of this work, I think proper to do. The idolaters said the same, when *Mahomet* preached the doctrine of a resurrection. “The unbelievers say, When we and our forefathers shall have been reduced to dust, shall we be taken forth from the grave? Verily, we have been threatened with this, both we and our fathers, heretofore. This is no other than fables of the ancients.”¶

The unbelievers also treated him as a poet, who wrote from his own invention: “They say, The *Koran* is a confused heap of dreams: nay, he has forged it; nay, he is a poet: let him come unto us, therefore, with some miracle, in like manner as the former prophets were sent.” But to this he answered as before, “None of the cities which we have destroyed, believed the miracles which they saw performed before them: will these, therefore, believe if they see a miracle?”**

Another miracle of *Mahomet's*, but not of a visible nature, was his pretending to have been carried from *Mecca* to *Jerusalem*, and thence to have been transported to heaven, where he had conversations with God; and to have returned in the space of a night. There was certainly much hazarded in this assertion, and accordingly it appears to have staggered

* *Koran*, II. p. 201. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 293. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 20. (P.)

•• *Ibid.* pp. 152, 153. (P.)

† *Ibid.* I. p. 160. See II. p. 373. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* I. pp. 221, 222. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* II. p. 229. (P.)

his followers, even after their faith in his mission was pretty well established. But the declaration of *Abubeker*, the most respectable of his adherents, that, since Mahomet asserted it, he had no doubt of the fact, confirmed the wavering faith of the rest. Little, however, is said of this in the *Koran*, and its being thus kept out of sight affords a strong suspicion that Mahomet did not wish to have it much canvassed. All the mention that is made of it in the *Koran* is in the following passage: "In the name of the most merciful God. Praise be unto him who transported his servant by night from the sacred temple of *Mecca* to the farther temple of *Jerusalem*, the circuit of which we have blessed, that we might shew him some of our signs."* Here is no mention of the journey to heaven, or of any conversations with God, and the journey to *Jerusalem* was no sign exhibited to *others*. No person saw Mahomet on this journey to or from *Jerusalem*, much less in his ascent to heaven, or in his descent from it. His followers had only his own word for this miracle, as well as for that of the revelation of the *Koran*.

The followers of *Mahomet* also allege another miracle in attestation of his mission. They say that, on some infidels demanding a sign of him, the moon appeared cloven in two, one part of it vanishing and the other remaining. Others say that it was divided into two parts; and that one person saw Mount *Hara* interposed between the two sections. But not to remark on the inconsistency of these two accounts, some of the *Mahometans* themselves give the passage in the *Koran*, which has been supposed to refer to it, another turn. They say that the meaning is, that the moon will be cleft asunder at the resurrection. The passage alluded to is the following: "The hour of judgment approacheth; and the moon hath been split in sunder: but if the unbelievers see a sign, they turn aside, saying, This is a powerful charm, and they accuse thee, O *Mohammed*, of imposture, and follow their own lusts: but every thing will be immutably fixed;"† meaning, perhaps, that this prodigy will certainly take place in due time. For some interpret the phrase which is here rendered *hath been split in sunder*, differently, supposing that the preter tense, indicating time past, is here used in the prophetic style for the future, and that the passage should be rendered, *The moon shall be split asunder*. Had it been an event that had

* *Koran*, II. p. 95. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 405. (P.)

really happened in *Mahomet's* own time, and had there been sufficient, or only plausible evidence of so great a miracle, there cannot be a doubt but that he would have mentioned it more distinctly, and have laid the greatest stress upon it. It would have answered his purpose infinitely better than his repeated assertions concerning the visits of the angel *Gabriel*, or his invisible journey to *Jerusalem*.

Lastly, The *Mahometans* pretend that the coming of *Mahomet* was foretold from early times, and especially by Christ. This, Mahomet himself asserts, with the addition of his being announced by name. "God accepted the covenant of the prophets, saying, This verily is the Scripture, and the wisdom which I have given you: hereafter shall an apostle come unto you, confirming the truth of that Scripture which is with you; ye shall surely believe on him, and ye shall assist him."* "Jesus, the son of Mary, said, O children of *Israel*, verily I am the apostle of God, sent unto you, confirming the law which was delivered before me, and bringing good tidings of an apostle who shall come after me, and whose name shall be *Ahmed*,"† this being a word of the same root with *Mahomet*. This pretension needs no refutation with any person acquainted with the *New Testament*, there being no such prophecy contained in it. But the *Mahometans* allege, though without any proof, that the *Christians*, as well as the *Jews*, have so corrupted their Scriptures, that there is no dependence to be placed on their copies.

There are some particular events said to have been foretold by *Mahomet*, which afterwards came to pass. But it is to be observed, that the life of Mahomet was not written by any of his contemporaries. His oldest historian, I believe, is *Abu Jaafar*, who flourished A. D. 900, about three hundred years after his death.‡ And if any thing of this kind should be found in the *Koran* itself, it is not altogether free from suspicion; as this work was put together from a great number of discordant copies, by *Abubeker*, after the death of *Mahomet*. Mahomet himself says, "The Greeks have been overcome by the Persians in the nearest part of the land; but after their defeat, they shall overcome the

* *Koran*, I. p. 71. (P.)

† *Ibid.* II. pp. 435, 436. (P.)

‡ "Abu Jaafar Mohammed Ben Jarir, Ebn Caled Altábari, the most celebrated and authentic ancient historian amongst the *Arabians*. He was a great *Imàm*, or doctor, in several capacities; as History; Ecclesiastical and Civil Law; *Traditions of the Sayings or Facts of Mahomet* (called by the *Arabians* *Hadith*); and in the exposition of the *Aleoran*. He died at *Bagdat*—in the year 310 of the *Hegirah*, [A. C. 929,] aged 84." Ockley's *Saracens*, ("Account of Authors,") II. pp. 350, 351.

others in their turn, within a few years. Unto God belongeth the disposal of this matter, both for what is past, and for what is to come.*

It is, however, to be observed, that the first edition of the *Koran* was eight years after this event, and in that time it was very easy for a mere conjecture of *Mahomet's*, to be converted by his friends into a prophecy. But admitting that *Mahomet* did say that the *Greeks* would defeat the *Persians*, it was only a single event, without any circumstances, and, *a priori*, as likely to happen as the contrary; at least not particularly improbable. And certainly it is not to be compared to the very circumstantial prediction of the destruction of the Temple, and the desolation of *Judea*, to take place in that generation, by our Saviour, three accounts of which were published before the event. Had this been a clear prophecy of *Mahomet's*, and he had lived to see the fulfilment of it, he would, no doubt, have laid great stress upon it.

The proper evidence of the mission of *Mahomet* being so deficient, we cannot wonder that he did not wish that his followers should enter into any discussion on the subject. According to the *Koran*, he was forbidden himself to dispute about it. "When thou seest those who are engaged at cavilling at, or ridiculing our signs, depart from them, until they be engaged in some other discourse: and if *Satan* cause thee to forget this precept, do not sit with the ungodly people after recollection."† "Wherefore—patiently suffer the contumelies which the infidels utter against thee, and depart from them with a decent departure;" that is, in such a manner as not to give offence; "And let me alone with those who charge the *Koran* with falsehood."‡ Thus he pretended to be authorized to treat with contempt those who called in question the truth of his mission, and whose arguments he could not answer.

How different was this from the conduct of *Jesus*, who, besides appealing to evident miracles for the truth of his divine mission, never declined answering any objection that was made to it.

PART II.

2. THE manner in which *Mahomet* published his mission, and gained his first proselytes, furnishes a strong presumption against the truth of it; his first converts being persons

* *Koran*, II. pp. 253, 254. (P.)

† *Ibid.* I. p. 167. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 467. (P.)

who, from their relationship to him, and the prospect of being gainers by his success, were the most likely to be influenced by him.

After passing the month of *Ramadan*, for some years, in the cave above-mentioned, *Mahomet* first revealed the secret of his mission in that cave to his wife; and she, having, no doubt, a good opinion of her husband, believed whatever he told her. His next convert was his slave *Zeid*, to whom he thereupon gave his liberty, of which it is possible he might have some prospect beforehand. At least he could not but know that pleasing his master, (which his declaring himself a convert was sure to do,) would probably be for his interest some way or other. His third convert was his cousin and pupil *Ali*, then very young. Also, among some of his first disciples, but in what order does not appear, were *Halema*, the nurse of Mahomet, and her husband, *Al Hareth*.* But his next convert after *Ali*, was *Abubeker*, a person of great authority among the *Koreish*, (of which tribe Mahomet was,) and his immediate successor. It cannot, however, be said, that he could have had any such prospect of advancement at that time. His conversion must therefore be ascribed to the good opinion he had of Mahomet, and the persuasion he had of his veracity. He did not pretend to have been converted by the exhibition of any miracle. A person of *Abubeker's* consequence being gained, Mahomet's progress was much facilitated. This new convert soon gained five more, and these, persons of some importance. These six were Mahomet's chief *companions*, distinguished afterwards by that title. But these, with a few more, were all that were converted in the space of three years,† in all which time he only declared his mission in a private way; but after this time he determined to make it more public.

Such was not the conduct of Jesus. He never addressed himself in any particular manner to his near relations, or friends; and as to dependents, like *Zeid* on *Mahomet*, he had none. His address was to individuals of the *Jewish* nation promiscuously, and his own brothers were some of the last who became his disciples. Conscious of the sufficiency of his proofs, he scrupled not to act in the most open manner, not in any formal way declaring that he had a commission from God, but doing such things as led men to *infer* that he was sent by him, working such miracles as they were sensible no man could have done if God had not been with

* *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. pp. 23, 24. (P.)

† See *Salé's Prelim. Disc.* pp. 56, 57.

him. His whole behaviour shews that he had the fullest confidence in the validity of his credentials, and therefore, that they were sufficient to make a proper impression on all candid observers, without any particular mode of address, or management whatever. Nor had he any occasion, like Mahomet, to endeavour previously to gain a character of extraordinary sanctity, by austerity or abstraction from the world. He issued not from a cave, but from a carpenter's shop, to the public theatre of the world; and from being a common artisan, assumed the character of the greatest of prophets. And notwithstanding these disadvantages, and many others, he made more converts in a year and a few months, and indeed probably in a few weeks, than Mahomet did in many years.

Mahomet having gained the above-mentioned nine converts, determined to make his mission more generally known; and for this purpose forty persons were invited to give him the meeting; but being prevented from making any declaration of his views, at that time, they were all invited again; and then, having informed them of his mission, but without pretending to any evidence of it, he asked who would be his second, and young *Ali* declared that *he* would. But instead of gaining any thing by this measure, all the company broke out into a fit of laughter.

Not discouraged at this unpromising outset, *Mahomet* began to preach in public, addressing himself to all who chose to listen to him. But, upbraiding the people with their idolatry and obstinacy, they were so provoked, that they would have destroyed him, if he had not been protected by *Abutaleb*, the father of *Ali*, though he was not then a convert.* Continuing to preach, and declare his divine mission, the number of his followers gradually increased, and sixteen of them were so zealous in his cause, that, being on that account persecuted by their countrymen, they fled to the king of *Ethiopia*, who received and protected them.

In the sixth year, *Mahomet's* uncle *Hamza*, and another person of some note, became converts; but the *Koreish* in general were so hostile to him, that they entered into a league to oppose his progress, and engaged to contract no marriage with any of his followers, or to have any friendly communication with them; and a written agreement for this purpose was laid up in the *Caaba*, a sacred place, the

* Sale's *Prelim. Disc.* p. 58. (P.)

centre of their worship.* They did not, however, persecute any to death; so that, though several fled, none died martyrs to their belief of Mahomet's mission, as great numbers in the earliest ages of Christianity did to that of Jesus. Besides, the only ground of faith in Mahomet was an opinion of his integrity, in which they might easily be deceived; whereas the ground of faith in the divine mission of Jesus was the evidence of their senses, with respect to which such numbers of persons as are said to have been witnesses of his miracles could not possibly have been deceived. This would have been a greater miracle than any of those that were attested by them: since the bodily senses of all of them must be under a supernatural illusion.

In the tenth year of his mission, *Mahomet* gave out that God disapproved of the league of the *Koreish*, by sending a worm to eat out every word in the written instrument, except the name of God. And when it was examined, it was found to be in that state: and in consequence of this, it is said that the league was dissolved. It was, however, far from being impossible for some zealous friend of Mahomet to get access to the *Caaba*, and do with the written instrument what had been asserted of it; and four years had intervened between the depositing of this writing in the *Caaba* and this event. Besides, I do not remember that there is any allusion to this miracle in the *Koran*. And notwithstanding this, the enemies of Mahomet were so powerful and inveterate, that in this very year he retired to *Tayef*, sixty miles from *Mecca*; but being ill received there, he returned to that city. †

In this year and the following, he, however, converted six of the inhabitants of *Medina*, who had been on a pilgrimage to *Mecca*. These, on their return, engaged many of their townsmen to take his part; and at length they were generally disposed in his favour. It was in the twelfth year of his mission that *Mahomet* pretended to have been carried in

* "The *Câbah*, or quadrangular edifice at *Meccah*, is indisputably so ancient, that its original use, and the name of its builder, are lost in a cloud of idle traditions. —Whether it was built as a place of divine worship, as a fortress, as a sepulchre, or as a monument of the treaty between the old possessors of *Arabia* and the sons of *Kedar*, antiquaries may dispute, but no mortal can determine. It is thought by *Reland* to have been 'the mansion of some ancient patriarch,' and revered 'on that account by his posterity.'—This temple, the sanctuary of which was restored by *Muhammed*, had been strangely profaned at the time of his birth, when it was usual to decorate its walls with poems on all subjects, and often on the triumphs of *Arabian* gallantry and the praises of *Grecian* wine, which the merchants of *Syria* brought for sale into the deserts." Sir W. Jones's *Discourse*, 1787, *Dissert.* (iv.), 1792, l. pp. 133, 134.

† Sale's *Prelim. Disc.* p. 60. (P.)

the night from *Mecca* to *Jerusalem*, and thence, as is said, to heaven, as was mentioned above. This story, as I have observed, appeared so incredible, that many of his followers left him upon it; but *Abubeker* declaring his firm belief of it, his credit was restored, and the story being believed, added much to his reputation.*

In the thirteenth year of his mission, *Mahomet's* friends in *Medina* offered him their assistance, and even took an oath to protect him from all insults, and on this he removed; or rather fled, to *Medina*; and this flight, called *Hegyra*, makes an æra in the *Mahometan* history to this day. He then chose twelve persons to be his apostles. And whereas before this time he had used the greatest moderation, and recommended only persuasion in the propagation of his religion, saying in his *Koran*, "Let there be no violence in religion,"† he now gave out that he had leave to defend himself from his enemies by arms, and afterwards to attack them, and to destroy idolaters every where.‡

Accordingly, as soon as he was settled at *Medina*, he began to send out small parties against his enemies, the *Koreish*, plundering their caravans, as it is the custom of the *Arabs* to do, with respect to those with whom they are at variance. "In the seventh year of the *Hejra*,§ *Mohammed* began to think of propagating his religion beyond the bounds of *Arabia*; and sent messengers to the neighbouring princes, with letters to invite them to *Mohammedism*. Nor was this without some success."||

In "the ninth year of the *Hejra*," the *Koreish* being conquered, submitted to him; and in consequence of this the *Arab* tribes in general submitted also, and engaged to follow his religion;¶ but it was twenty-two years before this was effected. Whereas more real converts were made to *Christianity* in the year after the death of *Jesus*, and this notwithstanding every disadvantage that can be imagined, than *Mahomet* made in his whole life.

3. Though *Mahomet* began, as of necessity he must have done, with persuasion; as soon as he safely could do it, he had recourse to arms, and depended chiefly upon them for the propagation of his religion. And though no real converts could be made in this manner, the conquered being only compelled to declare in his favour, and to profess his religion, provision was thereby made for the children being

* *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* pp. 61, 62. (P.)

† *Koran*, I. p. 48. (P.)

‡ *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* p. 64. (P.)

§ Thus the word is always spelt by *Sale*.

|| *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* p. 70. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* p. 73. (P.)

educated in it, and becoming sincerely attached to it. Also, it being generally believed that the providence of God decided the event of battles, many persons were, no doubt, led to think that Mahomet's wonderful success was a proof that God was with him, and, consequently, that he was no impostor.

Mahomet, like all other Arabs, was a soldier. He made his first campaign, and it was a successful one, under his uncle Abutaleb, when he was only fourteen years old,* and as the different tribes of Arabs were generally at war with one another, as well as with their neighbours, it is possible that he might have much experience, and acquire skill in the art of war. He does not, however, appear to have had any thoughts of making use of it as the means of propagating his religion at the beginning. But finding himself, after some years, at the head of a considerable number of men, who engaged to support him; and being irritated by opposition and persecution, he too readily adopted new and violent measures; and finding them successful, he pursued them through life, and recommended them to his followers. In the *Koran* he spares nothing that could encourage his disciples to fight for the defence and propagation of their religion. "When ye encounter the unbelievers," he says, "strike off their heads, until ye have made a great slaughter among them; and bind them in bonds."† Apostates from his religion were in a more particular manner devoted to destruction; and this is a law in all *Mahometan* countries, to this day. "If they turn back from the faith, take them, and kill them wherever ye find them."‡

To those who should die fighting for their religion, the joys of paradise (than which, as we shall see hereafter, nothing could be represented more tempting to sensual, worldly-minded men) were promised, as a sure reward. "Whosoever fighteth for the religion of God, whether he be slain, or be victorious, we will surely give him a great reward."§ "As to those who fight in defence of God's true religion, God will not suffer their work to perish; he will lead them into paradise."||

In order to induce his followers to risk their lives the more freely, *Mahomet* assured them, that such were the decrees of God, that the term of every man's life was absolutely fixed, so that whether they fought or not, it could not be

* *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. p. 27. (P.)

† *Ibid.* I. p. 111. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* II. p. 577. (P.)

† *Koran*, II. p. 376. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 108. (P.)

prolonged beyond the destined period. "If ye had been in your houses, verily they would have gone forth to fight, whose slaughter was decreed, to the places where they died,"* the place, as well as the time, of their death being fixed.

As *Mahomet* increased in power, and found that, with respect to the idolaters, he safely could do it, in the ninth year of the *Hegyra*, he published a chapter in the *Koran*, and the last that he gave out, revoking all the edicts he had before published in favour of idolaters, who, he said, had deceived him, and even cancelling all the treaties he had made with them. "A declaration of immunity from God and his apostle, unto the idolaters with whom ye have entered into league. Go to and fro in the earth securely four months.—Denounce unto those who believe not, a painful punishment. Except such of the idolaters with whom ye shall have entered into a league, and who, afterwards, shall not fail you in any instance, nor assist any other against you. Wherefore perform the covenant which ye shall have made with them until their time shall be elapsed.—And when the months wherein ye are not allowed to attack them shall be past, kill the idolaters wherever ye shall find them, and take them prisoners, and besiege them, and lay wait for them in every convenient place. But if they shall repent, and observe the appointed times of prayer, and pay the legal alms, dismiss them freely."† "How shall idolaters be admitted into a league with God, and with his apostle, since if they prevail against you, they will not regard in you either consanguinity or faith? They will please you with their mouths, while their hearts will be averse from you; for the greater part of them are wicked doers."

But though *Mahomet* found himself sufficiently powerful to despise the Heathen idolaters, who were at that time not numerous, he did not venture to treat the *Jews*, or the *Christians*, in the same manner. We find no precept in the *Koran* forbidding to make, or to observe, treaties with *them*; and it must be acknowledged that in general, *Mahometans* have, in this respect, acted with more honour and good faith than *Christians*, who have often, and in the most shameful manner, violated the most solemn treaties made with *Mahometans*.‡ But such men, whatever they may call

* *Koran*, I. p. 83. (P.)

† *Ibid.* I. pp. 237, 238. (P.)

‡ Sir Paul Rycout appears to have incorrectly represented it as "the doctrine of the *Alcoran*, that it is lawful for the *Mahometans* to break covenants entered

themselves, are certainly not properly Christians ; at least they do not act in a Christian-like manner, observing the precepts of the Gospel.

Mahomet having propagated his religion with great success by force of arms, presumed upon it so far as to hold it an argument of the truth of his mission, and to promise the continuance of it to his followers. Speaking of unbelievers, he says, " Do they not see that we come on their lands and straiten their borders ? " * And he represents the Divine Being as saying to him, " Turn aside, therefore, from them for a season ; and see the calamities which shall afflict them ; for they shall see thy future success and prosperity. " † " Thou art not a soothsayer, or a madman. Do they say that he is a poet ? We wait concerning him some adverse turn of fortune. Say, wait ye my ruin ? Verily, I wait with you the time of your destruction. " But in this it is possible that he might refer to their punishment after death.

But Jesus foretold the universal spread of his religion in circumstances very different from those of *Mahomet*, even when he at the same time foretold his own sufferings and death, which, to all appearance, would have put an end to his religion ; as such an event certainly would have done to that of *Mahomet*, as it did to the pretensions of his rivals *Moisseilama* and *Aswad*, and several others. Jesus gained more real and permanent converts by his sufferings, than *Mahomet* did by fighting. When a man suffers pain, and especially death, rather than abandon the profession of his faith, he gives the strongest evidence that man can give, of his own full persuasion of its truth ; and there may be circumstances in which the real persuasion of a competent witness of any thing, will be a sufficient proof of the reality of the fact ; because the supposition of his being deceived shall be more improbable than that of the fact, however extraordinary, being true ; and especially when great numbers join in attesting the same thing. But it is very possible for men to endeavour to force others to profess what they do not believe themselves, since their interest, or some other motive, may lead them to act this part.

Besides making use of threats and violence in the propagation of his religion, *Mahomet* promised rewards in this life, as well as in another, to those who should embrace his

into with Infidels, when they please ; " and " that they may take advantage of the unwary. " Compare *Rycaut's* " Present State of the Ottoman Empire, " (B. i. ad fin.) 1668, p. 96, with *Reland*, pp. 87, 88.

* *Koran*. (P.)

† *Ibid*. II. p. 316. (P.)

religion. He offered *Malec*, a general of some *Arab* tribes, with whom he had been at war, and whom he had defeated, "not only the restitution of his effects, as well as his family," which had been taken from him in the war, "but likewise a present of a hundred camels, if he would forsake his idolatrous worship;" and in consequence of this, he declared himself a convert, and Mahomet made "him the commandant of all his brethren that should embrace the new religion."* On the contrary, Jesus promised to his followers nothing but persecution in this world, and happiness in the world to come. All his denunciations of judgment respected a future state, and had no relation whatever to this. In every respect *his kingdom was not of this world*. His servants did not fight, but suffer and die for him.

That all the conversions to *Mahometanism* were not made by argument, is evident from whole provinces becoming *Mussulmen* at the same time. In the tenth year of the *Hegyra*, Ali "converted the whole tribe of *Hamdan*, as it is said, in one day; and their example was quickly followed by all the inhabitants of that province, except only some—who being *Christians*, chose rather to pay tribute."†

Charlemagne, indeed, and some other Christian princes, made converts to Christianity in the same manner, compelling whole nations to be baptized, and declare themselves Christians.‡ But this was not a method adopted, or recommended, by Christ, or the apostles. They always addressed themselves to the understandings of individual men, and therefore the conversions they made were gradual, as requiring time for due attention and rational conviction, each person thinking and acting for himself, independent of his superior, or any other person whatever. And yet in this manner, which necessarily required much time, Christianity made what in these circumstances may justly be called a rapid progress; there being probably a society of Christians in every city of the *Roman* empire, before the death of the apostles, though no whole nation professed Christianity. And it was three hundred years before any civil governor became a Christian, so as to have it in his power to proceed as *Mahomet* did in his life-time.

Real conversions made in the manner in which *Mahomet* made his, without the evidence of proper miracles, could not be many. Accordingly we find through the whole of the

* *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. p. 188., (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 205. (P.)

‡ See Vol. IX. pp. 116, 167.

Koran, grievous complaints of the number of unbelievers, and the contempt with which they treated him and his mission. "This people hath accused the revelation which thou hast brought, of falsehood, although it be the truth."* "Whenever a *sura*" (that is, a section in the *Koran*) "is sent down, there are some of them who say, Which of you hath this caused to increase in faith? It will increase the faith of those who believe, and they shall rejoice; but unto those in whose hearts there is an infirmity, it will add farther doubt unto their present doubt; and they shall die in their infidelity.—And whenever a *sura* is sent down, they look at one another, saying, Doth any one see you; then do they turn aside."† "Do they say, He is a madman? Nay, he hath come unto them with the truth; but the greater part of them detest the truth."‡ "The unbelievers say, Hearken not unto this *Koran*; but use vain discourse during the reading thereof."§ "It wanteth little but that the unbelievers strike thee down with their malicious looks, when they hear the admonition of the *Koran*."|| "What aileth the unbelievers, that they run before thee in companies, on the right-hand and on the left?"¶ This was before *Mahomet* had any power to guard himself against such insults as these. No unbelievers behaved in this manner towards the close of his life.

A very common objection to *Mahomet*, as we find by the *Koran*, was that of his being a madman, and out of his senses, on account of his pretences to inspiration. "The *Meccans* say,—Thou art certainly possessed with a devil: wouldst thou not have come unto us with an attendance of angels, if thou hadst spoken truth?"** "The ungodly say, Ye follow no other than a man who is distracted. Behold what they liken thee unto. But they are deceived; neither can they find a just occasion to reproach thee."†† "They say, Shall we abandon our gods for a distracted poet?" "Thou art not a soothsayer or a madman. I will afflict him‡‡ with grievous calamity, for he has devised and prepared contemptuous expressions to ridicule the *Koran*. May he be accursed: how contemptuously has he prepared the same!" Again he says, "May he be cursed; how maliciously has

* *Koran*, I. p. 167. (P.)

† *Ibid.* I. pp. 263, 264. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 182. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 346. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 455. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* p. 460. (P.)

** *Ibid.* p. 69. (P.)

†† *Ibid.* p. 202. (P.)

‡‡ This is supposed to refer to a person styled *Al Wahed al Mogheira*, a principal man among the *Koreish*. (P.) See *Koran*, pp. 75, 469, *Notes*.

he prepared the same!—Then he looked and frowned, and put on an austere countenance; then he turned back, and was elated with pride; and he said, This is no other than a piece of magic, borrowed from others. These are only the words of a man. I will cast him to be burned in hell.”*

Scepticism was not confined to the open enemies of *Mahomet*. We find in the *Koran* several intimations that some of his followers entertained doubts respecting his revelations, though they found their account in their adherence to him. “Thy people are also jealous, and in doubt concerning the *Koran*.”† “We well know that there are some of you who charge the same with imposture; but it shall surely be an occasion of grievous sighing unto the infidels; for it is the truth of a certainty.”‡ *Mahomet* was also much offended at the levity with which his audience sometimes behaved during his preaching. “When they see any merchandising or sport, they flock thereto, and leave thee standing up in thy pulpit.”§ We do not read of the disciples of Jesus, or of the apostles, behaving in this manner.

When conversions were made in the manner that has been represented, and whole tribes became *Mussulmen* at once, we cannot wonder that there were many defections from this new religion. Accordingly we find some considerable instances of relapses in the life of *Mahomet*. *Al Aswad*, the chief of several tribes of *Arabs*, apostatized from *Mahometanism*, and set up for himself the year in which *Mahomet* died, and he was at the head of a great party in *Arabia*; but *Mahomet* sent some troops against him, who joining with some of his revolted followers, broke into his house in the night, and cut off his head. This was on the very night in which *Mahomet* died. From the beginning of this rebellion, as it is called, to this extinction of it, was four months. ||

After the death of *Mahomet*, many of those who had professed his religion abandoned it.¶ On that event the people of *Mecca*, who had been conquered, and compelled to yield to *Mahomet*, thought of revolting, and resuming their ancient religion and form of government, but they were diverted from it by *Sohail Ebn Amru*; who, in his address to them,

* *Koran*, II. p. 469. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 32. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 458. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 438. (P.)

¶ *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* pp. 239, 240. (P.)

¶ No less than twelve classes of them are enumerated in the *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. p. 279. (P.)

said, "O ye *Meccans*, ye were the last of the *Arabs* that embraced *Islamism*,* and will ye be the first that shall renounce it?"

The success of *Mahomet* encouraged several others to act a similar part, and some of them had as great success for a time as he had had; and it was not by reason, but only by force, that they were reduced. The principal of these was *Moisseilama*, who "headed an embassy sent by his tribe to *Mohammed*, in the ninth year of the *Hejra*, and professed himself a Moslem," but then set up for himself; "pretending to be joined with *Mahomet* in the commission to recall mankind from idolatry.—And he published written revelations in imitation of the *Koran*," and proposed to *Mahomet* to divide the world between them. Writing to *Mahomet*, he began with this expression: "From *Moisseilama* the apostle of God, to *Mohammed* the apostle of God." But *Mahomet* in reply said, "From *Mohammed*, the apostle of God, to *Moisseilama* the liar," and sent an army against him. But "during the few months which *Mohammed* lived, after this revolt, *Moisseilama* rather gained than lost ground, and grew very formidable." However, "in the eleventh year of the *Hejra*," *Abubeker* sent against him an army of forty thousand men, commanded by *Ebn al Walid*, who was at first repulsed, with the loss of 1200 men; but, rallying his troops, he defeated *Moisseilama*, when no less than ten thousand men were killed on the spot.† This is a sufficient proof that *Moisseilama* had made considerable progress in the same way that *Mahomet* had done, and in much less time. *Sejáj* also, a woman, pretended to prophecy. She was followed by her own tribe, and several others, and was married to *Moisseilama*.‡

Another prophet, of the name of *Toleiha*, arose in the "eleventh year of the *Hejra*;" but on being defeated in battle, he joined the Caliph *Omar*.§ Many other persons pretending to inspiration arose among the *Mahometans* in later times, especially *Al Hakem*, who gave out "that the Deity resided in his person," and therefore claimed divine honours.|| One *Karmata*, another pretended prophet, was the founder of the sect of *Kurmatians*, which continued and even increased after his death, and gave great disturbance to the caliphs at *Bagdad*, "at length establishing a consider-

* *Mod. Univ. Hist.* p. 274. (P.)

† *Sales Prelim. Disc.* pp. 238, 239; *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. pp. 260, 281. (P.)

‡ *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* pp. 240, 241. (P.) § *Ibid.* p. 240. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 242. (P.)

able principality.”* Mr. Sale, in his *Introduction* to the *Koran*,† and also the writers of the *Universal History*, give an account of several other pretenders to prophecy among the Mahometans.

We find many divisions among the followers of Jesus, but no person, from the beginning of the world to the present day, ever undertook to act the part that he did, offering himself to die, and engaging to rise again at a fixed time, in proof of his doctrine; and this was a kind of evidence peculiarly suitable to his doctrine, which was that of an universal resurrection. Among the *Jews*, indeed, there were many who pretended to be the *Messiah*; but by no means such an one as Jesus had been. They were ready enough to fight, like *Mahomet*, but not voluntarily to suffer and die. The part that Jesus had acted precluded all attempts at imitation. There were many sects of religion after the time of Jesus, but none of their leaders thought of setting up for themselves in opposition to him. This was not the case of Mahomet.

PART III.

HAVING now considered the manner in which *Mahometanism* was promulgated, which certainly furnishes no presumptive evidence of its divine origin, but a striking contrast with that of Jesus, the evidence of whose divine mission is greatly illustrated by it; I shall proceed to consider the religion itself; and I doubt not but to all who are impartial, it will appear to be such as an impostor *might* have advanced; being such as was not unlikely to recommend itself to *Mahomet's* countrymen, and to a great part of mankind.

In order to acquire fame and power, as the founder of a religion, it was absolutely necessary that a man should have something *new* to propose, and also something striking. It could not, therefore, be such as all men were prepared to receive immediately. Some difficulty must necessarily be in the way of every thing that is novel. And we have seen that for a long time *Mahomet* met with much opposition, and that his religion made but little progress till he became possessed of the power to enforce it.

1. I have observed, that it is probable that *Mahomet* commenced with being a sincere religionist, having rather an

* Sale's *Prelim. Disc.* pp. 245, 246. (P.)

† *Ibid.* pp. 246—248.

enthusiastic turn of mind; and that it was this that led him to retire to his cave, near *Mecca*. It is not improbable also, that, in consequence of frequent meditation on the subject, his acquaintance with *Jews*, and his conversations with the *Nestorian** monk, he was very early struck with the absurdity and impiety of polytheism, to which a great part of his countrymen were addicted, and also with the great and manifest infringement on the doctrine of the unity of God, by almost all the Christians of that age, who had likewise brought their religion into contempt by their divisions and animosities on the subject of the doctrine of the Trinity. This article, therefore, of the strict *unity of God*, it is probable that Mahomet was very conscientious in making the fundamental principle of his religion; and so far he had great merit. His demerit consisted in the methods that he took to enforce that great truth, and his joining with it other things of his own invention, or adopted from other religions, which were calculated to recommend his system to those to whom it was to be proposed.

In the time of *Mahomet* the *Arabs* were by no means universally Heathen idolaters. Many of them had been converted to *Judaism*, and many to *Christianity*; and it is probable that there were others in a state of indifference with respect to all religion, seeing the absurdity of idolatry, but without joining themselves to the Jews or the Christians. *Mecca*, however, was the centre of the Heathen worship. "There were," it is said, "no less than three hundred and sixty idols (equalling in number the days of their year) in or about the Caaba,† the chief of whom was *Hobal*, brought from Belka, in Syria, by Amru Ebn Lohai; pretending it would procure them rain when they wanted it."‡ And the *Ishmaelites* paid divine worship to any fine stone that they met with. *Mahomet* had great merit in putting a stop to this absurd worship, and also to some shocking and inhuman customs to which the *Heathen* Arabs were addicted; especially that of burying their daughters alive,§ and also that of "sacrificing their children

* Nestorianism bordered so much on Unitarianism, that the Nestorians were generally charged with it. They held that Jesus was born a man like other men, but, that afterwards the second person in the Trinity resided in him. (P.) See *supra*, p. 313; Vol. VIII. pp. 534—540.

† See *supra*, p. 326, Note *.

‡ Sale's *Prelim. Disc.* p. 26. (P.)

§ "Some say, that when an Arab had a daughter born, if he intended to bring her up, he sent her, clothed in a garment of wool or hair, to keep camels or sheep in the desert, but, if he designed to put her to death, he let her live till she became six years old, and then said to her mother, perfume her, and adorn her, that I may

to their idols;" which they often did, after making a vow "that if they had a certain number of sons born, they would offer one of them in sacrifice."*

Several passages in the *Koran*, on the subject of the unity of God, are so emphatical, that I shall quote them at full length. They are by far the most sublime and valuable parts of the work, and cannot fail to be read with satisfaction by *Unitarians* of every description, *Jews* and *Christians*.

"Believe in God and his apostles, and say not, There are three Gods.—God is but one God. Far be it from him that he should have a son.—Christ doth not proudly disdain to be a servant unto God."† "They are infidels who say, Verily, *God* is *Christ*, the son of *Mary*. Say unto them, And who could obtain any thing from *God* to the contrary, if he pleased to destroy *Christ*, the son of *Mary*, and his mother, and all those who are upon the earth? For unto *God* belongeth the kingdom of heaven and earth, and whatsoever is contained between them; he createth what he pleaseth, and *God* is almighty."‡ "They are surely infidels, who say, Verily, *God* is *Christ*, the son of *Mary*, since *Christ* said, O children of *Israel!* serve *God*, my *Lord* and your *Lord*.—They are certainly infidels who say, *God* is the third of three: for there is no *God* besides one *God*.—*Christ*, the son of *Mary*, is no more than an apostle; other apostles have preceded him, and his mother was a woman of veracity: they both ate food."§

"When *God* shall say unto *Jesus* at the last day, O *Jesus*, son of *Mary!* hast thou said unto men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides *God*, he shall answer, Praise be unto thee! It is not for me to say that which I ought not. If I had said so, thou wouldst surely have known it. Thou knowest what is in me, but I know not what is in thee, for thou art the knower of secrets. I have not spoken to them any other than what thou didst command me; namely, Worship *God*, my *Lord* and your *Lord*; and I was a witness of their actions while I stayed among them; but since thou hast taken me to thyself, thou hast been the watcher over them; for thou art witness of all things. If thou punish them, they are surely thy servants; and if thou forgive them, thou art mighty and wise."||

carry her to her mothers; which being done, the father led her to a well or pit dug for that purpose, and, having bid her to look down into it, pushed her in headlong, as he stood behind her, and then filling up the pit, levelled it with the rest of the ground." Sale's *Prelim. Disc.* p. 174.

* *Ibid.* p. 176. (P.) † *Koran*, I. p. 126. (P.) ‡ *Ibid.* p. 133. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 146. (P.) || *Ibid.* p. 156. (P.)

“The Jews say, *Ezra* is the son of *God*, and Christians say, *Christ* is the son of *God*.—They take their priests and their monks for their Lords, besides *God*, and *Christ*, the son of *Mary*; although they are commanded to worship one *God* only: there is no *God* but he; far be that from him which they associate with him.”* “They say, the Merciful hath begotten issue. Now have ye uttered an impious thing: it wanteth little but that on occasion thereof, the heavens be rent, and the earth cleave in sunder, and the mountains be overthrown and fall; for that they attribute children unto the Merciful; whereas it becometh not *God* to beget children. Verily there is none in heaven, or on earth, but shall approach the Merciful as his servant.”† “Remember when *Lockman* ‡ said unto his son, as he admonished him, O my son, give not a partner unto *God*; for polytheism is a great impiety.”§ “Say, *God* is one *God*: the eternal *God*: he begetteth not, neither is he begotten: and there is not any one like unto him.”||

So much stress did *Mahomet* lay on the doctrine of the Divine unity, that he thought any offence to be pardonable except an infringement upon it. “Surely *God* will not pardon the giving him an equal.”¶ “Verily *God* will not pardon the giving him a companion, but he will pardon any crime besides that.”**

2. In order to recommend his religion to his countrymen, *Mahomet* always asserted, that it was the religion of their ancestors, †† and of the ancient patriarchs, uncorrupted; and also the same in substance with that of the *Jews* and *Christians*. “Say, we believe in *God*, and that which hath been sent down unto us, and that which was sent down unto *Abraham*, and *Ishmael*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and the tribes; and that which was delivered to *Moses*, and *Jesus*, and the

* *Koran*, I. pp. 243, 244. (P.)

† *Ibid.* pp. 137, 138. (P.)

‡ “Surnamed the Wise,” said to have been “an Abyssinian of Ethiopia or Nubia,” and “sold among the Israelites, in the reigns of David and Solomon.—He is, by many, supposed to be the same with the *Æsop* of the Greeks.” *Gen. Biog. Dict.* 1784, VIII. pp. 300—302. “Si *Lockman* n’est pas le même qu’*Esop*, il est difficile de décider si les Orientaux ont pris des Grecs l’invention des Fables, ou si les Grecs l’ont empruntée des Orientaux. Les Fables et les Apologues paroissent néanmoins plus conformes au génie des peuples d’Orient qu’à celui des Nations Occidentales.” *Nouv. Dict. Hist.* IV. p. 132.

§ *Koran*, II. p. 263. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 517. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* I. p. 104. (P.)

** *Ibid.* p. 117. (P.)

†† “The former part of that well-known sentence which now constitutes the Mahometan confession of faith, *there is no God but God*, is said to have been in use amongst the ancient Arabs long before the time of Mahomet, and was expressive of their belief in the unity of the Supreme Being. (Vide *Mill. de Mohammedismo ante Moham.* p. 11.)” *White’s Sermons (Notes)*, p. xxxii.

prophets, from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them, and to him are we resigned.* “He have ordained you the religion which he commanded *Noah*, and which we revealed unto thee, O *Mohammed*, and which we commanded *Abraham*, and *Moses*, and *Jesus*; saying, Observe this religion, and be not divided therein. The worship of one *God*, to which thou invitest them, is grievous to the unbelievers. God will elect thereto whom he pleaseth.—Those who lived in times past, were not divided among themselves, until after that the knowledge of *God’s* unity had come unto them, through their own perverseness.”†

As *Mahomet* did not pretend to introduce a religion essentially different from those of the *Jews* and the *Christians*, he did not deny the authority of the *Hebrew* or *Christian* Scriptures. “Say, I believe in all the Scriptures which God has sent down.”‡ “The *Koran* is not a new invented fiction; but a confirmation of those scriptures which have been revealed before it, and a distinct explication of every thing necessary.”§ “Whereas the book of *Moses* was revealed before the *Koran*, to be a guide and a mercy: and this is a book confirming the same in the Arabic tongue.”||

But, then, *Mahomet* pretended that both the *Jews* and the *Christians* had so corrupted their scriptures, that they were of little or no use. They were, therefore, to be urged to receive the *Koran*, as necessary to their instruction. “They who have inherited the Scriptures,—are certainly in a perplexing doubt concerning the same. Wherefore invite them to receive the sure faith, and be urgent with them, as thou hast been commanded.”¶

3. *Mahomet* had little merit of invention with respect to his religion; nor, indeed, as we have seen, did he pretend to it. Almost all his institutions were borrowed from others; some from the ancient *Arabians*, some from the *Jews*, some from the *Christians*, and some from the *Magians*.

The sacrifices, and other ceremonies attending the pilgrimage to *Mecca*, were almost all observed by the *Pagan* Arabs, many ages before the time of *Mahomet*;** especially “the compassing of the *Caaba*, the running between *Safâ* and *Merwâ*, and the throwing of the stones in *Mina* ;” which some say was “in imitation of *Abraham*, who, meeting the devil in that place, and being by him disturbed in his devotions, or tempted to disobedience, when he was going to

* *Koran*, I. p. 72. (P.)

† *Ibid.* II. p. 351. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 53. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 372. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* p. 351. (P.)

** *Sale’s Prelim. Disc.* p. 160. (P.)

sacrifice his son, was commanded by God to drive him away by throwing stones at him; though others pretend this rite to be as old as Adam, who also put the devil to flight in the same place, and by the same means.*

Mahomet preferred *Friday* for the purpose of public worship, "because it was the day on which the people used to be assembled long before his time; though such assemblies were had, perhaps, rather on a civil, than a religious account."† He prohibited the eating of swine's flesh; but the Arabs had not been used to eat it, any more than the Jews.‡

Mahomet adopted many of the opinions and customs of the *Jews*, who were very numerous and powerful in some parts of *Arabia*; but few of them becoming proselytes, and creating him much opposition, he, towards the close of his life, entertained the greatest aversion to them.§ *Jerusalem* was the first *Keblah* that he recommended for pilgrimages, and it continued to be so "for six or seven months;" but he changed it "for the *Caaba*," for the sake of gaining the *Heathen Arabs*.||

Mahomet allowed the utility of monastic institutions, and they have been in some measure imitated by his followers, among whom there are dervises, who very much resemble the *Mendicants* among Christians, as they also do the *Faquirs* of *Indostan*, though we meet with no precept in the *Koran* to this purpose. Speaking of the followers of Jesus and the apostles, as to the monastic state, he says, "They instituted the same; (we did not prescribe it to them,) only out of a desire to please God; yet they observed not the same as it ought truly to have been observed."¶

He probably borrowed from the *Jews* their notion of "a thin veil dividing Paradise from hell;"** from the Persian *Magi*, his "black-eyed nymphs of Paradise;"†† and from both *Jews* and the *Magi*, his "seven distinct apartments in hell."‡‡

Mahomet's prohibition of the use of wine and of gaming, was his own, intended, it is said, to prevent quarrels in his army,§§ as well as the neglect of religious duties, and inde-

* *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* pp. 160, 161. (P.) † *Ibid.* p. 199. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 170. (P.) § *Ibid.* p. 46. (P.) || *Ibid.* p. 145. (P.)

¶ *Koran*, II. p. 421. (F.) ** *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* I. p. 126. (P.)

†† *Ibid.* p. 134. (P.) ‡‡ *Ibid.* p. 124. (P.)

§§ "This prohibition is said to have been occasioned by a drunken quarrel among the chiefs of his army at play, which had like to have set them altogether by the ears, and produced great disorder and confusion in his affairs. Others relate, that *Mahomet* passing by a place where a wedding was celebrated, and

gency in the performance of them ; a quarrel from this cause being said to have been nearly fatal to him."* But certainly the use of wine may not only be innocent, but beneficial ; and, therefore, it was not forbidden to the *Jews* or *Christians*, but only temperance recommended with respect to it, as to other things.

4. The religion of *Mahomet*, as collected from the *Koran*, has by no means the recommendation of consistency ; and his precepts varied with his circumstances. When any thing perplexed him, he always had recourse to a new chapter in the *Koran*, and this never failed to answer his purpose.† Accordingly we find many alterations, and those avowed to be such, in the *Koran*. "Whatever verse we shall abrogate, or cause thee to forget, we will bring a better than it, or one like unto it."‡ The passages in the *Koran*, which were thus abrogated, are enumerated by the *Mahometan* commentators, and divided into three classes : "the *first*, where the letter and the sense are both abrogated ; the *second*, where the letter only is abrogated, but the sense remaining ; and the *third*, where the sense is abrogated, though the letter remains."§

This practice of altering the *Koran* was an easy remedy for any inconvenience into which the author of a new religion might bring himself, but it is certainly very liable to suspicion. The Divine Being may, no doubt, change his positive institutions, adapting them to new circumstances ; but it is more probable that uninspired men will change theirs, from their not being able to foresee the situations into which they will be brought. The many changes that *Mahomet* made in his own life-time, has much the appearance of human weakness and want of foresight. The great distance between *Moses* and *Jesus* makes a case very different from this ; and yet the apostles and other *Jews*, when they became *Christians*, did not lay aside any of the institutions of *Moses*, any more than *Jesus* himself ; who said that he came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it.

5. It will be said that the religion of *Mahomet* abounds with austerities, such as no man would have devised with a view to recommend it to general acceptance. But it is to

seeing nothing but friendship and jollity amongst them, blessed the creature of wine, which made cheerful the heart of man ; but returning the same way some time after, and finding the place all strowed with dead and dying men, occasioned by a drunken fray, he cursed the creature of wine, and forbid it to all his followers." *Reland*, p. 66.

* *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. p. 126. (P.)

† *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* p. 84. (P.)

‡ *Koran*, I. p. 21. (P.)

§ *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. p. 321. (P.)

be observed, that all religions have abounded with austerities, except the Christian; and the *Jewish* religion has been greatly misrepresented in this respect; and those austerities have always tended to recommend those religions. The *Heathen* religions had the most painful and cruel rites. What else were human sacrifices, which were universal; the cutting of their flesh in some of their ceremonies, and the burning of widows with their husbands in *Indostan*,* and the dreadful but voluntary sufferings of their *Faquirs!* † All mankind have thought that they must make some sacrifice of their own inclination and pleasure to please their gods, and any kind of sacrifice has appeared to them to be preferable to that of their vices. Accordingly, we find men submitting to the most painful austerities, and of long continuance, who have discovered no command of their passions in common life, and who made themselves amends for the pains to which they sometimes subjected themselves, by the most excessive indulgence at other times. There is nothing, therefore, peculiar to *Mahometanism* in this, or that would, upon the whole, deter a proselyte. The most rigorous of the monastic orders among Christians have generally been the most in vogue. And with respect to both the *Catholics* and the *Mahometans*, superstition generally takes the place of moral virtue; more stress being laid upon the former than the latter.

The *Mahometans* pray five times a-day; ‡ but their prayers are very short, and they fast one month in the year; but it is only in the day time; for they may eat after sunset.§

* See *supra*, pp. 44, 45, Note §.

† See *ibid.* pp. 45, 46; Mr. Ward's *Extracts*, No. 1.

" On rich Golconda's walls
Ten tedious nights, and ten long sleepless days,
The self-tormented Bramin sits; if *Fo*
Well-pleas'd behold his pain, it reckns not him
That torn with hooks of steel his mangled flesh
Pours streams of blood, or from his burning head
With livid light the spiral flames ascend."

Poems by Dr. Roberts, of Eton, 1776, p. 22.

‡ "Their *Salah* [worship] is to be performed five times every day, at *Mosque*, (or *church*,) unless in case of extraordinary business or hindrance; and even then, though they may be prevented at the set times, yet they are not wholly excused from the performance of it, but are obliged to do it afterwards, either in the *Mosques*, or some other convenient place.

"The stated times of public worship are—In the morning, when the day-light is broke;—about two of the clock, in the afternoon;—about four of the clock;—just after candle-lighting;—and the last, about an hour and a half after night. In all these times of service they differ as to the number of their devotions, (which are all taken out of the *Alcoran*,) and also the manner of performing them." *Pitts's Account*, Ed. 3, 1731, pp. 50, 51.

§ "They begin their *fast* the next day after the moon appears, and fast till they

And that too much account is made of these outward acts may be inferred from the summaries of their religion, which they say is comprehended under four heads, "prayer, alms, fasting, and the pilgrimage to Mecca,"* all which may be performed without moral virtue. It is also evident, from the accounts of all travellers, that the thing on which the *Mahometans* lay the greatest stress, as of the most consequence to recommend them to the favour of God, is the pilgrimage to *Mecca*.

How different is this from the summary of the religion of *Moses*, which our Saviour says is comprehended in these two precepts, [*Mark* xii. 30, 31, 33,] "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and—thy neighbour as thyself," and that this is better "than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices"!

If the *Mahometans* have many restrictions in some things, they have few in others, especially with respect to women, every man being allowed to have four wives, or concubines.† But I think it may be inferred from the *Koran*, that besides this number of wives, or concubines, the *Mahometans* are allowed to do what they please with women taken captive in war. "Now are the true believers happy—who keep themselves from carnal knowledge of any woman, except their wives, or the captives which their right hands possess; for as to them they shall be blameless."‡ The law of *Moses* has a very different complexion in this respect. According to this, no captive woman could be used as a prostitute. She could only become a lawful wife.

6. *Mahomet* himself claimed an unlimited indulgence with respect to women, which is certainly no recommendation of his character; and had this claim been advanced in an early period of his pretended mission, it would, I doubt not, have defeated his whole scheme. But afterwards, besides the peculiar privilege that he might lawfully marry as many

see the next moon; unless it so happen that the weather hinder the sight of the moon, and then they complete thirty days' fast, after they have seen the *Ramadan* moon.

"As soon as they see the new moon in sea-port towns, they fire a cannon to give notice when they are to begin the fast; upon which signal they will immediately make provision for the night, and rise every morning about two or three o'clock, (which I reckon the night,) to eat and drink, and then continue without meat or drink, *smoking*, or *chewing tobacco*, or *taking snuff*. (which three things are much in use amongst them,) till it be half an hour after sunset. Nay, there are some so scrupulous, that they question whether it be lawful for them to go into the room where there is a *grist-mill*, for fear any flour should get into their throats, and through their nostrils." *Pitts*, pp. 80, 81.

* *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* pp. 93, 142—162. (P.) See *Pitts*, pp. 75—78.

† *Sale's Prelim. Disc.* l. p. 177. (P.) ‡ *Koran*, II. p. 178. (P.)

wives, and have as many concubines as he pleased—he might alter the turns of his wives, and take such of them to his bed as he thought fit. He might also marry within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. Also “no man might marry any of his wives” after his death, or after their being divorced by him.*

“O prophet, we have allowed thee thy wives unto whom thou hast given their dower, and also the slaves whom thy right hand possesseth, of the booty which God hath granted thee, and the daughters of thy uncle and the daughters of thy aunts, both on thy father’s side, and on thy mother’s side, who have fled with thee from *Mecca*, and any other believing woman, if she give herself unto the prophet; in case the prophet desireth to take her to wife. This is a peculiar privilege granted unto thee, above the rest of the true believers;—lest it should be deemed a crime in thee:—for God is gracious and merciful. Thou mayest postpone the turn of such of thy wives as thou shalt please—and her whom thou shalt desire, of those whom thou shalt have before rejected; and it shall be no crime in thee. This will be more easy, that they may be entirely content, and may not be grieved, but may be well pleased with what thou shalt give every of them.”† In fact, *Mahomet* had twelve wives with whom he actually cohabited, and he had some others with whom he had no commerce, and eleven concubines, to whom, when he died, he gave their liberty.‡

Mahomet acquired one of his wives in a manner peculiarly disreputable. Being smitten with the beauty of *Zeinib*, the wife of his freedman and adopted son *Zeid*, the latter, to please him, divorced her, and he married her, though both she herself, who was the daughter of one of *Mahomet*’s aunt’s, and her relations were averse to the match. This giving offence to many of his followers, he produced a chapter in the *Koran* in his justification. “It is not fit for a true believer of either sex, when *God* and his apostle have decreed a thing, that they should have the liberty of choosing a different matter of their own; and whoever is disobedient unto *God* and his apostle, surely erreth with a manifest error. And remember when thou saidst to him unto whom *God* had been gracious, and on whom thou also hadst conferred favours, Keep thy wife to thyself, and fear *God*: and thou didst conceal that in thy

* Sale’s *Prelim. Disc.* p. 182. (P.)

† *Koran*, II. pp. 281, 282. (P.)

‡ *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. pp. 239–245. (P.)

mind which *God* had determined to discover, and didst fear men, whereas it was more just that thou shouldst fear *God*. But when *Zeid* had determined the matter concerning her, and had resolved to divorce her, we joined her in marriage unto thee, lest a crime should be charged on the true believers, in marrying the wives of their adopted sons, when they have determined the matter concerning them, and the command of *God* is to be performed. No crime is to be charged on the prophet, as to what *God* hath allowed him; conformable to the ordinance of *God* with regard to those who preceded him, (for the command of *God* is a determinate decree,) who brought the messages of *God*, and feared him, and feared none besides *God*; and *God* is a sufficient accomptant. *Mohammed* is not the father of any man among you: but the apostle of *God*, and the seal of the prophets: and *God* knoweth all things.”*

Mahomet must have been much pressed before he would have had recourse to so elaborate a vindication of his conduct, as this. However, these pretended revelations of particular chapters in the *Koran* on the whole answered his purpose so well, that he sometimes had recourse to them where there does not appear to have been a *nodus deo vindice dignus*;† as to prevent unnecessary intrusions upon him, and other liberties which he wished to check. Of this take the following example:

“O true believers, enter not the houses of the prophet, unless it be permitted you to eat meat with him, without waiting his convenient time: but when ye are invited, then enter. And when ye shall have eaten, disperse yourselves; and stay not to enter into familiar discourse; for this incommodeth the prophet. He is ashamed to bid you depart; but *God* is not ashamed of the truth. And when ye ask of the prophet’s wives what ye may have occasion for, ask it of them from behind a curtain. This will be more pure for your hearts and their hearts. Neither is it fit for you to give any uneasiness to the apostle of *God*, or to marry his wives after him for ever; for this would be a grievous thing in the sight of *God*.”‡ “O true believers, raise not your voices above the voice of the prophet; neither speak loud unto him

* *Koran*, II. pp. 278—280. (P.)

† “Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit.”

Hor. de Art. Poet. L. 191.

“Nor let a God, in person stand display’d,
Unless the lab’ring plot deserve his aid.”

Francis.

‡ *Koran*, II. p. 283. (P.)

in discourse, as ye speak loud unto one another, lest your works become vain, and ye perceive it not. Verily, they who lower their voices in the presence of the apostle of *God*, are those whose hearts *God* hath disposed unto piety: they shall obtain piety, and a great reward. As to those who call unto thee from without the inner apartments; the greater part of them do not understand the respect due to thee. If they wait with patience until thou come forth unto them, it will certainly be better for them: but *God* is inclined to forgive, and merciful.”*

Beside the charge of incontinence at a time when it was least excusable, (for he was above fifty before he took any of the liberties above-mentioned,) *Mahomet* is charged with some acts of excessive and unnecessary cruelty, and even treachery. Eight persons having been concerned in the murder of his shepherd, and having seized upon some of his camels, whose milk and urine he had allowed them to drink for some disorder to which they were subject, he “ordered their hands and their feet to be cut off, their eyes to be put out with a red-hot iron, and their bodies to be fixed to crosses, where they miserably expired.”† He once ordered seven hundred Jews to be put to the sword, but was persuaded to change their punishment for that of perpetual banishment.‡

When *Sofián Ebn Kháled* was making preparations to attack him, he gave a commission to *Abdállah* “to assassinate him;” and when he had succeeded, and “imparted the news of it to him, he gave him, in token of friendship, the cane he had in his hand; which *Abdállah* ever afterwards carried about with him, and had it interred with him after his death.”§ *Mahomet* also endeavoured to procure the assassination of his enemy *Abu Sofián*, but the scheme failed. ||

It certainly is not necessary that every prophet should be a good, moral man, and much less that he should be a perfect character. But it might reasonably be expected that the founder of a new religion should be free from such great defects as these; and therefore they take something from the evidence, small as it otherwise was, of his prophetic office. Both *Moses* and *Jesus* were far superior characters. They both excelled in the virtues of meekness, patience, and benevolence, as well as piety, in which last it is not pre-

* *Koran*, II. pp. 387, 388. (P.)

† *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. p. 137. (P.) See *Reland*, p. 69

‡ *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. pp. 116, 117. § *Ibid.* p. 124. (P.) || *Ibid.* p. 125. (P.)

tended that *Mahomet* was particularly deficient, except so far as his false pretensions to a divine mission make him chargeable, as they certainly do, with impiety, whatever good end he might ultimately propose by such an imposture. But that devotion is of little value which does not enforce a command of our passions, and which admits of the violation of the virtues of benevolence, placability, and temperance, including chastity. Jesus was far from being chargeable with any vicious indulgence whatever, so that his example may be safely proposed to the imitation of all his disciples. He pleaded no exemption of any kind.

The same kind of indulgence to which *Mahomet* was himself addicted, he largely promised to his followers, in another world; presuming, no doubt, that the same gratifications would have equal charms for *them*; and it cannot be denied that the delights of *Mahomet's Paradise* consist wholly of sensual indulgences of the grossest kind. It is in vain to attempt to spiritualize what he says on this subject; his language is too definite, and the same expressions too often repeated, without the least mention of any thing else.

PART IV.

THAT the contrast between the doctrine of *Jesus*, who brought life and immortality to light, and that of *Mahomet* on this subject, may be the more striking, I shall recite all the particulars of *Mahomet's Paradise*, as collected from the *Koran*, and then subjoin extracts from that work, as my authorities for the account.

According to the *Koran*, *Paradise* consists of a garden, or rather of two gardens, watered by rivers, and in each of them there are also two fountains. They are so shaded by trees, that neither the sun nor the moon are visible in them. They who are admitted to this *Paradise* shall be clothed in garments of fine silk and brocade, be adorned with bracelets of gold and silver, and repose on couches, the lining of which shall be silk interwoven with gold. They shall be placed opposite to one another, so that while they recline on the couches they may have easy conversation with one another; while youths, continuing in their bloom for ever, shall attend them, going round with goblets, and cups filled either with water from the limpid fountain, or with wine. They shall also be supplied with every kind of food that shall be most pleasing to them, and with the most delicious fruits,

such as dates and pomegranates, growing on trees whose branches hang so low that they shall be easily gathered. Though they shall eat and drink whatever they wish for, they shall have an easy digestion, and the wine will not intoxicate them. They shall also be possessed of women of an equal age with themselves, created on purpose for their use, with complexions like rubies and roses, large black eyes, and swelling breasts, not subject to any impurity, and whom neither man nor genius shall have deflowered before them. They shall be kept in pavilions from public view, or when they are in the company of others, they shall refrain their looks from all but their own husbands. These delights *Mahomet* assures his followers they shall enjoy without weariness and without end.

I shall now subjoin my authorities for this account, in passages selected from the *Koran*, and if there be repetitions in them, they will serve to give a truer idea of the work, in which the repetitions are tiresome in the extreme. And yet I shall by no means quote all that it contains on this subject, some of the same particulars being mentioned several times even in the same chapter; and there are few of the chapters, though one hundred and twelve in all, in which (at least those of any considerable length) the delights of this *Paradise* are not promised to his followers, with more or fewer of the particulars above-mentioned; as the pains of hell, of which I shall afterwards give a similar account, are threatened to the unbelievers.

“For those who fear their *Lord* will be prepared high apartments in Paradise, over which shall be other apartments built; and rivers shall run beneath them.”*

“They shall be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and shall be clothed in green garments of fine silk and brocades; reposing themselves therein on thrones.”† “Therein shall be raised beds, and goblets placed before them, and cushions laid in order, and carpets ready spread.”‡ “They shall be as brethren, sitting over against one another on couches: weariness shall not affect them therein, neither shall they be cast out thence for ever.”§

“They shall see therein neither sun nor moon: and the shades thereof shall be near spreading over them, and the fruits thereof shall hang low, so as to be easily gathered. And their attendants shall go round about unto them, with

* *Koran*, II. p. 327. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 117. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 493. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 72. (P.)

vessels of silver and goblets: the bottles shall be bottles of silver, shining like glass; they shall determine the measure thereof by their wish. And therein shall they be given to drink of a cup of wine, mixed with water of *Zenjebil*, a fountain in Paradise named *Salsabil*: and youths which shall continue for ever in their bloom, shall go round to attend them: when thou seest them, thou shalt think them to be scattered pearls: and when thou lookest, there shalt thou behold delights, and a great kingdom. Upon them shall be garments of fine green silk, and of brocades, and they shall be adorned with bracelets of silver: and their *Lord* shall give them to drink of a most pure liquor; and shall say unto them, Verily, this is your reward.*

“So often as they eat of the fruit thereof for sustenance, they shall say, This is what we have formerly eaten of, and they shall be supplied with several sorts of fruit, having a mutual resemblance to one another.”† “Eat and drink with easy digestion.”‡ “A cup shall be carried round unto them, filled from a limpid fountain, for the delight of those who drink: it shall not oppress the understanding, neither shall they be inebriated therewith. And near them shall be the virgins of Paradise, refraining their looks from beholding any besides their spouses, having large black eyes, and resembling the eggs of an ostrich, covered with feathers from the dust. And they shall turn the one unto the other, and shall ask one another questions. And one of them shall say, Verily, I had an intimate friend, while I lived in the world, who said unto me, Art thou one of those who assertest the truth of the resurrection? After we shall be dead, and reduced to dust and bones, shall we surely be judged? Then he shall say to his companions, Will ye look down? And he shall look down, and shall see him in the midst of hell: and he shall say unto him, By *God*, it wanted little but thou hadst drawn me into ruin; and had it not been for the grace of my *Lord*, I had surely been one of those who have been delivered up to eternal torment.”§

“Dishes of gold shall be carried round unto them, and cups without handles: and therein shall they enjoy whatever their souls shall desire, and whatever their eyes shall delight in: and ye shall remain therein for ever.”|| “It shall be said unto them, Eat and drink with easy digestion; —leaning on couches disposed in order: and ye will espouse

* *Koran*, II. p. 475. (P.)

† *Ibid.* II. p. 457. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* I. p. 5. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 310. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 361. (P.)

them unto virgins having large black eyes.—And we will give them fruits in abundance, and flesh of the kinds which they shall desire. They shall present unto one another therein a cup of wine, wherein there shall be no vain discourse, nor any incitement unto wickedness; and youths appointed to attend them, shall go round them; beautiful as pearls hidden in their shell. And they shall approach unto one another, and shall ask mutual questions.”*

“They shall be given to drink of pure wine, sealed; the seal whereof shall be musk:—and the water mixed therewith shall be of *Tasnim*, a fountain whereof those shall drink who approach near unto the Divine presence.”†

“Youths which shall continue in their bloom for ever, shall go round about to attend them with goblets and beakers, and a cup of flowing wine: their heads shall not ache by drinking the same, neither shall their reason be disturbed: and with fruits of the sorts which they shall choose, and the flesh of birds of the kinds which they shall desire. And there shall accompany them fair damsels, having large black eyes; resembling pearls in their hidden shells; as a reward for that which they shall have wrought. They shall not hear therein any vain discourse, or any charge of sin; but only the salutation, Peace! peace! And the companions of the right hand—shall have their abode among lote-trees, free from thorns, and trees of *mauz* loaded regularly with their produce from top to bottom: under an extended shade, near a flowing water, and amidst fruits in abundance, which shall not fail; nor shall be forbidden to be gathered; and they shall repose themselves on lofty beds. Verily, we have created the damsels of Paradise of a peculiar creation; and we have made them virgins, beloved by their husbands, of equal age with them; for the delight of the companions of the right hand.”‡

“They shall enjoy wives free from all impurity,—and there shall they continue for ever.”§

“Near them shall sit the virgins of Paradise, refraining their looks from beholding any besides their spouses, and of equal age with them. This is what we are promised at the day of account. This is our provision; which shall not fail.”|| “They shall sit facing one another.—And we will espouse them to fair damsels, having large black eyes.

* *Koran*, II. p. 399. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 487. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* pp. 414, 415. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* I. pp. 5, 57, 105. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* II. p. 323. (P.)

In that place shall they call for all kinds of fruits, in full security.”*

“ For him who dreadeth the tribunal of his *Lord*, are prepared two gardens.—In each of them shall be two fountains flowing.—In each of them shall there be of every fruit, two kinds.—They shall repose on couches, the linings whereof shall be of thick silk, interwoven with gold ; and the fruit of the two gardens shall be near at hand to gather. Therein shall receive them beauteous damsels, refraining their eyes from beholding any besides their spouses : whom no man shall have deflowered before them, neither any genius :—having complexions like rubies and pearls.—And besides these there shall be two other gardens :—of a dark green.—In each of them shall be two fountains, pouring forth plenty of water.—In each of them shall be fruits, and palm-trees, and pomegranates. Therein shall be agreeable and beauteous damsels,—having fine black eyes ; and kept in pavilions from public view ;—whom no man shall have deflowered before their destined spouses, nor any genius.—Therein shall they delight themselves, lying on green cushions, and beautiful carpets.” † “ For the pious is prepared a place of bliss ; gardens planted with trees, and vineyards, and damsels with swelling breasts, of equal age with themselves, and a full cup.” ‡

The state of the wicked in hell, as described by *Mahomet*, is as dreadful as that of the good in Paradise is desirable ; and as the delights of his Paradise were altogether those of sense, the pains of his hell affect the bodily senses only. According to the *Koran*, hell has seven gates, to admit different companies of sinners at the same time. Nineteen terrible angels preside over it. It consists wholly of fire, both under and over those who are thrown into it. It throws out large sparks, as big as towers, and yellow like a camel. The black smoke issuing from it makes a shade, but not a cool one. It is subject to burning winds, and yields a sound like the braying of an ass.

At the resurrection, the wicked will be produced blind. They will be seized by the forelocks and the feet, and be bound together in fetters, with collars on their necks, and a chain of seventy cubits long. They shall have garments of pitch, and be dragged into hell on their faces. Their treasures will be heated in the fire, and with them marks

* *Koran*, II. p. 366. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 479. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* II. pp. 411, 412. (P.)

will be imprinted on their foreheads, sides, and backs. They will have no food but thorns and thistles, and the fruit of the tree *Al Zackum*, which will not satisfy hunger, but will almost choke them when they swallow it. Their drink shall be boiling water, like molten brass, which will scald their faces, and burst their bowels. They shall also drink the corruption that will flow from the bodies of the damned, and every thing else most filthy; and though they will be eager to drink like thirsty camels, they will only be able to sup it by little and little, as it will not easily pass their throats.

Wicked men will be joined to wicked women, but for what purpose is not said. But in this situation the inhabitants of *Paradise* will look down upon them, and laugh at them; and in this state, between life and death, they shall continue for ever; fresh skins being given to them as the former are burned off.

The passages in the *Koran* from which this account is extracted are the following, and many more might have been quoted for the same purpose:

“Hell hath seven gates; unto every gate a distinct company of them shall be assigned.”* “Save your souls, and those of your families, from the fire whose fuel is men and stones, over which are set angels, fiery and terrible.”† “Hell leaveth not any thing unconsumed,—neither doth it suffer any thing to escape; it scorseth men’s flesh: over the same are nineteen angels appointed. We have appointed none but angels to preside over hell-fire; and we have expressed the number of them only for an occasion of discord to the unbelievers.”‡

“Above them shall be arched fire.”§ “Their couch shall be in hell, and over them shall be coverings of fire.”|| “Go ye into the shadow of the smoke of hell, which shall ascend in three columns, and shall not shade you from the heat, neither shall it be of service against the flame; but it shall cast forth sparks as big as towers, resembling yellow camels in colour. Woe be, on that day, unto those who accused the prophets of imposture.”¶

“When they shall be thrown thereinto, they shall hear it bray like an ass; and it shall boil and almost burst for fury. So often as a company of them shall be thrown therein, the keepers thereof shall ask them, saying, Did

* *Koran*, II. p. 72. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 470. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* I. p. 192. (P.)

† *Ibid.* pp. 447, 448. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 498. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* II. p. 477. (P.)

not a warner come unto you? They shall answer, Yea, a warner came unto us, but we accused him of imposture, and said, God hath not revealed any thing; ye are in no other than a great error. And they shall say, If we had hearkened, or had rightly considered, we should not have been among the inhabitants of burning fire. And they shall confess their sins: but far be the inhabitants of burning fire from obtaining mercy!"*

"We will cause him to appear before us on the day of resurrection, blind. And he shall say, O Lord, why hast thou brought me before thee, blind, whereas before I saw clearly? God shall answer, Thus have we done because our signs came unto thee, and thou didst forget them; and in the same manner shalt thou be forgotten this day."†

"Thou shalt see the wicked on that day bound together in fetters: their inner garments shall be pitch, and fire shall cover their faces."‡ "These shall have collars on their necks."§ "The wicked shall be known by their marks; and they shall be taken by the forelocks and the feet, and shall be cast into hell.—They shall pass to and fro between the same and hot boiling water."|| "On that day they shall be dragged into the fire on their faces."¶

"The wicked shall wish to redeem himself from the punishment of that day, by giving up his children, and his wife, and his brother, and his kindred who shewed kindness unto him, and all who are in the earth; and that this might deliver him. By no means; for hell-fire, dragging them by their scalps, shall call him who shall have turned his back and fled from the faith, and shall have amassed riches, and covetously hoarded them."** "On the day of judgment their treasures shall be intensely heated in the fire of hell, and their foreheads, and their sides, and their backs, shall be stigmatized therewith; and their tormentors shall say; This is what you have treasured up for your souls; taste, therefore, that which ye have treasured up."††

Speaking of *Abu Laheb*, one of his cousins, but an inveterate opposer of him, he says, "The hands of *Abu Laheb* shall perish, and he shall perish. His riches shall

* *Koran*, II. p. 450. (P.)

† *Ibid.* pp. 150, 151. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* pp. 68, 69. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 55. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 411. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* p. 408. (P.)

** *Ibid.* p. 459. There is something incorrect in this sentence; but I have copied from Sale's Translation, and did not know how to amend it. (P.) Here is probably a personification of *hell-fire*. The word *they*, after *scalps*, was in my Author's text, but is not in Sale.

†† *Ibid.* I. p. 244. (P.)

not profit him, neither that which he hath gained. He shall go down to be burned into flaming fire; and his wife also, bearing wood, having on her neck a cord of twisted fibres of a palm-tree.*

“Verily with us are heavy fetters, and a burning fire, and food ready to choak him who swalloweth it, and painful torment.”† “They shall be cast into scorching fire to be broiled: they shall be given to drink of a boiling fountain: they shall have no food but of dry thorns and thistles; which shall not fatten, neither shall they satisfy hunger.”‡

“The companions of the left hand—shall dwell amidst burning winds and scalding water, under the shade of a black smoke, neither cool nor agreeable. Ye, O men, who have erred, and denied the resurrection as a falsehood, shall surely eat of the fruit of the tree of *Al Zakkum*, and shall fill your bellies therewith; and ye shall drink therein boiling water; and ye shall drink as a thirsty camel drinketh. This shall be their entertainment on the day of judgment.”§ They, who must dwell for ever in hell-fire, will have the boiling water given them to drink, which shall burst their bowels.”||

“Flame and smoke shall surround them like a pavilion; and if they beg relief, they shall be relieved with water like molten brass, which shall scald their faces.”¶ “God shall say to the keepers of hell, Take him, and bind him, and cast him into hell, to be burned; then put him into a chain of the length of seventy cubits.—This day he shall have no friend here; nor any food, but the filthy corruption flowing from the bodies of the damned, which none shall eat but the sinners.”** “This let them taste, to wit, scalding water, and corruption flowing from the bodies of the damned, and divers other things of the same kind.”†† “He shall have filthy water given him to drink.” “He shall sup it up by little and little, and he shall not easily let it pass his throat, because of its nauseousness. Death also shall come upon him from every quarter, yet he shall not die, and before him shall there stand prepared a grievous torment.”‡‡

“Verily hell shall be a place of ambush, a receptacle for the transgressors, who shall remain therein for ages: they

* *Koran*, II. p. 516. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 467. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 493. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 415. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* pp. 377, 378. See p. 2; I. p. 167. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* II. p. 117. (P.)

** *Ibid.* p. 457. (P.)

†† *Ibid.* p. 323. (P.)

‡‡ *Ibid.* pp. 63, 64. (P.)

shall not taste any refreshment therein, or any drink, except boiling water, and filthy corruption.* “The wicked women shall be joined to the wicked men, and the wicked men to the wicked women; but the good women shall be married to the good men, and the good men to the good women.†”

“Wherefore one day the true believers—shall laugh the infidels to scorn: lying on couches, they shall look down upon them in hell.”‡ “Whoso feareth God, he will be admonished; but the most wretched unbeliever will turn away therefrom; who shall be cast to be broiled in the greater fire of hell, wherein he shall not die, neither shall he live.”§ “Verily those who disbelieve our signs, we will surely cast to be broiled in hell-fire; so often as their skins shall be well burned, we will give them other skins in exchange, that they may taste the sharper torment.”||

Let any person peruse these passages in the *Koran*, descriptive of *Paradise* and of *Hell*;¶ and say whether they bear on the face of them any probable marks of divine revelation. They are wholly destitute of the dignity that we naturally expect from such a communication, and evi-

* *Koran*, II. p. 479. (P.) † *Ibid.* p. 191. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* pp. 487, 488. (P.) A similar gratification was provided for the *Elect*, in the system of that eminent Calvinist, *Jonathan Edwards*. See Vol. III. pp. 8, 9, Note †.

§ *Koran*, II. p. 492. (P.) || *Ibid.* I. p. 105. (P.)

¶ With some of these passages may be, not unsuitably, classed the following descriptions by a *Christian* propagandist. *Cotton Mather* gives them, in his life of *Eliot*, from the originals in his possession, among “the manuscripts of a *Jesuit*, whom the French employed as a *missionary* among the *Western Indians*.” One of these MSS., is “a *Catechism* in the *Iroquoise* language, with a [*French*] translation annexed,—wherein,” says the plain-speaking biographer, “are such *thick-skulled* passages as these:—Q. How is the soil made in heaven? A. 'Tis a very fair soil; they want neither for meats nor clothes; 'tis but wishing, and we have them. Q. Are they employ'd in heaven? A. No, they do nothing; the fields yield corn, beans, pumpkins, and the like, without any tillage. Q. What sort of trees are there? A. Always green, full and flourishing. Q. Have they in heaven the same sun, the same wind, the same thunder that we have here? A. No, the sun ever shines; 'tis always fair weather. Q. But how their fruits? A. In this one quality they exceed ours; that they are never wasted; you have no sooner pluckt one, but you see another presently hanging in its room.

“Q. What sort of a soil is that of hell? A. A very wretched soil; 'tis a fiery pit, in the center of the earth. Q. Have they any light in hell? A. No, 'tis always dark; there's always smoke there; their eyes are always in pain with it; they can see nothing but the devils. Q. What shap'd things are the devils? A. Very ill-shap'd things; they go about with vizards on; and they terrifie men. Q. What do they eat in hell? A. They are always hungry; but the damned feed upon hot ashes and serpents there. Q. What water have they to drink? A. Horrid water; nothing but melted lead. Q. Don't they die in hell? A. No, yet they eat one another every day; but anon God restores and renews the man that was eaten as a crop plant, in a little time, repullulates.” *Life of Eliot*, Ed. 3, 1694, pp. 135—137.

For the daily slaughter and restoration of the heroes, in the *Valhalla*, see *Mallet's Edda*, quoted Vol. II. p. 101, Note †.

dently come from nothing but a wild imagination, picturing to itself whatever a mere sensualist would most covet and most dread. In men of sense they cannot excite any emotions but those of contempt, not those of either hope or fear. Compared with these arbitrary and absurd fancies, to how much advantage does the Scripture account of the day of judgment, and the future state of the righteous and wicked appear! It is figurative, no doubt, but highly dignified, and calculated to make the most serious impression on all persons capable of just thinking, and who have the common apprehensions and feelings of men, but general, and not intended to gratify an idle curiosity, as I have shewn at large in my *Discourse* on that subject.*

PART V.

We have seen that *Mahomet* was perpetually charged with filling his *Koran* with *fables of the ancients*, and it cannot be denied that it abounds with stories of the most improbable kind, concerning the transactions of former times, many of them seemingly borrowed from the Scriptures, or traditional accounts of events recorded in them, but exceedingly altered, so that both the narratives cannot be true; and many of the stories occur again and again in the *Koran*, which makes the reading of it extremely tiresome, as must be felt by any person who will take the trouble to read it through. I shall give a few specimens of them, and this is necessary in order to give a just idea of the contexture and contents of the book.

Something of fable or allegory is by many supposed to be mixed with the account of the formation of man in the books of *Moses*; but in the *Koran* we find several additions made to it, and those of a very improbable kind, especially the account of the command of God to the angels to worship *Adam*, and the refusal of *Eblis*, or the devil, to do it, and the sentence passed on him for his disobedience.†

“ We created man of dried clay, of black mud formed into shape; and we had before created the devil of subtle fire. And remember when thy Lord said unto the angels, Verily, I am about to create man of dried clay, of black mud wrought into shape: when, therefore, I shall have completely formed him, and shall have breathed

* See *supra*, pp. 298—304.

† The story is told, but not without variations, in three parts of the *Koran*, and all the times at great length, viz. I. pp. 187, 188; II. pp. 71, 72, 324. I shall give that from II. pp. 71, 72. (P).

of my spirit into him, do ye fall down and worship him. And all the angels worshipped *Adam* together, except *Eblis*, who refused to be with those who worshipped him. And *God* said unto him, O *Eblis*, what hindered thee from being with those who worshipped *Adam*? He answered, It is not fit that I should worship man, whom thou hast created of dried clay, of black mud wrought into shape. *God* said, Get thee therefore hence; for thou shalt be driven away with stones: and a curse shall be on thee until the day of judgment. The devil said, O Lord, give me respite until the day of resurrection. *God* answered, Verily, thou shalt be one of those who are respited until the day of the appointed time. The devil replied, O Lord, because thou hast seduced me, I will surely tempt them to disobedience in the earth; and I will seduce them all, except such of them as shall be thy chosen servants. *God* said, This is the right way with me. Verily, as to my servants, thou shalt have no power over them; but over those only who shall be seduced, and who shall follow thee. And hell is surely denounced unto them all."

More absurd than this is the account of *God's* producing all mankind from the loins of *Adam*, in order to their acknowledging him, that when they should afterwards be guilty of idolatry, they should not complain of their punishment at the resurrection. "When thy Lord drew forth their posterity from the loins of the sons of *Adam*, and took them to witness against themselves, saying, Am not I your Lord? They answered, Yea: we do bear witness. This was done lest ye should say, at the day of resurrection, Verily we were negligent as to this matter, because we were not apprized thereof; or lest ye should say, Verily our fathers were formerly guilty of idolatry, and we are their posterity who have succeeded them; wilt thou therefore destroy us for that which vain men have committed? Thus do we explain our signs, that they may return from their vanities."*

Examples of additions to the Scripture history, and variations from it, are endless in the *Koran*. As a specimen, I shall recite the account of the preaching of *Noah*, of which also we have several narratives, all with variations.

"We formerly sent *Noah* unto his people; and he said, Verily, I am a public preacher unto you; that ye worship *God* alone: verily, I fear for you the punishment of the

* *Koran*, I. p. 217. (P.)

terrible day. But the chiefs of his people, who believed not, answered, We see thee to be no other than a man like unto us; and we do not see that any follow thee, except those who are the most abject among us, who have believed on thee by a rash judgment, neither do we perceive any excellence in you above us; but we esteem you to be liars. *Noah* said, O my people, tell me; if I have received an evident declaration from my Lord, and he hath bestowed on me mercy from himself, which is hidden from you, do we compel you to receive the same, in case ye be averse thereto? O my people, I ask not of you any riches for my preaching unto you: my reward is with God alone. I will not drive away those who have believed: verily, they shall meet their Lord at the resurrection; but I perceive that ye are ignorant men. O my people, who shall assist me against God, if I drive them away? Will ye not therefore consider? I say not unto you, the treasures of God are in my power; neither do I say, I know the secrets of God: neither do I say, Verily, I am an angel; neither do I say of those whom your eyes do contemn, God will by no means bestow good on them; (God best knoweth that which is in their souls;) for then should I certainly be one of the unjust. They answered, O *Noah*, thou hast already disputed with us, and hast multiplied disputes with us; now therefore, do thou bring that punishment upon us, wherewith thou hast threatened us, if thou speakest truth. *Noah* said, Verily God alone shall bring it upon you, if he pleaseth; and ye shall not prevail against him, so as to escape the same. Neither shall my counsel profit you, although I endeavour to counsel you aright, if God shall please to lead you into error. He is your Lord, and unto him shall ye return.—And it was revealed unto *Noah*, saying, Verily none of thy people shall believe, except he who hath already believed: be not therefore grieved for that which they are doing. But make an ark in our presence, according to the form and dimensions which we have revealed unto thee; and speak not unto me in behalf of those who have acted unjustly; for they are doomed to be drowned.

“ And he built the ark; and so often as a company of his people passed by him, they derided him; but he said, Though ye scoff at us now, we will scoff at you hereafter, as ye scoff at us; and ye shall surely know on whom a punishment shall be inflicted, which shall cover him with shame, and on whom a lasting punishment shall fall. Thus

were they employed until our sentence was put in execution, and the oven* poured forth water. And we said unto *Noah*, Carry into the ark of every species of animals, one pair, and thy family, (except him on whom a previous sentence of destruction hath passed,) and those who believe. But there believed not with him, except a few. And *Noah* said, Embark therein, in the name of God, while it moveth forward, and while it standeth still; for my Lord is gracious and merciful. And the ark swam with them between waves like mountains: and *Noah* called up to his son, who was separated from him, saying, Embark with us, my son, and stay not with the unbelievers. He answered, I will get on a mountain, which will secure me from the water. *Noah* replied, There is no security this day from the decree of God, except for him on whom he shall have mercy. And a wave passed between them, and he became one of those who were drowned.

“And it was said, O earth, swallow up thy waters, and thou, O heaven, withhold thy rain. And immediately the water abated, and the decree was fulfilled, and the ark rested on the mountain *Al Judi*; and it was said, Away with the ungodly people! And *Noah* called upon his Lord, and said, O Lord, verily my son is of my family; and thy promise is true; for thou art the most just of those who exercise judgment. God answered, O *Noah*, verily he is not of thy family: this intercession of thine for him, is not a righteous work. Ask not of me therefore that wherein thou hast no knowledge: I admonish thee that thou become not one of the ignorant. *Noah* said, O Lord, I have recourse unto thee for the assistance of thy grace, that I ask not of thee that wherein I have no knowledge; and unless thou forgive me, and be merciful unto me, I shall be one of those who perish. It was said unto him, O *Noah*, come down from the ark, with peace from us, and blessings upon thee, and upon a part of those who are with thee; but as for a part of them, we will suffer them to enjoy the provision of this world; and afterwards shall a grievous punishment from us be inflicted on them, in the life to come. This is a secret history, which we reveal unto thee: thou didst not know it, neither did thy people before this. Wherefore persevere with patience, for a prosperous issue shall attend the pious.”†

According to the *Koran*, the wife of *Noah*, as well as the

* See Sale's Note †.

† *Koran*, II. p. 19—24. (P.)

wife of *Lot*, was guilty of offences, for which they were to be sent to hell, whereas the wife of *Pharoah* was among the believers.

“ God propoundeth as a similitude unto the unbelievers, the wife of *Noah*, and the wife of *Lot*: they were under two of our righteous servants, and they deceived them both; wherefore their husbands were of no advantage unto them at all in the sight of God: and it shall be said unto them, at the last day, Enter ye into hell-fire, with those who enter therein. God also propoundeth as a similitude unto those who believe, the wife of *Pharoah*; when she said, Lord, build me a house with thee in Paradise; and deliver me from *Phuroah*, and his doings, and deliver me from the unjust people.”*

Of *Saleh* we know nothing from the Scriptures, but that he was the son of *Arphaxad*, the father of *Heber*, and grandfather of *Peleg*. But from the *Koran* we learn the following curious particulars concerning him, and his preaching:

“ And unto the tribe of *Thamud* we sent their brother *Saleh*. He said unto them, O my people, worship God; ye have no God besides him. It is he who hath produced you out of the earth, and hath given you an habitation therein. Ask pardon of him, therefore, and be turned unto him; for my Lord is near, and ready to answer. They answered, O *Saleh*, thou wast a person on whom we placed our hopes before this. Dost thou forbid us to worship that which our fathers worshipped? But we are certainly in doubt concerning the religion to which thou dost invite us, as justly to be suspected. *Saleh* said, O my people, tell me; if I have received an evident declaration from my Lord, and he hath bestowed on me mercy from himself; who will protect me from the vengeance of God, if I be disobedient unto him? For ye shall not add unto me, other than loss. And he said, O my people, this she-camel of God is a sign unto you; therefore dismiss her freely, that she may feed in God's earth, and do her no harm, lest a swift punishment seize you. Yet they killed her; and *Saleh* said, Enjoy yourselves in your dwellings for three days, after which ye shall be destroyed. This is an infallible prediction.

“ And when our decree came to be executed, we delivered *Saleh*, and those who believed with him, through our mercy,

* *Koran*, II. pp. 448 449. (P.)

from the disgrace of that day; for thy Lord is the strong, the mighty *God*. But a terrible noise from heaven assailed those who had acted unjustly; and in the morning they were found in their houses, lying dead and prostrate; as though they had never dwelt therein. Did not *Thamud* disbelieve in their Lord? Was not *Thamud* cast away?*"

There are two other accounts of *Saleh* and his preaching, all different from one another. The last, as an example of the variations in the *Koran*, I shall relate.

"Also we heretofore sent unto the tribe of *Thamud*, their brother *Saleh*; who said unto them, Serve ye God. And behold they were divided into two parties, who disputed among themselves. *Saleh* said, O my people, why do ye hasten evil, rather than good? Unless ye ask pardon of God, that ye may obtain mercy, ye are lost. They answered, We presage evil from thee, and from those who are with thee. *Saleh* replied, The evil which ye presage is with God: but ye are a people who are proved by a vicissitude of prosperity and adversity. And there were nine men in the city who acted corruptly in the earth, and behaved not with integrity. And they said unto one another, Swear ye reciprocally by God, that we will fall upon *Saleh* and his family by night; and afterwards we will say unto him who hath right to avenge his blood, We were not so much as present at the destruction of his family; and we certainly speak the truth. And they devised a plot against him: but we devised a plot against them; and they perceived it not. And see what was the issue of their plot: we utterly destroyed them, and their whole people; and these their habitations remain empty, because of the injustice which they committed. Verily herein is a sign, unto people who understand. And we delivered those who believed, and feared *God*."†

Mahomet's history of *Abraham* abounds with curious particulars. I shall only select the following:

"Hast thou not considered him who disputed with *Abraham* concerning his Lord, because God had given him the kingdom? When *Abraham* said, My Lord is he who giveth life, and killeth: he answered, I give life and I kill. *Abraham* said, Verily, God bringeth the sun from the east, now do thou bring it from the west. Whereupon the infidel was confounded; for God directeth not the ungodly people. Or hast thou not considered how he behaved who passed by a city which had been destroyed, even to her

* *Koran*, II. pp. 25, 26. (P.)

† *Ibid.* pp. 227, 228. (P.)

foundations? He said, How shall God quicken this city, after she hath been dead? And God caused him to die for a hundred years, and afterwards raised him to life. And God said, How long hast thou tarried here? He answered, A day, or part of a day. God said, Nay, thou hast tarried here a hundred years. Now look on thy food, and thy drink, they are not yet corrupted; and look on thine ass: and this have we done that we might make thee a sign unto men. And look on the bones of thine ass, how we raise them, and afterwards clothe them with flesh. And when this was shewn unto him, he said, I know that God is able to do all things."

"And when *Abraham* said, O Lord, shew me how thou wilt raise the dead; God said, Dost thou not yet believe? He answered, Yea; but I ask this that my heart may rest at ease. God said, Take therefore four birds, and divide them; then lay a part of them on every mountain; then call them, and they shall come swiftly unto thee, and know that God is mighty and wise."*

After this I need not proceed any farther with the history of *Abraham*, or recite that of *Joseph*, of *Moses*, and *Pharoah*, with the shaking of Mount *Sinai* over the heads of the *Israelites*, so often mentioned in the *Koran*; I shall also omit the history of *Job*, of *David*, and *Solomon*, with the subjection of the demons to him, and other silly stories, which, besides being evidently fabulous and absurd, are tiresome in the extreme.

The history of the *New Testament* has suffered no less than that of the *Old* in the hands of *Mahomet*. The following is a part of that history, curiously amplified and disguised:

"Remember, when the wife of *Imran*," (supposed to have been the husband of *Anna*, and father of the Virgin *Mary*,) "said, Lord, verily I have vowed unto thee that which is in my womb, to be dedicated to thy service: accept it therefore of me; for thou art he who heareth and knoweth. And when she was delivered of it, she said, Lord, verily, I have brought forth a female, (and God well knew what she had brought forth,) and a male is not as a female. I have called her *Mary*; and I commend her to thy protection, and also her issue, against *Satan* driven away with stones. Therefore the Lord accepted her with a gracious acceptance, and caused her to bear an excellent offspring. And *Zacharias* took care of the child. Whenever *Zacharias* went into the

* *Koran*, I. pp. 48—50. (P.)

chamber to her, he found provisions with her: and he said, *O Mary*, whence hadst thou this? She answered, This is from God: for God provideth for whom he pleaseth, without measure. There *Zacharias* called on his Lord, and said, Lord, give me from thee a good offspring, for thou art the hearer of prayer.

“ And the angels called to him, while he stood praying in the chamber, saying, Verily, God promiseth thee a son named *John*, who shall bear witness to the *Word* which cometh from God; an honourable person, chaste, and one of the righteous prophets. He answered, Lord, how shall I have a son, when old age hath overtaken me, and my wife is barren? The angel said, So God doth that which he pleaseth. *Zacharias* answered, Lord, give me a sign. The angel said, Thy sign shall be, that thou shalt speak unto no man for three days, otherwise than by gesture: remember thy Lord often, and praise him evening and morning. And when the angels said, *O Mary*—be devout towards thy Lord, and worship, and bow down with those who bow down. This is secret history: we reveal it unto thee, although thou wast not present with them when they threw in their rods to cast lots which of them should have the education of *Mary*; neither wast thou with them when they strove among themselves. When the angels said, *O Mary*, verily God sendeth thee good tidings, that thou shalt bear the *Word*, proceeding from himself; his name shall be *Christ Jesus*, the son of *Mary*, honourable in this world and in the world to come, and one of those who approach near to the presence of *God*; and he shall speak unto men in the cradle, and when he is grown up; and he shall be one of the righteous. She answered, Lord, how shall I have a son, since a man hath not touched me? The angel said, So God createth that which he pleaseth: when he decreeth a thing, he only saith unto it, Be; and it is. *God* shall teach him the Scripture, and wisdom, and the Law, and the Gospel; and shall appoint him his apostle to the children of *Israel*; and he shall say, Verily, I come unto you with a sign from your Lord; for I will make before you, of clay, as it were the figure of a bird; then will I breathe thereon, and it shall become a bird, by the permission of *God*: and I will heal him that hath been blind from his birth, and the leper: and I will raise the dead by the permission of *God*: and I will prophesy unto you what ye eat, and what ye lay up for store in your houses. Verily, herein will be a sign unto you, if ye believe. And I come to con-

firm the law which was revealed before me, and to allow unto you, as lawful, part of that which hath been forbidden you: and I come unto you with a sign from your Lord; therefore, fear God, and obey me. Verily, God is my Lord and your Lord; therefore serve him. This is the right way.

“But when Jesus perceived their unbelief, he said, Who will be my helpers towards God? The apostles answered, We will be the helpers of God; we believe in God, and do thou bear witness that we are true believers. O Lord, we believe in that which thou hast sent down, and we have followed thy apostle; write us down therefore with those who bear witness of him.

“And the Jews devised a stratagem against him; but God devised a stratagem against them; and God is the best deviser of stratagems. When God said, *O Jesus*, verily, I will cause thee to die, and I will take thee up unto me, and I will deliver thee from the unbelievers; and I will place those who follow thee, above the unbelievers, until the day of resurrection: then unto me shall ye return, and I will judge between you of that concerning which ye disagree.”

“Moreover, as for the infidels, I will punish them with a grievous punishment in this world, and in that which is to come; and there shall be none to help them.—Verily, the likeness of *Jesus*, in the sight of God, is as the likeness of *Adam*: he created him out of the dust, and then said unto him, Be; and he was. This is the truth from thy Lord.—Verily, this is a true history: and there is no God, but God; and God is most mighty and wise.”*

How little *Mahomet* knew of the real history of *Jesus*, and that what we learn in the *Koran* concerning him, was derived from the notions that had prevailed among the *Gnostics*, will appear from the following passage relating to the *Jews*:

“They have not believed on *Jesus*, and have spoken against *Mary* a grievous calumny; and have said, Verily, we have slain *Christ Jesus*, the son of *Mary*, the apostle of God; yet they slew him not, neither crucified him, but he was represented by one in his likeness; and verily they who disagreed concerning him, were in a doubt as to this matter, and had no sure knowledge thereof, but followed only an uncertain opinion. They did not really kill him; but God

* *Koran*, I. pp. 60—68. (P.)

took him up unto himself: and God is mighty and wise. And there shall not be one of those who have received the Scriptures, who shall not believe in him, before his death; and on the day of resurrection, he shall be a witness against them.”*

The following is another part of the history of Jesus and his mother, equally fabulous and absurd. “Remember in the book of the *Koran* the story of *Mary*; when she retired from her family to a place towards the East, and took a veil to conceal herself from them; and we sent our spirit *Gabriel* unto her, and he appeared unto her in the shape of a perfect man. She said, I fly for refuge unto the merciful *God*, that he may defend me from thee; if thou fearest him, thou wilt not approach me. He answered, Verily, I am the messenger of thy Lord, and am sent to give thee a holy son. She said, How shall I have a son, seeing a man hath not touched me, and I am no harlot? *Gabriel* replied, So shall it be. Thy Lord saith, This is easy with me; and we will perform it, that we may ordain him for a sign unto men, and a mercy from us: for it is a thing which is decreed. Wherefore she conceived him: and she retired aside with him in her womb to a distant place; and the pains of child-birth came upon her near the trunk of a palm-tree. She said, Would to God I had died before this, and had become a thing forgotten, and lost in oblivion! And he who was beneath her, called to her, saying, Be not grieved; now hath God provided a rivulet under thee; and do thou shake the body of the palm-tree, and it shall let fall ripe dates upon thee, ready gathered. And eat and drink, and calm thy mind. Moreover, if thou see any man, and he question thee, say, Verily, I have vowed a fast unto the Merciful; wherefore I will by no means speak to a man this day. So she brought the child to her people, carrying him in her arms. And they said unto her, *O Mary*, now hast thou done a strange thing. *O sister of Aaron*, thy Father was not a bad man, neither was thy mother a harlot. But she made signs unto the child to answer them; and they said, How shall we speak to him who is an infant in the cradle? Whereupon the child said, Verily, I am the servant of God; he hath given me the book of the gospel, and hath appointed me a prophet. And he hath made me blessed, wheresoever I shall be, and hath commanded me to observe prayer, and to give alms, so long as I shall live; and he hath made me dutiful towards my

* *Koran*, I. pp. 124, 125. (P.)

mother, and hath not made me proud, or unhappy. And peace be on me the day whereon I was born, and the day whereon I shall die, and the day whereon I shall be raised to life. This was *Jesus*, the son of *Mary*, the Word of truth, concerning whom they doubt. It is not meet for God, that he should have any son : God forbid !”*

I shall conclude these extracts which, though they are long, are, at least, amusing, and necessary to give us a just idea of the *Koran*, that celebrated book, which some unbelievers represent as of equal value with our Scriptures, with *Mahomet's* history of the preaching of the apostles at *Antioch* :

“ Propound unto them as an example, the inhabitants of the city of *Antioch*, when the apostles of *Jesus* came thereto : when he sent unto them two of the said apostles ; but they charged them with imposture. Wherefore we strengthened them with a third. And they said, Verily, we are sent unto you by *God*. The inhabitants answered, Ye are no other than men, as we are : neither hath the Merciful revealed any thing unto you : ye only publish a lie. The apostles replied, Our Lord knoweth that we are really sent unto you : and our duty is only public preaching. Those of *Antioch* said, Verily, we presage evil from you : if ye desist not from preaching, we will surely stone you, and a painful punishment shall be inflicted on you by us. The apostles answered, Your evil presage is with yourselves ; although ye be warned, will ye persist in your errors ? Verily, ye are a people who transgress exceedingly. And a certain man came hastily from the farther parts of the city, and said, O my people, follow the messengers of *God* ; follow him who demandeth not any reward of you ; for these are rightly directed. What reason have I that I should not worship him who hath created me ? for unto him shall ye return. Shall I take other gods besides him ? If the Merciful be pleased to afflict me, their intercession will not avail me at all, neither can they deliver me : then should I be in a manifest error. Verily, I believe in your Lord ; wherefore hearken unto me. But they stoned him ; and as he died, it was said unto him, Enter thou into Paradise. And he said, O that my people knew how merciful God hath been unto me ! for he hath highly honoured me. And we sent not down against his people, after they had slain him, an army from heaven, nor the other instruments of

* *Koran*, II. pp. 129—132. (P.)

destruction, which we sent down on unbelievers in former days : there was only one cry of *Gabriel* from heaven, and behold, they became utterly extinct. O the misery of men ! No apostle cometh unto them, but they laugh him to scorn."* We find in the *Koran* the fabulous story of the *seven sleepers* and their *dog*, told at considerable length.† It is there said that they slept " three hundred years, and nine years over," and when they awaked were not conscious of having slept longer than usual.

Though these extracts are long, they are but a small specimen of the extravagant stories contained in the *Koran*, and certainly they justify the charge of the people of *Mecca*, that it contains nothing but *fables of the ancients*, or else the inventions of *Mahomet* himself. They are evidently absurd in the extreme, and altogether unworthy of a messenger from God.

When we consider the great natural ability of *Mahomet*, or of those who assisted him in the composition of the *Koran*, and the infinite superiority of the books of the *Old* and *New Testament*, many of them written by men possessed of no natural advantage whatever, we cannot avoid concluding that they were written by men who were possessed of some advantages of another kind, and that these must have been supernatural. They were not, evidently, men who could have invented what they wrote. To this, or any thing approaching to it, they were unequal. Let other books, pretended to be written by men who were inspired, and had communications with God, but which are now generally acknowledged not to have been so, be compared with the Scriptures, where the subjects are similar, and the difference cannot but be seen to be most striking. For example, let the second book of *Ezdras*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*,‡ or the *Sibylline Oracles*,§ be compared with the prophecies of *Daniel*, and other prophetic writings of the *Old Testament*, or the book of *Revelation* in the *New*, and we must be convinced that, though there was a studied imitation of them, they are exceedingly unlike, with respect to those circumstances which affect their credibility. This is a subject deserving of a particular examination ; but I forbear to enter upon it at this time.

* *Koran*, II. pp. 301—303. (P.) † *Ibid.* pp. 112—116. (P.)

‡ See Vol. VI. pp. 59, 60 ; Wake's *Apostolical Fathers*, Ed. 4, 1737, pp. 78—85, (*Discourse*), 199—346 ; *Lardner*, II. pp. 50—65.

§ See *Prideaux's Connect.* (Pt. ii. B. ix.), 1749, IV. pp. 885—897 ; *Lardner*, II. pp. 242, 243, 313—324 ; IV. pp. 83—85.

PART. VI.

IN one of my former *Discourses*,* I shewed that the philosophical principles, if they may be so called, of the Scriptures, even of the *Old Testament*, are more consonant to reason than those of the *Heathen* philosophers of any age, which is a circumstance deserving particular notice; since it cannot be said that they were written by men who had any advantage of education or literature; and the *Hebrews*, or Jews in general, are always represented by unbelievers as mere barbarians, who had no knowledge of science or the arts. If we consider *Mahometanism* in this respect, we shall find in the *Koran* many crude, unfounded opinions relating to the structure of the universe and the formation of man, &c., from which the religion of *Mahomet* cannot derive any credit.

According to Mr. Sale, there are in the *Koran* frequent allusions to many of the wildest notions of the Jewish *Rab- bins*,† which he details in his notes; but I shall only notice a few that are more distinctly mentioned in that work. Nor am I disposed to lay much stress on the circumstance of its containing them, or any mere popular opinions, however ill founded, as an argument against its divine authority. But in language supposed to proceed immediately from the mouth of God, we naturally expect something more correct, especially when there is no appearance of the language being figurative, and therefore capable of a different construction. I shall, however, mention a few opinions, with passages of the *Koran* in which they are contained, as at least curiosities of their kind, and which Christians may compare with the doctrine and the language of the Scriptures on the same subjects, whatever inferences they may be disposed to draw from them.

We find in the *Koran* something more than an allusion to the notion of there being *seven heavens*, all created in two days, viz. the fifth and sixth days of the week: of angels being placed to guard them from the attempts of devils; and of falling stars being lamps thrown at them by these guardian angels; and also of the distance of the throne of God being so great that it would take fifty thousand years for a man to ascend it.

* See *supra*, pp. 90—116.

† See *Prelim. Disc.* pp. 93, 101.

“ He formed them into seven heavens, in two days ; and revealed unto every heaven its office: And we adorned the lower heaven with lights, and placed therein a guard of angels.”* “ We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps, and have appointed them to be darted at the devils; for whom we have prepared the torment of burning fire.”† “ One demanded, and called for vengeance to fall on the unbelievers. There shall be none to avert the same from being inflicted by God, the possessor of the steps, by which the angels ascend unto him, and the spirit *Gabriel* also, in a day, whose space is fifty thousand years.”‡

The idea of an impassable gulph between heaven and hell, and of the possibility of conversation being held between the inhabitants of each of those places, in our Saviour’s *parable*, are evidently imagined for the sake of figurative representation, and the instruction to be conveyed by it. And no Christian ever supposed that, in reality, these two places would be so situated. But, according to the *Koran*, *Paradise* and *Hell* are really contiguous, but separated by a high wall ; Paradise being much elevated, and Hell much beneath it. And it has been seen, [p. 355,] that a great part of the entertainment of the inhabitants of Paradise consists in their looking down upon, and laughing at the wicked in the midst of their torments.

“ A high wall shall be set between them, wherein shall be a gate, within which shall be mercy ; and without it, over against the same, the torment of hell. The hypocrites shall call out unto the true believers, saying, Were we not with you ? They shall answer, Yea ; but ye seduced your own souls by your hypocrisy ; and ye waited our ruin ; and ye doubted concerning the faith ; and your wishes deceived you, until the decree of God came, and ye died : and the deceiver deceived you concerning God.”§ Speaking of those who are in *Paradise*, he says, They “ shall ask one another questions concerning the wicked, and shall also ask the wicked themselves, saying, What hath brought you into hell ?” ||

The idea of a narrow bridge laid over hell, which both the righteous and the wicked are to pass over after the day of judgment, Mr. Sale says, that “ Mohammed seems to have borrowed from the Magians.” This bridge the righteous pass over very safely, whereas the wicked, unable to

* *Koran*, II. pp. 344, 345. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 450. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 458. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* pp. 419, 420. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* pp. 470, 471. (P.)

stand upon it, fall into hell. This, he says, "the sect of the Motázalites reject as a fable; though the orthodox think it a sufficient proof that it is not, that it was seriously affirmed by Mahomet.* I do not, however, recollect any account of this bridge, in the *Koran*; and there we find, as has been seen, a different account of the manner in which the wicked go into hell.

We find in several passages of the *Koran*, in which the Divine Being is represented as the speaker, the opinions which appear to be current among the *Arabs* concerning *genii*, supposed by them to be an order of beings below that of angels or devils, and above that of men, but who "eat and drink, and propagate their species, and are subject to death."† They had, however, the same origin with the angels and devils, being formed of fire; whereas man was formed of clay. "He created man of dried clay, like an earthen vessel; but he created the *genii* of fire, clear from smoke."‡

We have seen in the accounts of Mahomet's *Paradise*, extracted from the *Koran*, that the *genii* are capable of having commerce with women. According to the same authority, they are also the proper subjects of the mission of *Mahomet*, as well as men, and some of them are said to be believers, and others unbelievers, and to be rewarded or punished accordingly.

"Remember when we caused certain of the *genii* to turn aside unto thee, that they might hear the *Koran*; and when they were present at the reading of the same, they said to one another, Give ear; and when it was ended, they returned back unto their people, preaching what they had heard. They said, Our people, verily, we have heard a book read unto us, which hath been revealed since *Moses*, confirming the Scripture which was delivered before it; and directing unto the truth and the right way. Our people, obey God's preacher: and believe in him; that he may forgive you your sins, and may deliver you from a painful punishment."§

"It hath been revealed unto me, that a company of *genii* attentively heard me reading the *Koran*, and said, Verily, we have heard an admirable discourse; which directeth unto the right institution: wherefore we believe therein, and we will by no means associate any other with our Lord. He—

* *Prelim. Disc.* pp. 120, 121. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 95. (P.)

‡ *Koran*, II. p. 409. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* pp. 374, 375. (P.)

hath taken no wife, nor hath he begotten any issue. Yet the foolish among us hath spoken that which is extremely false of God ; but we verily thought that neither man nor genius would by any means have uttered a lie concerning God. And there are certain men who fly for refuge unto certain of the genii ; but they increase their folly and transgression ; and they also thought, as ye thought, that God would not raise any one to life. And we formerly attempted to pry into what was transacting in heaven ; but we found the same filled with a strong guard of angels, and with flaming darts ; and we sat on some of the seats thereof, to hear the discourse of its inhabitants ; but whoever listeneth now, findeth a flame laid in ambush for him, to guard the celestial confines. And we know not whether evil be not hereby intended against those who are in the earth, or whether their Lord intendeth to direct them aright. There are some among us who are upright ; and there are some among us who are otherwise : we are of different ways. And we verily thought that we could by no means frustrate God in the earth, neither could we escape him by flight ; wherefore, when we had heard the direction contained in the *Koran*, we believed therein. And whoever believeth in his Lord need not fear any diminution of his reward, nor any injustice. There are some Moslems among us ; and there are others of us who swerve from righteousness. And whoso embraceth *Islam*, they earnestly seek true direction : but those who swerve from righteousness, shall be fuel for hell.”*

We find in the *Koran* very unphilosophical opinions on the subject of the formation of man in the womb ; but they are so little intelligible, that I shall not attempt to explain or to reconcile them. “ O men, if ye be in doubt concerning the resurrection, consider that we first created you of the dust of the ground ; afterwards, of seed ; afterwards, of a little coagulated blood ; afterwards, of a piece of flesh, perfectly formed in part, and in part imperfectly formed ; that we might make our power manifest unto you.”† “ He formeth you in the wombs of your mothers, by several gradual formations, within three veils of darkness.”‡ “ Let a man consider, therefore, of what he is created. He is created of seed poured forth, issuing from the loins and the breast bones.”§

But whatever was *Mahomet's* opinion concerning the for-

* *Koran*, II. pp. 463, 464. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 166. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 326. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 491. (P.)

mation of man, he appears to have thought that there was no sensible interval between his death and his resurrection; since it is evident that, through the whole *Koran*, there is no mention made of any reward conferred on believers, or any punishment inflicted on unbelievers, before that time, which is agreeable to the Scriptures. Mahomet believed that there is a soul distinct from the body of man, and, therefore, must have thought that it remained in an insensible state between the time of death and that of the general resurrection. "God," says he, "taketh unto himself the souls of men at the time of their death; and those which die not, he also taketh in their sleep."*

When *Mahomet* speaks of the wicked as making their appearance at the resurrection, they are often said to be surprised at the shortness of the time in which they had lain in their graves; as if they had awaked from a sound sleep. "The trumpet shall be sounded again; and behold they shall come forth from their graves, and hasten unto their Lord. They shall say, Alas for us! Who hath awakened us from our bed? This is what the Merciful promised us, and his apostles spake the truth. It shall be but one sound of the trumpet, and behold, they shall be all assembled before us."† "On that day whereon the last hour shall come, the wicked will swear that they have not tarried above an hour: in like manner did they utter lies in their life-time"‡

Mahomet had the same ideas with respect to the righteous. "But those on whom knowledge hath been bestowed, and faith, will say, Ye have tarried, according to the book of God, until the day of resurrection; for this is the day of resurrection; but ye knew it not."§ "On that day shall God call you forth from your sepulchres, and ye shall obey, with celebration of his praise; and ye shall think that ye tarried but a little while."|| When he took his leave of *Moadh*, who was going to govern the distant province of *Yaman*, in "the tenth year of the Hejra," which was not long before his death, he said to him, "that they should not meet again till the day of resurrection."¶

My object in these Discourses has been, not to prove that *Mahomet* was an impostor; for that will not be disputed; but to shew, in the first place, that with natural advantages greatly superior to those of Jesus, Mahomet, having the am-

* *Koran*, II. p. 330. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 305. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 260. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 102. (P.)

¶ *Mod. Univ. Hist.* I. p. 203. (P.)

bition to be the founder of a new religion, with the knowledge of Christianity, and a persuasion of its divine origin, was so far from making any improvement upon it, that every thing that is really valuable in his system was derived from it, and that whenever he departed from its principles, every thing that he advanced was wild and absurd.* Hence, I

* Mr. Volney's account of the influence of the *Mahometan* religion in the Turkish dominions comes so much in aid of my observations on the subject, that I shall subjoin the greatest part of it, and he certainly did not write with any view to recommend Christianity.

"Nothing can be worse calculated to remedy the abuses of government than the spirit of *Islamism*. We may, on the contrary, pronounce it to be their original source. To convince himself of this, the reader has only to examine their revered book. In vain do the Mahometans boast that the Koran contains the seeds, and even the perfection, of all political and legislative knowledge and jurisprudence. Nothing but the prejudice of education, or the partiality of interest, can dictate, or admit, such a judgment. Whoever reads the Koran must be obliged to confess, that it conveys no notion either of the relative duties of mankind in society, of the formation of the body politic, or of the principles of the art of governing; nothing, in a word, which constitutes a legislative code. The only laws we find there may be reduced to four or five ordinances relative to polygamy, divorces, slavery, and the succession of near relations; and even these form no code of jurisprudence, but are so contradictory, that they cannot be reconciled by the alterations of the doctors. The rest is merely a chaos of unmeaning phrases, an emphatical declamation on the attributes of God, from which nothing is to be learned; a collection of puerile tales and ridiculous fables; and on the whole, so flat and fastidious a composition that no man can read it to the end, notwithstanding the elegance of M. Savary's translation.

"But should any general tendency or semblance of meaning be visible through the absurdities of this delirious effusion, it is the inculcation of a fierce and obstinate fanaticism. We are wearied by the perpetual recurrence of the words *impious, incredulous, enemies of God and the prophet, rebels against God and the prophet, devotion towards God and the prophet*. Heaven is open to whomsoever combats in their cause. *Houris* stretch out their arms to martyrs. The imagination takes fire, and the proselyte exclaims, 'Oh, Mahomet; thou art the messenger of God, thy word is his; he is infallible; thou canst neither err, nor deceive me: go on, I follow thee.' Such is the spirit of the Koran, and it is visible in the very first line. 'There is no uncertainty in this book; it guides without error those who believe without doubting, who believe in what they do not see.' What is the tendency of this, but to establish the most absolute despotism in him who commands, and the blindest devotion in him who obeys? and such was the object of Mahomet.

"He did not wish to enlighten men, but to rule over them. He sought not disciples, but subjects; and obedience, not reasoning, is required from subjects. It was to lead them the more easily, that he ascribed all to God. By making himself his minister, he removed every suspicion of personal interest, and avoided alarming that distrustful vanity which is common to all men. He feigned to obey, that he might exact obedience. He made himself but the first of servants, with a certainty that every man would strive to be the second, and command the rest. He allured by promises, and terrified by menaces; and as every novelty is sure to meet with opponents, by holding out the terrors of his anathemas, he left them the hope of pardon. Hence, in some passages we find an appearance of toleration; but this toleration is so rigid, that sooner or later it must lead to absolute submission. So that, in fact, the fundamental spirit of the Koran continually recurs, and the most arbitrary power is delegated to the messenger of God, and by a natural consequence to his successors. But by what kind of precepts is the use of this power manifested? 'There is only one God, and Mahomet is his prophet. Pray five times a-day, turning towards Mecca. Eat not in the day-time during the whole month of Ramadan. Make the pilgrimage of the Caaba, and give alms to the widow and orphan.'

"Here is the profound source from whence must spring all the sciences, and

infer that the great superiority of the religion of Jesus cannot be accounted for but by supposing that he had advantages of a supernatural kind.

Secondly, the manner in which the two religions were promulgated and propagated shews that the founders of them acted on quite different and even opposite principles. The conduct of *Jesus* shews in the clearest light, that he was conscious of a divine mission; and that of *Mahomet*, that he was not. Their proceedings in making converts, were accordingly very different.

Mahomet, by his austerities, acquired a character for divine communications, at first with his relations and near friends; and it was only in a long course of time that this belief was propagated to others, and as soon as by this means, and his personal address and accomplishments, he had acquired a sufficient number of followers, he proceeded to the use of force.

On the contrary, Jesus had no recourse to austerity, or any peculiarity in his manner of living or acting; the conversion of his relations or friends was no particular object with him; but the tokens of his mission were such as in a very short time convinced the most incredulous.

Mahomet led his followers to war and plunder; *Jesus* taught his disciples peace and submission in this world, and to look for their reward only in the world to come. Jesus commanded his disciples to love their enemies; Mahomet ordered his followers to put all theirs to the sword.* His

every branch of political and moral knowledge. The Solons, the Numas, the Lycurguses, all the legislators of antiquity, have in vain exhausted their genius to explain the relations of mankind in society, to declare the duties and rights of every class and every individual. Mahomet, more able or more profound than they, resolves all into five phrases. It certainly may be safely asserted, of all the men who have ever dared to give laws to nations, none were more ignorant than Mahomet; of all the absurd compositions ever produced, none is more truly wretched than his book. Of this the transactions of the last twelve hundred years in Asia are a proof. For, were I inclined to pass from particular to general observations, it would be easy to demonstrate that the convulsions of the governments, and the ignorance of the people, in that quarter of the globe, originate more or less immediately in the Koran, and its morality." *Volney's Travels*, II. p. 497. *American Edition*. (P.) *Appendix*, 1797. See *Volney*, Ed. 2, London, 1788, II. pp. 393—397. M. *Volney* died lately, (May, 1820,) at Paris, in his 65th year.

* The martial progress of a Mahometan devotee is well described by Dr. Roberts:

“ See, where the turban'd *Caliph* o'er the fields
Of fertile *Syria* spreads wide-wasting war
And famine: nor can groves of ravag'd palm,
Olives and figs, nor desolated vines
That crown'd the brink of *Pharphar*, lucid stream,
Nor widow's piercing shriek, nor orphan's tear,
Melt his obdurate soul: for not the lust
Of frantic power, or empire unconfind,

followers were exposed to very little suffering, but those of Jesus to the loss of every thing valuable in life, and often of life itself.

If we consider the characters of the two men, the great superiority of that of *Jesus* is manifest. *Mahomet*, though not without religion, had nothing of that rational and humble piety which eminently distinguished Jesus: nor did he discover any marks of that ardent and disinterested love of mankind in general, or even of his disciples in particular, which led Jesus to suffer and die for them. Mahomet's passions of lust and revenge, the suspicion of which never fell upon Jesus, render him a very improper object of imitation; whereas Jesus exhibited in his life a perfect pattern of every human virtue.

Whence, then, could arise this great difference in the characters and the conduct of those two men, equally the founders of new systems of religion? The only *hypothesis* that can account for the facts is, that the consciousness which Jesus had of his peculiar and near relation to God, gave him that spirit of habitual devotion which is the genuine parent of every other virtue; and the sure prospect of a great future reward gave him his superiority to all lower gratifications and pursuits. On the contrary, *Mahomet*, conscious that he was an *impostor*, could have no other object than worldly power and sensual indulgence; and whatever might be his devotion at his outset, he afterwards retained no more of it than was subservient to his schemes; and at length, as was probably the case with *Oliver Cromwell*,* his religion was entirely swallowed up by his ambition.†

But burning zeal, and hope of future bliss,
 Arm him with tenfold fury. On he goes
 Till vanquish'd millions glut his righteous rage;
 Then weeps all prostrate o'er *Mohammed's* tomb,
 While Victory washes from her savage hands
 The blood of slaughter'd hosts."

Poems, pp. 22, 23. See *supra*, p. 342, Note †.

* Of whom *Baxter*, a critical, rather than a kind observer, remarks, "He did, as our prelates have done, begin low, and rise higher in his resolutions, as his condition rose—and kept up as much godliness and honesty, in the main, as his cause and interest would allow; but there they left him: and his name standeth as a monitory monument or pillar to posterity, to tell them the instability of man, in strong temptations." *Reliq. Baxt.*, 1696, p. 100.

† "For twenty-three years he had taken upon him the character of a prophet, of which he lived thirteen years at *Mecca*, and ten at *Medina*. During which time, from very mean beginnings, he arose, by the impulse of his ambition and the sagaciousness of his wit, to that height as to make one of the greatest revolutions that ever happened in the world; which immediately gave birth to an empire which, in eighty years' time, extended its dominions over more kingdoms and countries than ever the *Roman* could in eight hundred." *The Life and Actions of Mahomet*, prefixed to *Four Treatises*, by *H. Reland*, 1712, p. 78.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL, AND HIS
PROPHETIC CHARACTER, VINDICATED.

DANIEL vi. 25, 26:

Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

PART I.

OF all the ancient prophets, *Daniel* announces the greatest variety of particular future events, though the language of his prophecies is enigmatical, and therefore obscure; in which it differs from that of all the preceding prophets. Whatever it was that *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and the others, foretold, it was in the most intelligible language. Such is what we find in their writings relating to the future condition of their own country, especially its prosperous state in the last days, the calamities that were to befall them in the intermediate time, and the utter downfall of other nations whose affairs were then in the most flourishing state, as *Egypt*, *Babylon*, *Tyre*, the *Edomites*, *Moabites*, and *Ammonites*. And to such predictions as these their prophetic commissions were confined. But the book of *Daniel* contains a connected series of prophecy, extending from his own time to those glorious and happy times which were the subject of the former prophecies, which happy times he barely announces, without dwelling on the description of them, as the other prophets had done.

The correspondence of many of these prophecies of *Daniel* with the subsequent events is remarkably clear and exact, so as to afford an abundant proof that they were dictated with a foreknowledge of the events. On this account, however, it has been maintained by unbelievers, ancient and modern, that this book of *Daniel* must have been written

long after the time of Daniel; and, indeed, after that of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, till whose reign it is universally acknowledged that the predictions and events correspond with the greatest exactness. But it appears to me that there is no sufficient ground for the charge of forgery in this case;* and because this is a subject of considerable importance with respect to the evidences of revelation in general, though they by no means depend upon it, I shall, in this *Discourse*, consider it pretty largely.

1. With respect to the authenticity of writings in general, we are usually determined by the reception of them with the people among whom they were published, who were certainly the best judges in the case; and if *they* do not appear to have had any suspicion of forgery, we have none. Now the *Jewish* nation, the best judges in this particular case, has always received the book of *Daniel* with as little suspicion as those of *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and the other prophets; and our Saviour mentions some particulars of his prophecies with the greatest respect, as to be fulfilled after his time.† It is, indeed, universally agreed by the Jews, that the canon of their Scriptures, in which the book of Daniel was always included, was settled by *Ezra*, or by *the great synagogue*, soon after his time. It is, therefore, highly improbable that any book pretending to greater antiquity should get a place in their canon afterwards.

2. There is every reason to believe that there has been no change in the general character, or principles, of the *Jews* since a short time after their return from the *Babylonish* Captivity to the present time;‡ and perhaps the most remarkable circumstance in their character, is their veneration for their sacred books. It has always been carried even to superstition. Whatever respect they might have for other writings, it was far short of that which they entertained for those contained in their *canon*. They were never confounded with those, (which they called the *Scriptures*,) but classed with those books which, though they considered them as genuine and valuable, were only allowed a secondary place in their esteem. These we now call *apocryphal*, as the book of *Maccabees*, *Ecclesiasticus*, *the Wisdom of Solomon*, &c.

This high respect for the *Scriptures*, we see in our Saviour's time. It shewed itself in their custom of applying texts of

* See Vol. XII. p. 309.

† See *Matt.* xxiv. 15; *Mark* xiii. 14.

‡ They appear, however, to vary in the degree of *prophetic* dignity, which they have attributed to Daniel. See Gray's *Key*, Ed. 2, 1791, pp. 402—404.

Scripture to every occurrence, and often with little reason. They were, indeed, books that the *Jews* were justly proud of, no other nation being possessed of any such. They, moreover, contained the records and principles of their religion and civil policy, and those predictions in favour of their nation, for the fulfilment of which they were then eagerly looking. The *Jews* had the same attachment to their laws and religion, and, consequently, to their Scriptures, in the time of the *Maccabees*, as appears by the severe persecutions they then bore for their adherence to them, and their refusing for some time even to defend themselves when they were attacked on the Sabbath-day. Can it, then, be supposed that at or after this time any such book as that of *Daniel* could be received into the Jewish canon of Scripture without immediate detection, and the most disgraceful treatment of the author of such an imposture? If the pious *Jews* had been capable of such a thing as the addition of another book that might do honour to their nation and religion, there were among them too many who were destitute of all regard to religion, and complied with the views of *Antiochus*, and who, from other motives, would not have failed to discover the cheat. Accordingly, it does not appear that the authenticity of the book of *Daniel* was ever questioned by any *Jew* whatever. *Daniel* is spoken of by *Josephus*, as the greatest of the prophets;* and he says that his prophecies were shewn to *Alexander the Great* when he was at *Jerusalem*;† which proves, at least, that, in his opinion, they were extant at that time; and the example of *Daniel*, which was most probably learned from the book so called, was recommended in the time of the *Maccabees*.‡

It is farther highly improbable from the nature and contents of the book of *Daniel* that it should have been a forgery.

3. Had the book of *Daniel* been the forgery of any *Jew*,

* "The several books that he wrote and left behind him, are still read by us, till this time; and from them we believe that *Daniel* conversed with God: for he did not only prophesy of future events, as did the other prophets; but he also determined the time of their accomplishment." *Antiq.* (B. x. Ch. xi. Sect. vii.); *Whiston*, 1737, p. 325.

† "When the book of *Daniel* was shewed him, wherein *Daniel* declared that one of the *Greeks* should destroy the empire of the *Persians*, he supposed that himself was the person intended. And as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present: but the next day he called them to him, and bid them ask what favours they pleased of him." *Ibid.* (B. xi. Ch. viii. Sect. v.) p. 354.

Whiston says, "the places shewn *Alexander* might be *Dan.* vii. 6, viii. 3—8, 20—22, xi. 3; some, or all of them, very plain predictions of *Alexander's* conquests and successors." *Note.*

‡ See 1 *Macc.* ii. 60. (*P.*)

(and no other person could have written such a book,) and been designed to impose upon Jews, it would have been written in imitation of some preceding prophecies of established credit, such as those of *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, &c.; but the contexture of this book is exceedingly unlike that of any of those, as will appear on the slightest attention to them. The book of *Daniel* is a perfect original, if there be such a thing in composition. Future events are indicated in this work in such a manner as they were never announced before, viz. by emblematical visions, and a subsequent interpretation, chiefly by angels. An angel is, indeed, represented as attending *Ezekiel*, but it is only to point out to him objects of sight, of which he was directed to write an account, and not for the purpose of explaining any thing. The vision of *the dry bones* most resembles those of *Daniel*; but it is still so very different from any of them, that none of them can be said to be an imitation of that.* The author could not, therefore, expect to pass his book on Jews as the work of one of their prophets.

4. It may be said that this book was written to impose upon *Gentiles*. But it does not appear that any Jew before *Josephus* wrote any thing with a view to its being read by the *Gentiles*. The *Greek* translations of the Scriptures were most probably made for the use of Jews, in the countries in which numbers of them were settled, and where the *Greek* language was spoken, especially at *Alexandria*, and when the *Hebrew* language was disused, or much corrupted; and though the most important of their sacred books were those of *Moses*, the veneration which the Jews were then known to have for all the books comprised in their *canon* of the Scriptures was such, as would not allow them to leave any of the books long untranslated.

If the version of the *Seventy* was made at the request of *Ptolemy Philadelphus*, it was not at the instigation of any *Jew*, but proceeded from his wish to collect all the books that he had heard of, and those of the Jews among others.† And, certainly, if he had heard, as he probably had, of there being any prophetic writings among them, he would not

* Several parts of the book of *Zechariah* resemble the prophecies of *Daniel*, but he wrote a considerable time afterwards. (P.)

† See *Jos. Antiq.* (B. xii. Ch. ii. Sect. xvi.); *Prideaux* (Pt. ii. B. i.), III. pp. 38—65. "The Version in the age of the first *Ptolemies* was only of the Law. The other books were probably translated after the prohibition against reading the Law, by *Antiochus Epiphanes*, B. C. 170; but the whole Bible was translated into *Greek* B. C. 130, as appears from the prologue to *Ecclesiasticus*. See *Kennicott, Diss. Gen.* § 17." Dr. *Aphthorps*'s "Discourses on Prophecy," 1786, I. p. 242.

have been the least desirous of being acquainted with *them*. Both the *canon* of *Jewish Scripture*, therefore, and the translation of the books contained in it, being completed before the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, it would have been absolutely impossible to introduce any forged book into it afterwards.

5. Though the book of *Daniel* does in some respects do honour to the Jewish nation, it is, in others, but little calculated to please them. The *Jews* would naturally be most pleased with prophecies relating to their future prosperous state, and the more so, in proportion to the humiliating condition in which they long were after their return from *Babylon*. But there is little or nothing of this in the book of *Daniel*. Mention, indeed, is made of the future happy state of the world, as *the kingdom of God*, and *of the saints*, in general, but nothing is said of the Jews in particular. And though the writer of this book speaks of the *Messiah*, it was as to be *cut off*, as the Jews themselves always rendered the passage. A Jew forging a book to flatter his countrymen would not have written in this manner. Here I would observe, with respect to the preceding prophets, *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel* and others, who dwelt the most on the future flourishing state of the Jews, that their writings contain many things that must have been very unacceptable to their countrymen, as their vehement invectives against them on account of their idolatry and their vices, which the history shews actually gave great offence, and often exposed the writers to grievous persecution, especially *Jeremiah*. Impostors would only have flattered their countrymen, as *Virgil*, in his celebrated *Eclogue*,* did the Romans, and not have provoked them, as the writings of the prophets were calculated to do.

6. Had the book of *Daniel* been forged by a *Jew*, with a view to flatter them, it would not have contained any thing that would have offended any of the Jews, but the author of it would have endeavoured to please them all, without distinction. For, by offending any party, he must have known that he would create enemies, and thereby invite discussion, and hazard detection. But presently after the return from

* *Pollio*. See L. 5, 6.

Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo;
 ————— *redeunt Saturnia regna.*

“ Saturnian times
 Roll round again, and mighty years, begun
 From their first orb, in radiant circles run.”

the *Babylonish* Captivity, (to say nothing of the *Samaritans*, who professed the same religion with the Jews, and made use of the same books, and who charged the Jews with corrupting their books,) the Jews themselves were divided into sects, exceedingly hostile to each other, the *Pharisees* and the *Sadducees*. And there is nothing in any of the books of the *Old Testament* so directly favouring the distinguishing tenets of the Pharisees, and, consequently, so likely to offend the Sadducees, as in this book of *Daniel*. For, in it the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, is expressly mentioned. *Dan. xii. 2*: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Now, allowing that this language may admit of some other interpretation than the literal one, (which, however, is the only one that is natural,) an impostor, who meant not to risk the giving offence, would have avoided it.

Porphyry, who wrote in the latter part of the *third* century, acknowledged that the book of *Daniel* contained a history of the kings of *Syria* and *Egypt* till the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and, therefore, concluded that it was written after that time.* But the sects of the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* existed before that time. According to *Josephus*, *John Hyrcanus*, the son of *Simon*, a brother of *Judas Maccabæus*, was educated by the Pharisees, and they then divided the nation, and were as hostile to each other as at any subsequent period. That the sects existed at the time of the *Antiochian* persecution is evident from the martyrs in that persecution, all of whom were probably *Pharisees*, as they expressed a joyful confidence in the resurrection;† and most of the apostates were probably *Sadducees*.

7. Had the book of *Daniel* been a forgery, intended to pass for a true history, the writer would have been careful to call all the kings of *Babylon* that he had occasion to mention, by such names as they were usually known by at the time in which he wrote, and would not have exposed himself by the mention of such names as were not found in other histories, as those of *Herodotus* and *Ctesias*. But he mentions *Darius the Mede*, as preceding *Cyrus* in the government of *Babylon*, which has greatly puzzled chronologers to make out who he was, and has actually been the cause of the rejection of the work by some; though, considering how

* See Vol. XII. pp. 309, 339; *Gray*, pp. 411—415.

† *Macc.* vii. 9—23. See Vol. II. p. 344; Vol. XII. p. 485.

imperfectly the history of the *Babylonians* and *Medes* was known to the *Greeks*, who were the only writers, except the *Jews*, the real names of those who reigned in Babylon might be such as never came to their knowledge. *Daniel*, living at the time, would naturally call the princes with whom he had intercourse by the names by which they were then called; and supposing the work to be genuine, his account is more to be depended upon than that of any later writer, especially one of a country so remote from *Babylon* as *Greece*.

Mr. Volney, who, like other unbelievers, takes it for granted that the book of *Daniel* was written after the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, supposes that the *Darius* whom the writer mentions was *Darius Hystaspes*, transferred, through ignorance, to a former period; because the *seventy years* of *Jeremiah* [xxv. 11, xxix. 10] are said in *Zechariah* (i. 12) to have been fulfilled in the time of the latter *Darius*. But though these seventy years from the burning of the Temple at *Jerusalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, were completed in the reign of *Darius Hystaspes*, in whose time it was rebuilt, the seventy years from the captivity of *Jehoiakim*, when *Daniel* was carried to *Babylon*, expired soon after the accession of *Cyrus*.* And why should *Daniel* call *Darius* a *Mede*, if he had been the same person with *Darius the Persian*? They were, therefore, no doubt, different persons.

3. If we compare the book of *Daniel* with other writings which are allowed to be forgeries, we shall find that there is a remarkable difference between them, especially in its not being so particular as they almost always are; and such particular circumstances as occur in such spurious writings could answer no good end in a prophecy, delivered antecedent to the events. Thus, not only the name of *Christ*, but also that of *Jesus*, occurs in the second book of *Esdras*, (vii. 28—33,) “For my son *Jesus* shall be revealed with those that be with him, and they that remain shall rejoice within four hundred years. After these years shall my son *Christ* die, and all men that have life.† And the world shall be turned into the old silence seven days, like as in the former judgments; so that no man shall remain. And after seven days the world that yet awaketh not, shall be raised up, and that shall die that is corrupt. And the earth shall restore those that are asleep in her, and so shall the dust those that dwell in silence, and the secret places shall deliver

* See Vol. XII. pp. 232, 235.

† See *Gray*, pp. 530, 538, 539.

those souls that were committed unto them. And the Most High shall appear upon the seat of judgment, and misery shall pass away.”

This is just such an account as a converted *Jew*, with the peculiar opinions of many of the primitive *Christians*, would give; Christ appearing about four hundred years after the time of *Ezra*, the supposed author of this book; and it being the opinion of many that the end of the world, and the day of judgment, were then near at hand. The account is, therefore, true to the time of the real author, but false with respect to all that followed. This is not the case with respect to the book of *Daniel*. His prophecies proceed in an uniform manner, describing all future events in the same enigmatical language from his own time to *the time of the end*, with equal obscurity or equal clearness; and no part of the prophecy is more clear than that which respects the rise and fall of the *fourth*, or *Roman* empire, of which it was impossible that any writer of his time could have any knowledge, except by divine revelation.

It is evident that the author of this book of *Esdras* must have lived after the time of the twelve *Cæsars*, and about that of *Trajan*, but not much later, for those reigns are described in a manner not to be easily mistaken, though the names of the emperors are not mentioned, and the comparatively long reign of *Augustus*, the second of the twelve, is particularly and unnecessarily insisted upon. See *Ch. xi.*, in which an eagle is represented [*ver. 1*] with “twelve feathered wings,” of which the second is said (*ver. 13*) to have “reigned, and had a great time,” and, [*vers. 15—17,*] “a voice came unto it, and said, Hear thou that hast borne rule over the earth so long: this I say unto thee, before thou beginnest to appear no more, there shall none after thee attain unto thy time, neither unto the half thereof.”* And in the interpretation it is said, (*xii. 11—15,*) “The eagle *which* thou sawest come up from the sea, is the kingdom which was seen in the vision of thy brother Daniel; but it was not expounded unto him, therefore now I declare it unto thee. Behold the days will come that there shall rise up a kingdom upon earth, and it shall be feared above all the kingdoms that were before it. In the same shall twelve kings reign, one after another; whereof the second shall begin to reign, and shall have more time than any of the twelve.”

* The reign of Tiberius was, however, a little more than the half of that of Augustus, but this was probably owing to the miscomputation of this writer. (*P.*) See *Gray*, p. 532, Note M.

The *Sibylline Oracles*, another acknowledged forgery, contains nothing less than a pretty full history of both the *Old* and *New Testaments*, in which we find not only the name of *Jesus Christ*, but all the more remarkable transactions of his life, his miraculous conception, the visit of the *Magi*, and their presents, his feeding of the five thousand, with the exact number of loaves and fishes, and the same twelve baskets of fragments which are mentioned by the evangelists.*

In works in which there is no intended deception, but only an imitation of prophecy, by ingenious and pious men, we see how difficult it is to avoid this error of too great particularity, as in the prophecies that *Milton* puts into the mouth of *Michael*, in his discourse with *Adam*; in which he shews him the murder of *Abel* by *Cain*, and all the more remarkable events in the history of his posterity.

The prophecies of *Daniel* are conducted on a different plan, and more suitable to divine wisdom; giving men a sufficient intimation of the *nature* of those future events in which they are most interested, as an exercise of their faith, hope and patience, but not enabling them to tell with precision either the particulars of the events, or the time at which they would take place; a happy medium which the ingenuity of man has never yet hit upon. But though future events are announced in this general manner, it may be sufficiently evident, when they have taken place, that they were clearly foreseen, and, consequently, that no other being than He who can look into the most remote futurity could have described them, even in that obscure manner. And these indications of future events have, in the great plan of prophecy, been given with greater distinctness as the time of their accomplishment has approached.

Thus the future prosperous state of the *Hebrew* nation was plainly announced to *Abraham*, more plainly to *Moses*, but as to take place after a previous state of dispersion and calamity. It was revealed with many more particulars to *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and the other prophets, who preceded the *Babylonish Captivity*, and also its connexion with the happy, final state of the world in general. In *Daniel* the same final, happy state of things called by him the *kingdom of God*, is announced, but as not to take place till after the succession of four great monarchies, the first of which was the *Babylonian*, and the last to terminate in ten lesser kingdoms, to be

* See *supra*, p. 367; *Lardner*, II. pp. 313, 319, 321, 322.

accompanied with the rise of another power of a very different nature, hostile to truth and goodness, which was to be destroyed together with them.

In the *Revelation* of *John* this last power is farther unfolded, and is made the subject of a variety of prophetic representations. There, also, we have an indication of many more intervening events than are noticed in the prophecies of *Daniel*; but without the books of *Daniel* we should want a very important link in the great chain of prophecy.

We now see the clear accomplishment of many of the particulars foretold in the prophecies of *Daniel* and of *John*. Consequently, our faith is strengthened, and our views greatly enlarged, with respect to the great events that are yet to take place, though without enabling us to say beforehand what the particular events will be, or when the glorious times so repeatedly announced to us will commence. Jesus himself did not know this, but, as he said, (*Mark* xiii. 32.) *his Father only*.

PART II.

9. That the book of *Daniel* was not written by any impostor, who only personated that prophet, may be safely inferred from the genuine marks of piety which are apparent through the whole of it. We every where perceive marks of a most extraordinary but natural character, in this work, especially marks of the most undissembled piety, and also of integrity, such as it must have been impossible for any man to counterfeit, and which are utterly inconsistent with so deliberate an imposition on the world as the forgery of such a work implies. But for this evidence I must appeal to those who have themselves a sense of piety, and who have a feeling of the sentiments of piety so naturally expressed in this book. Let the *ninth chapter*, in particular, be read with this view. Such sentiments as those which we discover there would be exceedingly discordant with those of any person who should be capable of deliberately forging any thing, as a work divinely inspired. We see nothing approaching to this in the *Koran*, or the writing of any known impostor. The genuine book of *Ezra* will be found to be exceedingly different from the apocryphal *Esdras*, in the same respect. In the former, there are marks of genuine piety, as in *Daniel*; but in the latter, mere declamation, which might well be adopted by a man who had no real feeling of the sentiments so expressed.

10. The internal evidence of the genuineness of the book of *Daniel* is, on several other accounts, very strong. There was no suspicion of the forgery of any writing whatever till long after this book was known; and it would be very extraordinary indeed, if so very difficult an undertaking as this, should have succeeded so well in the first attempt. For it is not easy to conceive of any undertaking more difficult than the forgery of a book so large as this, referred to times so remote from that of its pretended origin. No person would naturally think of composing different parts of any work in different languages, and still less would he have chosen to introduce so many names of places and persons, and so many other circumstances, which he might easily have avoided doing, as they do not at all contribute to any imaginable purpose of writing it, but would greatly facilitate the detection of the fraud. Let the first chapter of this book be read with this view. This alone has so many marks of genuineness as I should think decisive in its favour. On the whole, this book of *Daniel*, is one of the last of all ancient writings with respect to which I should suspect any imposition.

Various objections have been made to the genuineness of the book of *Daniel* by *Porphyry* among the *ancient*, and *Collins*, of the *modern* unbelievers: but as they have been often and satisfactorily answered, I shall not recite them.* The principal of them arises from the occurrence of a few words supposed to be of *Greek* origin,† whence they infer that it was originally composed in Greek. But all these words are the names of musical instruments, which it is said the Greeks borrowed from *Barbarians*, that is, the people of the *East*, so that it is most probable they got their names along with them. This may easily be supposed to be the case with respect to all of them except one, which certainly has much the appearance of a word originally Greek, viz. *Symphonia*. But as there are no *Grecisms* in the phraseology of the work, which could not have been concealed if so large a work as this had been originally composed in the Greek language, it is most natural to suppose that this single resemblance of a Greek word came by accident, which will not be the only case of the kind.‡

* See "The Scheme of Literal Prophecy considered," (Ch. v. Sect. vi.,) 1727, pp. 149—157, 440—460; Bp. *Newton*, (*Dissert.* xiii.,) I. pp. 229—231. On the question whether *Collins* were really an *Unbeliever*, see Vol. IV. pp. 260—262.

† *Collins*, who professes to follow *Grotius*, says, "This book abounds with derivations from the Greek." *Scheme*, p. 151. See *Grotii Opera*, 1679, I. p. 458.

‡ See, on *Dan.* iii. 5, Vol. XII. pp. 316, 317.

I will, however, mention another *hypothesis*, which may account for the introduction of this one Greek word. It is very possible that, as *Alexandria* abounded with learned Jews, who used the *Greek* language, the *Hebrew* copy from which ours was taken was written there, and that the copier inadvertently put the word of the Greek translation in the place of that particular *Chaldee* word; and this is the very word that is used in the version of the *Seventy*. Almost any *hypothesis* is more probable than that a large work in which there is not a single *Grecism* in the phraseology, and which has so much evidence of its genuineness of other kinds, should be a translation from the Greek. If any book more than another bespeaks itself to be of *oriental* origin, it is this very book of *Daniel*. The composition of the whole, from the beginning to the end, is most unlike any thing that was ever written in Greek. As the language of the place in which *Daniel* wrote was the *Chaldee*, while he himself was a *Hebrew*, it is not at all extraordinary that some parts of the book, especially those which related more immediately to the country, or the people, should be in their language, while those parts which more immediately respected his countrymen should be in *Hebrew*.* The same is the case with the book of *Ezra*, who wrote not long after *Daniel*.

Having thus proved the genuineness of the book of *Daniel*, I shall point out some of the marks of a prophetic spirit with which it is written.

It is evident from the structure of this work, that the prophecies contained in it look far beyond the times of *Antiochus Epiphanes*. That state of things which *Daniel* calls *the kingdom of heaven*, and *the kingdom of the saints*, is clearly the same with that which, without being so called, is described by *Isaiah*, and several of the ancient prophets, as that which was to succeed the restoration of the Jews to their own country, from which they were never more to be removed. That those prophets *do* foretel such an event, which certainly has not yet taken place, I must here take for granted, having shewn it in a former *Discourse*.†

Of this kingdom of heaven, which is represented in the vision of *Nebuchadnezzar*, [*Dan. ii. 45,*] by “the stone

* See *Lowth* in *Illustrations of Prophecy*, II. p. 348, *Note*. Dr. Chandler says, “The purity of the language in which the book is written, both of the *Chaldee* and *Hebrew*, is an undeniable argument of its great antiquity.” *Vindic. of Dan.* pp. 61, 63, in *ibid.*

† See *supra*, p. 157.

cut out of the mountain without hands," and which *smote* the great image, consisting of gold, silver, brass, and iron, (representing the four successive empires that began with the *Babylonian*,) which stone is said to have become "a great mountain," filling "the whole earth," it is said in the interpretation of the vision, (*ver.* 41,) "The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."*

This final and happy state of things is more particularly described in *Daniel's* vision of the *four beasts*, which represent the same *four kingdoms*. After the destruction of the last of the four, which is said (*Dan.* vii. 11) to be "slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame," it is said, (*vers.* 13, 14,) "I *Daniel* saw in the night-visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days," (who had before been described as in the most majestic form, sitting in judgment,) "and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

The same state of things he afterwards describes by saying, (*ver.* 18,) "The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."† In the interpretation of this vision, the angel informs him, that after the destruction of the fourth and last kingdom, and of another power that should arise in the last state of it, and as a part of it, (being represented by one of the horns of the last beast,) *vers.* 26, 27, "the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end; and the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

As this is said to be the final state of things in the world, it must necessarily be the same with that state of righteousness and peace spoken of by the preceding prophets, when it is said, *Isa.* ii. 4, that *nation shall no more rise up against*

* See Vol. XII. pp. 314, 315.

† See *ibid.* p. 325.

nation, and when *they shall learn war no more*, in which the descendants of *Abraham*, frequently called *the saints*, a holy people, or a people peculiarly devoted to God, he being called *their God*, and they *his people*, shall have the pre-eminence over all other nations.

Coincident with this great period, is that which *Daniel* mentions, (*Ch. xii. 1—3*), when *his people*, or the *Jews*, “shall be delivered;” when “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt;” and when “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”* As this state of things, thus described in three of the prophecies of *Daniel*, is said to be *final*, with respect to this world; and as that which is described still more copiously by *Isaiah* and the other prophets, exactly corresponding with this, is likewise said to be the final state of the world, they cannot be any other than the same state; and therefore the prophecies of *Daniel*, having respect to this state, must look much beyond the times of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, or even those in which we now live.

Since the states which precede the final and happy one are, in these prophecies of *Daniel*, connected with it, by immediate succession, (no other state intervening between them,) those states also must be subsequent to the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*. The *little stone*, which represents the kingdom of heaven, became a *great mountain*, filling the whole earth, immediately after its falling upon, and breaking in pieces, the great image. And *the Ancient of Days* sat in judgment, and gave the kingdom to the Son of Man, and to the saints, immediately after the destruction of the last of the four beasts, and of that other power which arose among the ten, in which the last great empire terminated. For it is said, (*Dan. vii. 21, 22*), “the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” This is evidently inconsistent with the opinion of the prophecies of *Daniel*, terminating with the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*. This was two thousand years ago; but the kingdom of the saints is not commenced yet.

According to the contexture of these prophecies, the

* See Vol. XII. pp. 341, 342.

kingdom of the *Seleucidæ*, in which *Antiochus Epiphanes* reigned, falls short of the *fourth* kingdom announced by *Daniel*, and must belong to the *third*. The third beast is said, (*Ch. vii. 6.*) to be “like to a leopard,” and to have had “four wings,” and also “four heads.”* The same power is evidently represented, (*viii. 5.*) by “a he-goat,” which “came from the West,” and which had “a notable horn between his eyes.”† Of him it is said, [*vers. 6—8.*] that “he came to the *second* beast,” which was a “ram that had two horns,” (and which in the interpretation, *ver. 20.* is said to represent *the kingdom of the Medes and Persians.*) “and smote the ram, and brake his two horns,” and then waxed “very great, and when he was strong, the great horn was broken: and for it came up four notable ones, towards the four winds of heaven.”‡ This *he-goat* is said in the interpretation [*ver. 21.*] to be “the king,” (or kingdom,) “of *Greece*, and the great horn between his eyes the first king.” [*Ver. 22.*]: “Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.” All this was exactly verified in *Alexander the Great*, in whom all the power of *Greece* was centred, and in the four kingdoms which history says rose out of the same power after his death, but greatly inferior to it, and of these that of the *Seleucidæ* was one.

But “a fourth beast” with “ten horns” is said to destroy this *third* beast. This, therefore, must be subsequent to the kingdom of the *Seleucidæ*, and antecedent to the kingdom of the saints, and therefore cannot be any other than the *Roman* empire, to which the emblematical description applies with wonderful exactness. *Dan. vii. 7.*: “After this I saw in the night-visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth. It devoured, and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet, and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.”§

This description also well agrees with that of the fourth kingdom in the vision of *Nebuchadnezzar*, represented by the iron legs of the great image, which had feet part of iron, and part of clay, and which was broken by “the stone cut out of the mountain without hands.” [*Dan. ii. 45.*]

From all this it appears to me impossible not to conclude, that these prophecies of *Daniel* have respect to another

* See Vol. XII. p. 323.

† See *ibid.* p. 327.

‡ *Vers. 6—8.* See Vol. XII. pp. 327, 328.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 323, 324.

temporal kingdom, which was to put an end to that of the *Seleucidæ*, this being one of the four into which that of the *Macedonians*, or *Greeks*, was to be divided; and this was the *Roman*, which also was to terminate in ten kingdoms, which took place on the dissolution of the *Roman* empire.* This division subsists at this day, but is to be succeeded by what *Daniel* calls *the kingdom of heaven*, which is to be established in the earth, and to continue to the end of time.

Admitting, therefore, the genuineness of the Book of *Daniel*, it cannot be denied that what he wrote was dictated by the spirit of prophecy, or a proper divine inspiration. For what human foresight could have enabled him to foretel even the destruction of the *Babylonian* empire, (then in its full power, probably about ten years before the death of *Nebuchadnezzar*,) by the *Medes* and *Persians*, who are here mentioned by name, when it does not appear that, at that time, they were either of them considerable, and not united? For this was more than thirty years before the taking of *Babylon* by *Cyrus*. Much less could any man foresee the end that would be put to the empire of the *Medes* and *Persians*, by the *Greeks*, who are also particularly mentioned, when it is probable that the *Greeks*, whose power was then nothing at all, were unknown at *Babylon*, and so remote from that part of the world, and in so rude and barbarous a state, that it could no more have been apprehended that they would be masters of that country, than that the *Esquimaux* should ever become masters of this.

But *Daniel* describes more particularly still a fourth empire, and the declining state of that empire, and also another power, of a most extraordinary kind, which, as I have shewn, could be no other than the *Papal*, arising within that empire, before the dissolution of it by the setting up of the kingdom of heaven, which has not yet taken place, but which may now be expected, and perhaps in the time of some who now hear me.

Whatever difficulty there may be in the interpretation of some parts of the prophecies of *Daniel*, this outline of the whole is sufficiently clear, and abundantly vindicates his prophetic character, the omniscience of the Being by whom he was inspired, and the divine origin of the religion which he professed.

There are, however, some *Christians*, firm believers in the authenticity of the book of *Daniel*, who yet are of opinion

* See *Mede* (B. iii.), p. 661; Sir I. Newton on *Daniel*, p. 47; Bp. Newton, (*Diss.* xiv.,) l. pp. 265—267.

that his prophecies do not go beyond the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*. But in this it appears to me that they violate all just rules of interpretation, and pay little regard to the contexture of the visions, or the language of the angel who explains them. The principal of these is *Grotius*. I shall therefore examine his ideas on this subject. It should, however, be considered, that being persecuted at home, and hospitably received in a Popish country,* he always discovered a great unwillingness to give offence to the *Catholics* by any interpretations of Scripture that would reflect upon them, especially by supposing that the Pope was *Antichrist*;† and this was almost unavoidable if the fourth empire of *Daniel* was made to be the *Roman*; because then the little horn in the seventh chapter cannot well be any other than the Papal power, the same with powers of a similar description in the *Revelation of John*.

In order to support his hypothesis, *Grotius* is obliged to suppose that *Daniel's* fourth kingdom, represented by the legs of iron in the image of *Nebuchadnezzar*, and the fourth beast with iron teeth in the vision of *Daniel*, represented the kingdom of the *Seleucidæ* and of the *Lagidæ* jointly;‡ whereas nothing is more evident than that those two kingdoms were only branches of the *Macedonian* or *Grecian* empire, two of the four into which it was divided after the death of *Alexander*. They were no other than Grecian

* France, in 1621. See his Life by *Burigny*, 1754, pp. 88—90.

† "He was in his own nature just, candid, benevolent, to a supreme degree; and the experience of an active, turbulent life had but fortified him the more in a love of these pacific virtues. He was, on principle, a sincere and zealous Christian; and consequently impressed with a due sense of that exalted charity which is the characteristic of that religion; but he had seen and felt much of the mischiefs which proceed from theological quarrels: and thus every thing concurred to make him a friend to peace, and, above all, to peace among Christians.

"An union of the Catholic and Protestant churches seemed necessary to this end:—henceforth, it became the ruling object of his life; and, permitting himself too easily to conclude, that the Protestant doctrine of Antichrist was the sole, or principal obstruction to the union desired; he bent all the efforts of his wit and learning to discredit and overthrow that doctrine. Thus was this virtuous man betrayed by the wisdom and equity of his own character.

"The issue of his general scheme was what might easily be foreseen; and of his arguments, I shall only say thus much, That the Romish writers themselves, for whose use they might seem to be invented, though they continue to object his name to us, are too wise to venture the stress of their cause upon them." Bp. Hurd's *Introduction*, (*Serm.* viii.) 1772, pp. 267—269; 1776, II. pp. 62—64. See *Burigny*, pp. 269—272.

‡ "Crura imaginis: quæ hæc. Sub unius feræ nomine describuntur, quòd tam Syriæ quàm Ægypti Reges Macedones essent, et incertis finibus, modò hi modò illi latius regnaverint.

"Videmur decem ista cornua reperire posse in capite infra undecimo, hos scilicet, Ptolemæum Lagi, Seleucum Nicatara, Ptolemæum Eupatora, Ptolemæum Euergeten, Seleucum Callinicum, Antiochum Magnum, Ptolemæum Philopatora, Ptolemæum Epiphanera, Seleucum Philopatora, Antiochum Epiphanem." *Grot. Op.* (on *Dan.* vii. 7), I. p. 466.

kingdoms, though established in *Syria* and *Egypt*; and were not erected on the ruins of the *Macedonian* empire. But according to *Daniel*, the fourth empire overturned and destroyed the third, as much as the third overturned the second, and the second the first.

Besides, with what propriety can these two kingdoms, generally hostile to, and frequently at open war with, each other, be called one? Nor does the character of these kingdoms with respect to *power*, at all correspond to the description of the fourth empire in the prophecy. For, instead of being superior in that respect to the preceding empire, here supposed to be that of *Alexander*, they were even together greatly inferior, and not to be compared with any of the three preceding empires. But in the *Roman* we find an empire that fully answers to this part of the description, as it does to every other.

The *fourth* kingdom of *Daniel* is said to be divided into *ten*, as the *third* was into *four*, these ten being represented by the ten horns of the fourth beast, which are said, (*Dan.* vii. 24,) to be “ten kings” (which, in the usual language of this prophecy, mean kingdoms) “that shall arise.” These ten kingdoms we very easily find in those into which the *Roman* empire was divided, and of which a more particular account is given in the *Revelation*. But *Grotius*, agreeably to his *hypothesis*, finds them in the individual kings of the two separate kingdoms of *Syria* and *Egypt*,* though, if all of them be enumerated, there will be more than twice that number. He therefore stops, though quite arbitrarily, at the reign of *Antiochus Epiphanes*;† and even on this plan there are too many: for there were seven kings of *Syria*, before him, and five of *Egypt*, before *Ptolemy Philometer*, who was contemporary with him, and whose reign commenced before his, and these make *twelve*.

Grotius is also obliged to maintain that *Antiochus Epiphanes* is the “little horn”‡ which “came up among the ten,” by whom (*Dan.* vii. 8) “three of the first horns” were “plucked up by the roots,” and of which it is said in the interpretation, [*ver.* 24,] that it arose after the ten, that it was diverse from these, and subdued three kings. Now the *Roman* empire was in many respects different from any of the preceding empires; but *Antiochus* was no way remarkably different

* “Modò Syriæ, modò Ægypti, qui Judæam vexabunt.” *Grot. Op.* (on *Dan.* vii. 24), l. p. 468.

† See *supra*, p. 392, *Note, ad fin.*

‡ “Parvulum cornu dicitur, quia etsi genere erat regio, nullum tamen jus habebat ad regnum, Antiochus scilicet Epiphanes. Vid. xi. 21.” *Grot. Op.* l. p. 466.

from any of the preceding kings. And who were the "three kings" that he can be said to have subdued? *Grotius* says they were *Ptolemy Philometer* of *Egypt*, *Seleucus*, his own elder brother, and his son *Demetrius*, in *Syria*.^{*} But though *Antiochus* defeated *Ptolemy*, he did not dethrone him, and reign in his stead. On the contrary, *Ptolemy* continued to reign, and outlived him many years. *Seleucus*, his elder brother, was not dethroned by him, but killed without his knowledge or participation, by *Heliodorus*, who hoped to succeed him, to the exclusion of *Antiochus*, who was then at *Rome*; and *Demetrius* did not reign at all till after the death of *Antiochus*.

As that state of things which succeeded the *fourth* empire is said to be *final*, and to continue to the end of time, and the *Roman* empire came immediately after those of the *Seleucidæ* and *Lagidæ*, which *Grotius* makes to be the *third*; he maintains that this is that power which is represented by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands and that filled the whole earth,[†] and also that *kingdom* which "the Ancient of Days" gave to "the Son of Man,"[‡] and to the saints, who were to "possess it for ever, even for ever and ever." [*Dan. viii. 18.*] But surely no two things were more different than the *Roman* empire and a kingdom at all answering to this description. Can the *Roman* empire be said to have been a kingdom of saints,[§] and was that an empire that was never to be destroyed?

There cannot, therefore, be any reasonable doubt but that the prophecies of *Daniel* relate to times long after those of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and even to those which are announced by the preceding prophets, when the *Jews* shall return to their own country, and when there will be a general prevalence of virtue, and universal peace will succeed the violence and wars which have hitherto afflicted the world.

* "Per ipsum, aut ex ipsius jussu, Seleucus frater ipsius major occisus; spoliatus verò Demetrius ejusdem Seleuci filius, Antiochi autem patruelis, spoliatus item Ptolemæus Philopator Rex Ægypti." *Grot. Op. I. p. 466.*

† "Exercitus populi qui sæ esset spontis, nullique Regi pareret: cujus populi origo à monte, nempe Palatino. (Vid. *Virg. L. viii. En.: Liv. L. i.*)—Gessit autem in hac re Imperium Romanum non obscurum typum Evangelii, quod ortum de cælo ab exiguis initiis in immensum crevit." *Ibid.* (on ii. 34) p. 456.

‡ "Imperium tandem maximum (id est, Romanum) perveniet ad unius Dei cultores." *Ibid.* (on vii. 18) p. 467.

§ See *supra*, p. 285, Note †; Vol. II. pp. 91, Note †, 92, 93. "The Romans were, in many respects, a barbarous nation. Let us view their public spectacles, which they were wont to behold, I do not say with indifference, but with transports of joy. Are not they equally shocking to modesty, and to every tender sentiment of humanity?—These melancholy details are found in a thousand writers; they are monuments of wanton cruelty and human depravity." *M. Macquer's Chron. Abridg. of Rom. Hist. 1760, p. 462.*

DISCOURSE VII.

OF THE

PROPHECIES CONCERNING ANTICHRIST.

2 TIM. iii. 1 :

This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

PART I.

INTERESTED as we all are in the events of what are called in the Scriptures *the last days*, or *the last times*, and the more as we approach nearer to them, it may be of use to collect all that we can learn from the prophecies concerning them, and compare the particulars with the events that are recorded in history, or that now take place. Though the prospect will be a melancholy one, it will serve to confirm our faith in those prophecies; and they give us an assurance of the happiest events that are to succeed the calamitous ones, and in the authority of revelation in general, on which alone is founded our hope of immortality.

Omitting at this time the consideration of the great catastrophe, which will be the most glorious and happy state of the world, when the Jews will be returned to their own country, and become, under the immediate direction of God, the most distinguished nation upon earth, and the greatest blessing to all other nations; I shall at present attend only to events of an intermediate nature, viz. that state of things which is in the Scriptures called *the apostacy of the latter times*, enumerating all the several characters of the power that is termed *Antichristian*, and which was to be the source of much evil in the world, from all the prophecies in which they are found. When these are recounted, and the applications of them to actual events examined, it must, I think, appear impossible to any reasonable person, that the description should have been given at random so many years before the least appearance of the events, and when nothing existed that could have led any person to suspect them. They must, therefore, have been

dictated by that great Being who alone can look into futurity, and to whom all things past, present, and to come, are equally known.

It is to be observed that all the characters of this Anti-christian power are not mentioned in all the prophecies, but so many of them are mentioned in them all, and these unquestionably the same in sense, though not in words, that there cannot be any doubt but that the same power was intended in them all. These prophecies are that of the "little horn" in *Daniel* vii., called in the interpretation *a king*, or kingdom; that of "the king" who did "according to his will," in *Dan.* xi. 36; that of the "man of sin," 2 *Thess.* ii. 3; that of the *two beasts*, one of which rose "out of the sea," and the other "out of the earth," *Rev.* xiii. 1—11; and that of "the woman arrayed in purple and scarlet," who sat "upon a scarlet-coloured beast," xvii. 34.* To

* After the sounding of the *sixth trumpet*, [ix. 13,] till which the prophetic history proceeds with great regularity, an angel is introduced as descending from heaven, and exhibiting to the apostle a variety of representations, in which the same things seem to be described, though under a variety of figures. But the angel had previously said, [x. 7,] that when "the seventh angel" should sound his trumpet, "the mystery of God should be finished, as declared to his servants the prophets," meaning, probably, that the kingdom so often announced by the ancient prophets would then be set up.

Among these representations, which interrupt the account of the trumpets, mention is made of three *beasts*, or persecuting powers, of which one rises "out of the sea," [xiii. 1,] another "out of the earth," [ver. 11,] and a third "out of the bottomless pit." [xi. 7.] The *first* of these, which has "seven heads and ten horns," evidently represents the *Roman empire*, especially after its division into *ten kingdoms*, of which that of the *popes*, residing in Rome, is one. For it is said, [xiii. 5,] "power was given to this beast to continue," (or rather to make war,) "forty and two months," which is the duration of the persecuting power of *Antichrist*.

The *second* beast, which rose "out of the earth," had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon; and he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him; he doeth great wonders, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth." [xiii. 11—14.] He also makes an *image of the former beasts*, and makes all men to worship it. His number [ver. 18] is 666. This, therefore, can be no other than the *Pope*, at first an ecclesiastical power, and at length a temporal one; and therefore must coincide in part with the former beast. His making an image of the former beast, must therefore mean his assuming his power, and mode of government, to which he makes all men submit.

The *third* beast which rose "out of the bottomless pit," or the abyss, which was *of a scarlet colour*, "full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns," [xvii. 3,] can only signify the first beast, as supporting the corruptions of Popery, represented by the woman who sat upon him. Of this beast it is said, [ver. 8,] that it "was, and is not, and yet is, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit." It, therefore, did not exist, though it was destined to destruction, at the time that the apostle wrote.

"The seven heads" of this beast, [ver. 9,] are said to be "seven mountains," which, therefore, must mean *Rome*. These heads also correspond to the seven kings, or forms of government, under which Rome subsisted, while the ten horns are the ten kingdoms which were to have power at the same time with the beast.

This beast, which rises "out of the bottomless pit," is also said, [ver. 11,] to be "the eighth" of these forms of government, and of course the *Papal*. Conse-

these we must add the description that Paul gives of "the latter times," (1 *Tim.* iv. 1,) and that in my text, and what the apostle *Peter* [2 *Ep.* iii. 3] and *Jude* [18] say to the same purpose.

These prophecies, at least the principal of them, are evidently not copied from one another. To appearance they are all equally original, and therefore, leading, as they do, to the same conclusion, they tend to confirm one another.

1. The first character of this extraordinary *Antichristian* power is, that it is a *kingly* one, or possessed of sovereign authority. This is clearly understood from the prophecies of *Daniel*, whose "fourth beast" with "ten horns," (vii. 7.) I must here take for granted, represents the *Roman* empire, the *fourth* in succession from the *Babylonian*, which is expressly said to have been the *first*; "the ten horns" being, as the interpreting angel says, (*ver.* 24,) "ten kings," or kingdoms, and that this "shall arise after them," that "he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings." In *Chapter xi.* 36, of the same power it is said, "The king shall do according to his will, and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god." And such unquestionably is, and long has been, the *Papal* power; the popes being as properly *sovereigns*, as any princes in the world, though of a very different character.

2. The seat of this power was to be Rome. For, in *Rev.* xvii. 18, "the woman seated [*ver.* 3] upon a scarlet-coloured beast" is said to be "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." And *Rome* was then the seat of almost universal empire. It is also said, (*Rev.* xvii. 9,) that "the seven heads" of the beast which carried the woman "are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth;" and *Rome* was usually denominated *Urbs Septicollis*, from the seven hills on which it was built.*

quently, the figures in these different representations are not free from some degree of intermixture and confusion, and therefore a nice attention to this circumstance is not necessary in the interpretation of this prophecy.

The term *abyss* may be synonymous to *sea*, but, strictly speaking, it rather signifies a hollow place, supposed to be under both the earth and the sea. For, in *Rev.* xx. 1, "an angel" is said to have "the key," of this abyss, and in it to shut up the dragon or *Satan*, and out of this *prison*, as it is called, [*ver.* 7.] he is to be loosed at the end of the thousand years." (*P.*)

* "It hath been said that Constantinople too was situated on seven hills. It may be so; but Constantinople did not, in the time of this vision, *reign over the kings of the earth*. Besides, if its *dominion* had not been mentioned, *the city on seven hills* is so characteristic of Rome, that the name itself could not have pointed it out more plainly; as must be evident to all those who recollect what the Latin writers have said on this subject.

"The *septem domini montes* of one poet, (*Martial*, L. iv. Ep. 64,) is well known;

3. The order in which this new system of government was to arise in *Rome* is particularly mentioned, *Rev.* xvii. 8, 10, 11: "There are seven kings," (or forms of government,) "five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, and yet is, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." Now it is remarkable that *Rome* had been governed in *five* different manners before the time of the apostle *John*, viz. by *kings*, *consuls*, *dictators*, *decemvirs*, and *military tribunes*; the *sixth*, or that by *emperors*, was then existing; the *seventh* was that of the senate of the people of *Rome*, which took place after an end was put to the *exarchate*, but did not continue long, at least without interruption. The *Papal* power, which exists at present, is therefore "the eighth," and it is said to be "of the seven," that is, of the same kind with them, or the supreme power in the city, succeeding the preceding powers, in the same place, and equally absolute.

Of "the beast" mentioned above, it is said that it "was, and is not, and yet is," signifying, probably, that the *Papal* power was the *Roman* power, but not in its *Pagan* state, which, however, was in a great measure revived in a mode of worship which much resembles the *Pagan*. For such, as many writers have shewn, is the worship of the *Roman*

and seems the abridgement of a still more famous line in another (*Propert.* L. iii. ix. 57):

Septem urbs alta jugis, toto quæ præsidet orbi:

to which St. John's idea of a woman, seated on seven hills, and reigning over the kings of the earth, so exactly corresponds, that one sees no difference between the poet and the prophet; except that the latter personifies his idea, as the genius of the prophetic style required.

"But a passage in Virgil, (*Georg.* L. ii. vers. 532—535,) is so much to our purpose that it merits peculiar attention. This poet, in the most finished of his works, had been celebrating the praises of a country life, which he makes the source and origin of the Roman greatness:

*Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini;
Hanc Remus et frater: sic fortis Etruria crevit:
Scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma.*

"The encomium, we see, is made with that gradual pomp which is familiar to Virgil. And the last line, (from its majestic simplicity, the noblest, perhaps, in all his writings,) one would naturally expect should close the description. Yet he adds, to the surprise, and, I believe, to the disappointment of most readers,

Septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces.

The seven hills were necessary to complete his description of the imperial city. (Compare *Æn.* vi. ver. 776, &c.) To an ancient Roman, the circumstance of its situation was, of all others, the most august and characteristic; and Rome itself was not Rome, till it was contemplated under this idea." Bp. Hurd, (*Serm* XI.) 1772, pp. 352—354; 1776, II. pp. 148, 149.

Catholics, the very same ceremonies, processions, &c. being resumed, and similar objects of worship adopted; a multiplicity of *saints* in the new religion succeeding to the multiplicity of *gods* in the old.

4. This power was not to arise till the removal of another power which existed in the time of the apostles, though some principles on which it was founded were then perceived to operate. This circumstance is expressly noticed by the apostle *Paul*, in answer to some who supposed that it would appear immediately, and be presently followed by the second coming of Christ. *2 Thess. ii. 1—3, 6—8*: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled—as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you, by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.—And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked one be revealed.”

According to *Daniel*, [vii. 24,] this power, signified by the “little horn,” was not to arise till after the rise of the *ten kingdoms*, into which the fourth or *Roman* empire, was to be broken. They were those kings, who, according to *Rev. xvii. 13*, were to “give their power and strength unto the beast,” so that this latter could have no power, or proper existence, till they gave it to him, which of course implies prior existence.

When the apostle wrote this, the *Roman* empire was in its full power, and this must have effectually prevented the rise of any other in the same seat and that would have interfered with it. And it is well known that, for several centuries, the popes were only bishops of *Rome*, without any temporal power at all, and that they first acquired it after the removal of the seat of empire to *Constantinople*. After this, by the gift of *Pepin* and *Charlemagne*, kings of France, they became possessed of the exarchate of *Ravenna*, and the kingdom of *Lombardy*; and, lastly, they acquired the sovereignty of the city of *Rome*. These may be the three principalities, represented by the three horns in the vision of *Daniel*, vii. 8: “And behold there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots.” In the interpreta-

tion it is said, (*ver.* 24,) “the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings,” (that is, *kingdoms*,) “that shall arise; and another shall arise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.” And it is remarkable that, at whatever time the custom was taken up, the popes wear a *triple crown*.*

5. This *Antichristian* power was to be acquired and kept up by *artifice*. The coming of the “man of sin,” *Paul* says, (2 *Thess.* ii. 10, 11,) is “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God gave them up to strong delusions.” Also, in his description of “the latter times,” he says, (1 *Tim.* iv. 2,) men will speak “lies in hypocrisy.” In *Rev.* xvii. 13, it is said that *the kings of the earth* gave “their power and strength unto the beast,” which it cannot be supposed they would have done from pure generosity. They must have been led, by some artful representations, to believe that it would be their interest to do it.

Now it is evident from all history that the *Popes* acquired their power not as other princes did, either by lineal succession, or by force of arms, but altogether by artifice; persuading princes who had power, to share it with them, in return for the assistance they were able to give them in another way, viz. by the influence they had over the minds of the people; and they contrived to preserve and enlarge their power by every species of craft and cunning.

It was thus that the Popes prevailed upon the *kings of France* to divide with them their conquests in *Lombardy*, and the *exarchate of Ravenna*; and thus, after a long struggle, they obtained the sovereignty of the city of *Rome*.† By their address, and taking advantage of circumstances, they also emancipated themselves from their subjection and allegiance to the emperors, on whom they had long depended, and whose consent had been necessary to their consecration. And for many centuries, the policy of the court of Rome was noted for its superior refinement, and directed in a great measure the politics of most other states; every measure of great political importance being taken and arranged at Rome.

6. Among other artifices, this power was to be distin-

* See, on *Dan.* vii. 8, Vol. XII. p. 324. “Boniface VIII. [1294] added a second crown to the Pope’s *Tiara*, then called *Regnum*. (See *Du Cange* in *Mitra*, *Regnum*.) Urban V. [1362] added a third.” *Apthorp on Prophecy*, II. p. 290.

† See Vol. V. pp. 402, 403; Vol. IX. pp. 123, 124, 183.

guished by pretences to *miracles*. His *coming*, says *Paul*, (2 *Thess.* ii. 9,) “is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.” And the *beast* that rose “out of the earth,” in *Rev.* xiii. 11, is said [vers. 13, 14] to do “great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men,* and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast.”

The history of Popery abounds with accounts of miracles of every kind. More of them are ascribed to some of their saints than to any of the ancient prophets, or to Jesus Christ, and one circumstance necessary to their canonization is a certificate of the miracles they wrought before, but especially after their deaths. The monks, who were the principal supports of the Papal power, were particularly famous for their invention of miracles; and at the time of the Reformation many of their frauds and impostures were detected; † and in the present more enlightened times, few miracles are pretended to.

7. Agreeably to this pretended power of working miracles, this antichristian power is represented as arising *in the church*, and by this means it was essentially *diverse* from all the preceding powers, as it is said to be in *Dan.* vii. 24. The “man of sin” of *St. Paul*, (2 *Thess.* ii. 4,) “sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” To

* This may allude to the dreadful excommunication of the court of Rome, in which, from an eminence, they threw down lighted torches, and denounced the most terrible judgments, as from God. (P.) See Vol. V. pp. 333, 334.

† On the authority of a writer, “living in those times,” who afterwards became “Clerk of the Council to *Edward VI.*,” Lord Herbert describes “two notable trumperies,” selected from a long list of *frauds and impostures*:

“One was the *Rood of Grace*, at Boxley in Kent; which, being made with divers *vices* to turn the eyes and move the lips, was shewed publicly at Paul’s Cross, by John, Bishop of Rochester, and there broken and pulled in pieces. The other was at Hales, in Gloucestershire, where the *blood of Jesus Christ*, brought from *Jerusalem*, being kept (as was affirmed) for divers ages, had drawn many great offerings to it from remote places; and it was said to have this property, that if a man were in mortal sin, and not absolved, he could not see it; otherwise very well.

“Therefore, every man that came to behold this miracle, confessed himself first to the priest there, and then offering something to the altar, was directed to the chapel where the relic was shewed; the priest who confessed him, in the mean while, retiring himself to the back part of the said chapel, and putting forth upon the altar a cabinet or tabernacle of crystal, which being thick on the one side, that nothing could be seen through it, but on the other side thin and transparent, they used diversly; for if a rich and devout man entered, they would shew the thick side, till he had paid for as many *masses*, and given as large alms as they thought fit; after which (to his great joy) they permitted him to see the thin side, and the blood.” This “was proved to be the blood of a duck, every week renewed by two priests, who kept the secret betwixt them.” *Life and Reign of Henry VIII.*, 1740, pp. 371, 372.

this circumstance our Saviour might allude, when he foretold, [*Matt. xiii. 25,*] that *tares* would be sown by an *enemy* among his *wheat*.

Improbable as this must have appeared, and indeed unintelligible as it must have been in the times of the apostles, what was then and in the time of *Daniel* foretold, has actually come to pass. The plain and simple doctrine of Christ has been corrupted in the most extraordinary manner, by the introduction of *Heathen* principles and practices; and what must have been thought the most extraordinary circumstance in the whole, one of the Christian ministers, originally nothing more than a person chosen by his brethren out of a society of Christians, to officiate among them, maintained by them, and removable at their pleasure, came, in a course of time, to be a sovereign prince; nay, to claim and be allowed *all power in heaven and in earth*, and to set up and put down other princes at his pleasure. Of all the events recorded in history, this is the most extraordinary, and would not even be credible, but that it is so authenticated, and so evident from the history of every state in *Europe*, that it is impossible to deny it.

The wealth, as well as the power of this extraordinary principality, exceeded that of any other. "The woman" sitting on the beast, (*Rev. xvii. 4,*) is described as "decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls;" and at the fall of *Mystical Babylon*, those who were made rich by her merchandise are represented (*Rev. xviii. 16, 17*) as lamenting over her, and saying, "Alas, alas! that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls: for in one hour so great riches is come to nought!"

The wealth that was drawn to *Rome* from every country in *Europe*, is almost beyond calculation. What was got from *England* exceeded the king's revenue, and other nations contributed to the wealth of *Rome* in nearly the same proportion. *Germany*, and other countries, complained of being entirely exhausted by this means; and on this account a reformation became absolutely necessary. The riches of some particular *Catholic* churches is immense, especially that of *Loretto* and others, to which pilgrimages are made.

Particular notice is taken, in the passage above quoted from the *Revelation*, of the "purple and scarlet" made use of by the power described in it; and it is very remarkable that the court of *Rome* appears almost wholly of this colour; the bonnet, the shoes, and many other parts of the dress of

the Pope, the hats of the cardinals, and almost every thing worn by them, are of it. They are not allowed to mourn, except in purple. All persons who wait upon the Pope, or attend upon him at public festivals, and even the horses and mules made use of in the procession, are dressed in red.

8. In proportion to the wealth and power of this new potentate, was to be his *pride* and *arrogance*. The "little horn" which represents it, is said (*Dan.* vii. 8) to have "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things;" and his *look* is said (*ver.* 20) to have been "more stout than his fellows; and he shall think to change times and laws." [*Ver.* 25.] In *Dan.* xi. 36, the same power is described as a *king* who "shall do according to his will, and shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god," that is, all who have supreme power. He shall not "regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all." [*Ver.* 37.] *Paul* says, (*2 Thess.* ii. 4,) that he "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called god, or that is worshipped." Of "the beast," by which the same power is represented, it is said, (*Rev.* xiii. 5, 6,) "there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies;" that "he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." "Another beast," by which the same power is signified, is said (*Rev.* xiii. 11, 12) to have "two horns like a lamb," but to speak "as a dragon," and to exercise "all the power of the first beast before him." The *Babylon*, which is also another figure of the same power, is described (*Rev.* xviii. 7) as having "glorified herself," as well as "lived deliciously," saying "in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow."

Instances of the most extreme pride, haughtiness, and insolence in the popes are without end. Kings and emperors have constantly rendered them the meanest offices, such as holding their stirrups when they mounted their horses, also the bason when they washed their hands, and kissing their feet. Henry IV. of Germany was obliged to wait barefooted several days, in very cold weather,* accompanied by the empress and his infant son, before pope Gregory VII. would receive the submission he came to make to him. Similar instances of arrogance frequently occur in the history of the popes.

This pride and arrogance had a foundation in real power,

* See Vol. IX. pp. 216, 217.

though it was derived from nothing but the ignorance and credulity of the Christian world. Confiding in this, they not only excommunicated sovereign princes, and laid their kingdoms under interdicts, but proceeded to the formal deposition of them, and gave their dominions to whom they pleased. This was several times done in the case of the emperors of *Germany*; and whenever the popes undertook any thing of this kind, they generally succeeded in it at last, though sometimes not without meeting with violent opposition.

The effects of their violent proceedings in the dark ages of Europe are barely credible at this day. When *Robert*, king of *France*,* was excommunicated,† it is said by the historians, that few persons would come near him, and that what his domestics received from his table, they would not eat, but threw to the dogs.‡ When king *John* of *England* was in the same circumstances, and his kingdom at the same time laid under an interdict,§ all the altars of the churches were stripped of their ornaments; the pictures, the statues, and the relics were laid on the ground; divine service was intermitted, the churches shut to the laity, and all the sacraments refused, except to the dying; and burying in consecrated ground was not allowed. In consequence of this, all the offices of life were disturbed by a general consternation. In this extremity, the king, high-spirited as he naturally was, found himself under the necessity of resigning his crown to the pope, and acknowledging himself his vassal, swearing allegiance on his knees to the pope's nuncio, and making every other submission that was required of him.||

This *antichristian* power is said [*Dan.* vii. 25] to "think to change times and laws;" and it is well known that the *popes* claim the power of abrogating any laws, civil as well as ecclesiastical, divine as well as human; and that they have frequently done it, when the most established laws have interfered with their interest. They have decreed changes

* Who "died in 1031, after a reign of thirty-five years." He was a "great protector of the sciences, and friend of the learned." *Mosheim* (Cent. xi. Pt. ii. Ch. i. Sect. iii.), II. p. 249.

† By *Gregory V.*, for having married his cousin. *Nouv. Dict. Hist.* V. p. 185.

‡ "Les historiens disent que cet anathème fit en France tant d'effet, que tous les courtisans du Roi et ses propres domestiques se séparèrent de lui. Il ne lui resta que deux domestiques, qui pleins d'horreur pour tout ce qu'il avoit touché, passaient par le feu jusqu'aux plats où il avoit mangé, et jusqu'aux vases où il avoit bu." *Ibid.*

§ By *Innocent III.*, in 1208.

|| See Vol. IX. pp. 407—409.

in the laws of God and of nature, respecting marriage, the use of meats, and even the obligation of oaths, and the most solemn engagements; having frequently absolved princes and other persons from them. When they have forbidden marriages without the usual degrees of relationship, and on account of spiritual relationship, as by means of godfathers and godmothers, they have granted dispensations for marrying the nearest relations, at the idea of which nature revolts. They have even asserted that the authority, not only of councils, but even that of the Scriptures, was derived from them. Things acknowledged to be allowed in the gospel, as communion in both kinds, and the marriages of the clergy, they have expressly forbidden.

The power to change *times*, as well as *laws*, many refer to the power the popes have claimed to appoint *fasts* and *festivals*; and to reform the *Calendar*, as when pope *Gregory XIII.* changed what was afterwards called the *old style* for the *new*, at which time ten days were struck out of the *Calendar*.*

9. The arrogance of this antichristian power is foretold to affect the rights and prerogatives of God himself, as was in a general way intimated under the last head, and therefore is chargeable with *blasphemy*. He is said (*Dan. vii. 25*) to “speak great words against the Most High,” and (*2 Thess. ii. 4*) to *oppose and exalt* himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”† And the *beast* which rose “out of the sea,” (*Rev. xiii. 1.*) and which probably represents the *civil* power of *Rome*, had upon his “seven heads—the name of blasphemy, and there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies;—and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”‡

Now the titles assumed by the popes are in a high degree blasphemous, some of them being such as belong to God only, as that of *Most Holy Father*. In the tenth session of the council of *Lateran*, § the archbishop of *Patras* addressed the Pope || in the following manner: “Constantine gave up the sceptre of the empire of the world, of the city, and monarchy of the universe, to his proper Lord, the

* See Vol. X. p. 429.

† See Vol. XIV. p. 28.

‡ *Vers. 5, 6.* See Vol. XIV. pp. 474—476.

§ Held in 1123.

|| *Calixtus II.* See a favourable character of him in *Mosheim* (Cent. xii. Pt. ii. Ch. ii. Sect. v.), II. pp. 391, 392.

creator of all things, to wit, Sylvester, the sovereign pontiff,* the victorious God and man, in the Roman see."†

This may be considered as flattery, and though not rejected, not accepted. But pope *Nicolas II.*‡ in one of his public decrees, says, "It is clearly proved that the Pope cannot be bound or loosed by any secular power: for it is known that he was styled *God* by the pious Constantine, and it is clear that God cannot be judged by man." *Urban II.* in a council held at *Rome*, A. D. 1099, said, "It is an execrable thing that hands consecrated to do what has never been granted to any angel, viz. to create God the creator, and to offer him to God the Father, for the salvation of all men, should be reduced to this unworthy baseness, to be the slaves of hands stained day and night with impurity, rapine, and blood."§

Innocent III. said that the popes held on earth the place, not of simple man, but of the true God. || *Martin V.* giving instructions to the ambassadors that he sent to *Constantinople*,¶ began in the following manner: "The most holy and the most blessed, who has the celestial empire, who is Lord upon earth, successor of St. Peter, the Christ of the Lord, the master of the universe, the father of kings, the light of the world, the sovereign pontiff, Martin by divine providence, instructs Anthony Bassan," &c. &c.

Leo X. at the Council of *Lateran*,** was styled "the lion of the tribe of Judah, of the race of Jesse, the Saviour and deliverer of Israel;" and an archbishop addressed him as follows: "All power is given unto you, and he who said *all*, excepted nothing." The same pope suffered himself to be styled *divine majesty*. *Paul V.*†† suffered himself to be called *vice-god*, and received this language of the prophets as applicable to himself, *Jer.* xxvii. 8: "The nation and kingdom which will not serve *thee*, and that will not put their neck under *thy* yoke, that nation will I punish saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the

* See Vol. IX. p. 124.

† Probably with several *infra*, from *Harmonie des Prophéties*. See *supra*, p. 197.

‡ Elected in 1058.

§ In the Council of *Clermont*, held by *Urban* in 1095, it was decreed, "Ne episcopus vel sacerdos, regi vel alicui laico, in manibus, ligiam fidelitatem faciant." *Mosheim* (Cent. xi. Pt. ii. Ch. ii. Sect. xx.), II. p. 301, *Note*. On the Pope's influence in this council, see Vol. IX. p. 274.

|| See *supra*. This assuming pontiff was the author of a treatise, *de Contemptu Mundi*. See *Nouv. Dict. Hist.* III. p. 397.

¶ In 1420. See Vol. X. p. 41.

** In 1513. See Vol. X. p. 23.

†† Elected in 1605.

pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand." *Dan.* vii. 14: "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Many more examples might be given of this blasphemous arrogance.

The popes do not scruple to ascribe to themselves the incommunicable attributes of God, as those of *infallible*, *impeccable*, the power of *pardonning sin*, and of absolving from the obligation of oaths, &c., which they have frequently done. They have also presumed to make new articles of faith. Nay, *Leo X.* in his bull against *Luther*,* anathematizes him for teaching that it is not in the power of the Pope to make new articles of faith. This was asserted by *Thomas Aquinas*, who was canonized. According to the decrees of *Gregory VII.*† no book of scripture is canonical without his authority. In these decrees it is farther said, that there is no appeal from the Pope, not even to God. He claims a power of giving dispensations "against the Old Testament, against the Gospel, against the Apostles, and against the Law, being himself above law."

Under this head we may also include the power which the popes claim of instituting new sacraments, and authorizing the worship of particular saints by their canonization, and admitting into heaven whom they pleased. *Clement VI.*‡ in his bull concerning those who might die in going to the jubilee at *Rome*, commands "the angels of Paradise to introduce their souls to glory and peace, without passing through the pains of purgatory."§ There cannot, therefore, surely be wanting any farther evidence of *blasphemy*, properly so called, in the pretensions and conduct of the popes.

10. We cannot wonder at such a power as this being styled (2 *Thess.* ii. 3, 8) "that man of sin,"|| and "that wicked one," that his reign should be called [*ver.* 7] "the mystery of iniquity," that he should be said [*ver.* 10] to act "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness," that in his time men should be said (1 *Tim.* iv. 2) to have "their consciences seared as with a hot iron," that in these "last days," (2 *Tim.* iii. 1, 2,) "men *should* be lovers of their own selves," and chargeable with almost every vice there

* In 1520. See Vol. X. p. 119.

† Elected in 1342.

|| See, on *ver.* 3, Vol. XIV. p. 28.

‡ Elected in 1073. See Vol. IX. p. 211.

§ See Vol. IX. p. 472. Note.

specified, especially [*ver.* 5] as “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” The woman in the *Revelation* (xvii. 4, 5) that was “arrayed in purple and scarlet,” had “in her hand, a golden cup full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication, and upon her head was a name written, *Mystery, Babylon the Great*, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.”*

It is not uncandid to say that this is no unfair character of the church and court of *Rome*. The undue stress which the *Catholics* are taught to lay on their endless superstitious practices naturally make them respect much less than they would otherwise do the obligations of morality; and when men know that they can have absolution and indulgences for money, whatever crimes they commit, they will make themselves easy on the subject, thinking themselves sure to go to heaven, though they should be least fit for it. It is universally acknowledged that the court of *Rome* was for ages the most corrupt of any in the world, and several of the popes themselves have been the most debauched, and in all respects the most flagitious, of men. For several centuries the priests in general, being forbidden to marry, were allowed for a small fine to have as many concubines as they pleased, women whom they took and dismissed at pleasure. In monasteries the most unnatural lusts were often indulged without restraint.

Several of the vices mentioned by the apostle *Paul*, (2 *Tim.* iii. 3—5,) as prevalent in the latter days, are those that are peculiarly countenanced and practised by the *Catholics*. One of them is a want of natural affection, and the priests having no lawful wives or families, must have been in a great measure devoid of it; the object of the restriction they were laid under, having been to prevent their having any natural attachment to families or to countries, that they might attach themselves to the church, and to the Pope as its head. The apostle also says that they would be “truce-breakers;” and the breach of treaties, and the violation of oaths and vows, were avowedly authorized on many occasions by the Pope and the clergy, whenever it was convenient for their interest that they should be broken. Men were also, according to the apostles, to be “traitors, heady, high-minded;” and the popes frequently authorized rebellions against lawful princes, and encouraged factions and disturbances in states, to answer their political purposes.

* See Vol. XIV. p. 489.

With all this they were to have “a form of godliness, but denying the power of it.” And the *Catholics*, notwithstanding the vicious practices above-mentioned, pretend to a character of peculiar holiness, and to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven, from which they think that all besides themselves will be excluded.

11. This *antichristian* power was to be an enemy to marriage, and to enjoin restrictions in the use of meats. In *Dan.* xi. 36, 37, “the king” who was to “do according to his will,” would not “regard—the desire of women;”* and *the man of sin*, in *Paul’s* epistles, would “*forbid* to marry, and *command* to abstain from meats, which God had created to be received with thanksgiving.”†

These circumstances are well known to mark the church of *Rome*. The priests are universally forbidden to marry, and their limitations with respect to the laws of marriage are numerous, in order to make dispensations necessary. Also their rules with respect to fasting, and abstinence from particular kinds of food make their religion exceedingly burdensome, and to require frequent dispensations, which, however, may always be purchased.

PART. II.

12. THE greatest enormity with which this *antichristian* power is charged in prophecy is, that it would be a *persecuting power*; and different degrees of persecution are mentioned in the prophecies concerning it. In *Rev.* xiii. 17, “the beast,” which represents this power, causes “that no man *should* buy or sell, save he that had the mark,‡ or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” In *Dan.* vii. 25, it is said to “wear out the saints of the Most High,” and that “they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time.” Of the same *beast* that forbade buying or selling, except to its followers, it is said, (*Rev.* xiii. 7,) that it shall be “given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them;” and that “power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations;” and in *Rev.* xvii. 6, “the woman,” which represents the same power, is said to be “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs

* See Vol. XII. p. 340.

† 1 *Tim.* iv. 3. See Vol. XIV. p. 136.

‡ See Vol. XIV. p. 478.

of Jesus." Of the city called *Babylon*, when it was fallen, it is said, (*Rev.* xviii. 24,) that "in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

Never was any prophecy more fully and more literally fulfilled than this has been in Rome *papal*. By a decree of *Gregory VII.** no person was allowed to buy or sell who disobeyed the holy see. The same was confirmed by *Alexander III.*,† and other popes, with a particular prohibition of their having any communication with *Catholics*. Farther than this, permission was given to the Catholics by papal decrees to deprive heretics of their goods. A father was even required to disinherit an heretical son, and a son was authorized to take the property of an heretical father; servants might refuse to obey an heretical master, and Catholics were not to be subject to an heretical king.‡

In consequence of excommunication, which affected all persons who were not within the pale of the *Catholic* church, all intercourse of every kind was strictly forbidden. Not only could no office of humanity be rendered to excommunicated persons, but all trade and commerce with them was deemed unlawful. Accordingly many persons in *England*, who were stigmatized as *Lollards*, perished for want, and through the inclemency of the weather; no person daring, or not choosing, to relieve them.§

Farther than this, multitudes in all Christian countries have been put to death by order of the court of *Rome*, and generally in the most painful way, of burning alive. Those who have suffered death in the persecutions of Rome *papal*, have been far more numerous than those who suffered by

* Elected in 1073.

† Elected in 1159.

‡ On this *papal* assumption of authority, to absolve from civil allegiance, Dr. Geddes says, "It must be confessed, I think, by the most zealous Papist, that it was once a dangerous, a most dangerous tenet." He adds,

"When circumvested with supposed Infallibility, uncircumscribed by Canons, and in the hands of an aspiring, ambitious Pontiff, it could not but be dangerous: and so it proved.—From it, as from the Trojan horse, issued forth an Iliad of evils, which, for a time, destroyed all lawful subordination, and subjected Crowns and Tiaras to the will and pleasure of one absolute ghostly Despot, who governed a great portion of the world with sovereign sway.

"Yet this usurped empire was neither universal, nor, in its highest altitude, of long duration. It fell more rapidly than it rose, and is now almost totally annihilated. Kings no more dread the effects of Pontifical rage; Vatican fulminations are no longer formidable; Roman Infallibility is laughed at even in Rome itself; and a Pope's *Bull*, or *Breve*, is, as such, as little regarded at Paris, Vienna, Madrid and Lisbon, as it would be at Petersburg, Berlin, Copenhagen or London," *Modest Apology*, 1800, pp. 75, 76. See Lord Petre to Bishop Horsley, 1790, *passim*.

§ See Vol. IX. pp. 345, 346; Vol. XIV. (on *Rev.* xiii. 16, 17), p. 478.

Rome in its *Heathen* state. It has been computed that more than a hundred thousand persons suffered death in the crusade against the *Albigenses*,* in the south of France. In the war of the *Hussites*† there perished not fewer than a hundred and fifty thousand. In the massacre of the *Vaudois*‡ twenty-two towns were burned, and eighteen thousand persons were put to death in various ways, women and children not being spared. If we include all the massacres in *Flanders, Germany, Holland, France* and *England*, we cannot make them less than two millions; and numerous families were reduced to a degree of distress worse than death. By means of the *inquisition* alone it is thought that not less than two hundred thousand have perished. Besides these massacres, which were directly on account of religion, the policy of the court of *Rome* has been the cause of many bloody wars, indeed of almost all the wars that have afflicted *Europe* from the time that the popes had any influence in public affairs. The *crusades* were chiefly incited by the popes, and in them it has been computed that there perished not less than a million.

13. This *antichristian* power was to introduce *new objects of worship*, as may with probability at least be inferred from what both *Daniel* and the apostle *Paul* say on the subject. Of the king who would do according to his will, it is said, (*Dan. xi. 38, 39*), “In his estate shall he honour the God of forces,” (but Mr. Wintle renders it thus, *and near to God, in his seat he shall honour Mahuzzim*), “and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour, with gold, with silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge, and increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.” The apostle says, (*1 Tim. iv. 1*), “The spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of *dæmons*,” by which we may understand the spirits of dead men, or any intelligent beings inferior to God.

The word *Mahuzzim*, made use of by *Daniel*, and expressions similar to it, are frequently used in the Scriptures to denote objects of worship, as the rocks, strong holds,

* See Vol. IX. pp. 429—437.

† See Vol. X. p. 30.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 284—286.

and fortresses, to which men fly for protection.* Thus *Moses* says, (*Deut.* xxxii. 37,) "He shall say, Where are their gods, their *rocks* in *which* they trusted?" *Psalm* xxviii. 1: "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock." xxxi. 3: "Thou art my rock, and my fortress." xlii. 9: "I will say unto God, My rock, why hast thou forgotten me?"

Admitting this to be the meaning of the passage, the fulfilment of the prophecies, in the history of Popery, is exceedingly clear. Did not the popes recommend, and make the greatest use of, the worship of saints and angels, which were objects of worship certainly unknown to the primitive Christians; and was not the church, and especially the monasteries, which were particularly devoted to this worship, enriched by this means? Every monastery, as well as every church, was dedicated to some particular saint, and many of them became immensely rich with donations of every thing of value, as gold, silver, and precious stones. Also great possessions of land were given to such institutions. These new objects of worship were also honoured with canonizations, festivals, processions, the solemn dedication of their churches, and the presentation of relics, preserved in the most costly vases and worshipped with incense, &c.

Such were the characters of the great *antichristian* power which was to arise in the Christian church, and so clearly does the papal power answer to them all, though so many in number. Before I consider the prophecies that relate to the destruction of this power, I shall observe, that another characteristic of the last times is the great prevalence of *infidelity* in them; and this has been in a great measure produced by the absurdities and extravagances above-mentioned, which have led many to reject the whole of the system that was loaded with them.

Of the prevalence of *infidelity* in the latter times our Saviour gave a plain intimation, when he said, (*Luke* xviii. 8,) "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The same was also announced by the apostle *Peter*, (*2 Ep.* iii. 3, 4,) "There shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the

* See *Mede*, pp. 673, 674; *Sir I. Newton*. p. 203; *Bp. Newton* (*Diss.* xvii. Pt. ii.), I. pp. 390—396.

creation." Jude makes the same observation: (*ver.* 17:) "Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken *by* the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts."

Though our Saviour foresaw that there would be a great prevalence of infidelity before his second coming, yet he foretold with the greatest confidence the final and universal spread of his religion; when he said, (*Matt.* xvi. 18,) "the gates of *death* shall not prevail against it." He expressed the same thing in his comparison of the kingdom of heaven to a *little leaven*, which would leaven the whole lump, and in various other ways. And notwithstanding the unpromising state of his religion at the time of the prediction, we have seen the accomplishment of much of this prophecy in the rapid spread of Christianity over a great part of the world; and, judging by present appearances, it is not at all probable that, great as is the progress that infidelity is making, it will ever prevail to the total extinction of Christianity.

Infidelity seems to have begun with *Averroes*, the *Mahometan* philosopher, in the twelfth century,* and to have affected many Christians, who, like him, were addicted to the *Aristotelian* philosophy, especially in *Italy*, as we see in the history of *Petrarch*. But, till the last century, *unbelievers* were not very conspicuous. As they never courted persecution, they carefully concealed themselves, making no scruple to profess whatever was required of them; so that they did not outwardly distinguish themselves from Christians. It was usual with them to say, that their tenets were *philosophically true*, but *theologically false*, and, therefore, they were always ready to disclaim them, and profess themselves good *Catholics*. Indeed, till within our own memory, all *unbelievers* wrote in a disguised and artful manner, pretending to be friends to Christianity, at the same time that they were endeavouring to undermine it. This was the case with all the *Deists* in England, at the beginning of the present [18th] century, and with *Voltaire*, who probably made more *unbelievers*, not only in *France*, but in all parts of *Europe*, than any person before him. Of this character, also, are the writings of Mr. Hume and Mr. Gibbon.

But at this day, and especially since the Revolution in France, *unbelievers* appear without any disguise, openly

* See *supra*, pp. 109, 110.

insulting the Christian religion, and assailing it both by wit and argument; and the writings of *unbelievers*, now that they can do it with impunity, and even with applause, are exceedingly multiplied. Perhaps, however, *unbelievers* are not much less numerous, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, in *England*, and some parts of *America*, than in any part of the continent of *Europe*. I think it cannot but be allowed by candid *unbelievers* themselves, that many writers on their side discover extreme ignorance of the subject, though meeting with a previous disposition to reject the doctrines, the obligations, and the expectations of Christianity, they have of late had an astonishing effect; while very rational and able defences of Christianity are little read or attended to.

There is not, however, any reason to believe that Christianity will ever lose its hold on the minds of the bulk of the *common people*, who are in general virtuously disposed, and are of course attached to a religion that favours virtue, and are unwilling to give up the hopes of Christians in a future state. Besides, the common people are but little disposed to speculation, or innovation, and, therefore, in all cases, they longest retain the principles in which they were educated. Christianity, I also doubt not, will continue to be held, and with additional zeal, by the most truly learned, pious, and candid of men, though the number of such persons is never great; and their firm persuasion of the goodness and importance of the cause to which they adhere, will easily enable them to bear up against the influence of any *unbelievers* they may meet with, be their number, their ability, their knowledge and respectability, on other accounts, ever so great; and though the prevailing *infidelity*, which at this time increases in an astonishing degree, should proceed to its utmost possible limit. On the contrary, when they perceive that this is the case, they will, in the language of Scripture, *lift up their heads with rejoicing*, knowing that *their redemption draws nigh*, and that the second coming of Christ is at hand. That great event, which to the world at large will be most unexpected, even as *a thief in the night*, will find them prepared, and in earnest and joyful expectation of it, like the wise virgins, with their lamps burning, ready to meet the bridegroom.

14. Lastly; this *antichristian* power, enormous as it has been, and long as it has tyrannized over the Christian world, is, in the sure word of prophecy, destined to *destruction*, though it is not to be fully completed till the second coming

of Christ, and the commencement of his proper kingdom. Its tyranny, by which it is to persecute and oppress the saints, is to continue a limited time, in the language of prophecy 1260 days, forty-two months, or, “a time, and times, and half a time,”* all of which are equivalent expressions; a day, signifying a year, and a time, a year of days, or 360 years.

After the description of the “little horn,” which represents this power, in *Daniel* vii. 8, which had “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things,” it is said, (*vers.* 9—11,) “I beheld till the thrones were cast down,† and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened.‡ I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.”§ In the interpretation of this, it is said, (*vers.* 25—27,) “He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand till a time, and times, and the dividing of time.¶ But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

In *Daniel* xi. 36, it is said of “the king,” who “shall do according to his will,” and who “shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods,” that he “shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished, for that *which* is determined shall be done.” It is said of the same power, (*ver.* 35,) “that some of them *that understand*, shall fall *by him*, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end:¶ because it is yet for a time appointed.”

* *Dan.* xii. 7; *Rev.* xii. 14. See Vol. XIV. pp. 473, 474.

† *Were erected.* See Vol. XII. p. 324.

‡ See (on *ver.* 10) *ibid.*

§ See *ibid.* p. 325. ¶ See (on *ver.* 25) *ibid.* pp. 325—327. ¶ See *ibid.* p. 340.

Corresponding to these are the prophecies concerning the destruction of the same *antichristian* power, in the *New Testament*. In 2 *Thess.* ii. 3, he is called “the son of perdition,” clearly intimating that he is to be destroyed. It is said of him, (*ver.* 8,) “then shall that wicked *one* be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”* Of the *beast* which rises “out of the sea,” to which “was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies,” (evidently the same with the “little horn” of *Daniel*,) it is said, (*Rev.* xiii. 5,) that “power was given unto him to continue forty and two months;” but of the same *beast* it is said, (*Rev.* xix. 20,) that he “was taken, and with him the false prophet, that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image,” (the same with the *beast* with “two horns like a lamb, and that spake as a dragon,” xiii. 11,) “these both were cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone.” †

Of the “two witnesses,” who bear their testimony against the idolatrous corruptions of religion, it is said, (*Rev.* xi. 3,) that “they shall prophesy 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth,” but though “the beast” [*ver.* 7] “that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them,” and they were not permitted to be buried, “and they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them;” [*ver.* 10,] yet, “after three days and a half,” it is said, [*vers.* 11—13,] that “the spirit of life from God entered into them: and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake there were slain of men,” (or *names of men*,) “seven thousand: and the remnant were *afraid*, and gave glory to the God of heaven.” ‡

There is great difference of opinion about the time at which this tyrannical empire of *antichrist*, or that of the *Pope*, commenced; because it reached its height of power by degrees, and, therefore, there must be equal difficulty in determining when it is to terminate; § but this uncertainty

* See Vol. XII. pp. 29, 30.

† See Vol. XIV. pp. 469—471.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 499.

§ See *ibid.* (on *Rev.* xiii. 5), p. 476.

was, no doubt, wisely intended to prevent our knowing with certainty any thing more than the general *catastrophe*, which alone it much concerns us to be acquainted with; and in what manner soever we compute the 1260 years, at no great distance of time this power is to come to an end. That it cannot be very distant, is evident from its having greatly declined already, so that, though the popes are now sovereign princes, their power is small.*

The religious orders which have been the great supports of the papal power,† are now in a manner abolished, especially that of the *Jesuits*, which was more than any other devoted to the interest of the Pope;‡ the number of festivals is reduced, and the power of the *inquisition* almost annihilated. In addition to the states that threw off the yoke of *Rome*, at the *Reformation*, France has now [1797] done it completely, and other states seem pretty well prepared to follow her example.§ That spirit of *infidelity* which the shocking abuses of Popery (which have been naturally enough taken for Christianity itself by those who had no opportunity of seeing it in any other form) have eminently contributed to produce, revolts at such enormities, and will be a great means of destroying that which gave it birth.

As the kings of the earth formerly agreed (*Rev. xvii. 13*) to “give their power and strength unto the beast,” the other part of the prophecy is already in a great measure fulfilled: (*vers. 16—18*;) “The ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore,” (another emblem of the same power,) “and shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdoms unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

That the final destruction of this *mystical* Babylon will be *sudden*, is evident from the account of its fall in the book of *Revelation*: (*xviii. 7—10*;) “How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she hath said in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth who

* See *supra*, p. 410, *Note, ad fin.*

† See Vol. V. p. 462.

‡ See *ibid.* *Note*; Vol. X. pp. 276—283, 322, 478—482.

§ See, on *Rev. xvii. 15—17*, Vol. XIV. p. 491.

have committed fornication, and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning; standing afar off, for fear of her torment; saying, Alas, alas, that great city, Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”*

To this great *catastrophe* we now see things visibly hastening. The scenes that are more immediately opening upon us we may expect, as I shewed in a former *Discourse*,† to be exceedingly calamitous, what the Scriptures call *a time of trouble, such as has not been, since the foundation of the world*, affecting more particularly that part of the world which has been the seat of the four great monarchies, and especially those that have been subject to *papal* power; but it will, according to the sure word of prophecy, issue in a state of things most glorious and happy, when *the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ*, a state of righteousness and of universal peace; when, as the prophet says, (*Isaiah* ii. 4,) men “shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;” when “nation shall not lift up a sword against nation,” and when “they shall learn war *no more*.”

May God, who rules among the children of men, and who is the common and the benevolent Parent of all the human race, soon accomplish so desirable an event.

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 495, 496.

† See *supra*, p. 395.

FOUR DISCOURSES

INTENDED TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED AT PHILADELPHIA.

PUBLISHED BY DESIRE OF THE AUTHOR.

[Northumberland, 1806.]

DISCOURSE I.

ON THE

DUTY OF MUTUAL EXHORTATION.

HEB. iii. 3:

Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

THIS advice of the author of this epistle is not less reasonable at the present day than when it was given. It is even more deserving of attention now than it was then. At that time, the Christian church was in a state of persecution. At least the open profession of Christianity was attended with more danger than it is at present. It was not then patronized by the great, the learned, or the fashionable; but was a *sect every where spoken against*, and the teachers of it were generally considered as *men who turned the world upside down*, the enemies of peace, and the authors of innovation and revolution.

Such, indeed, will ever be the character of *reformers*. It was so in every period of the Reformation from Popery. In this light were *Wickliffe, Huss, Luther, Calvin, and Socinus*, considered in their day; and such is the light in which every person who in the present times, having by any means acquired more light than others, is desirous of communicating it, and to improve upon any established system, must expect to stand. The bulk of mankind wish to be at their

ease, and not to have their opinions, any more than their property, or their government, disturbed. Being satisfied with their present situation, they naturally dislike any change, lest it should be for the worse. The situation of a reformer must, therefore, require great fortitude, the courage of the lion, as well as the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocence of the dove.

These virtues are equally necessary in our times, as far as they bear the same character; but they are only peculiarly requisite for reformers, and their immediate followers. With respect to Christianity in general, the profession of it is not, at least in this country, at all disreputable. On the contrary, it is rather disreputable not to be a Christian; and I rejoice that it is so, and that infidelity has not made so much progress as to make it otherwise. And I am willing to think that the seasonable and temperate answers which several learned Christians have given to the numerous writings of ignorant and petulant unbelievers, have been a check, at least with all sober-minded and thinking men, to the late alarming increase of infidelity.

But because the profession of Christianity is not disreputable, is the genuine spirit of it more readily imbibed, and the practice of its precepts more easy? By no means. There is another enemy to contend with, far more to be dreaded than open violence, against which it behoves us to be on our guard, if we wish to have any thing more of Christianity than the name, which alone will avail us nothing; and from the insidious and unsuspected attacks of the enemy, we have no means of escaping, as we might have from those of an open persecution.

This enemy is the world in which we live, and the intercourse we must have with it. For now, as much as ever, to be the *friend of*, what may properly be called *the world*, is to be *the enemy of God*. "Love not the world," says the apostle *John*, [1 *Ep.* ii. 15—17,] "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever."

In order to feel, and consequently to act, as becomes a Christian, and this in an uniform and steady manner, the principles of Christianity must be attended to, and never lost sight of. In time of persecution, the distinction be-

tween Christians and other persons, who are not Christians, is constantly kept up. For then the mere profession of Christianity makes men liable to suffering, and often to death; and when men are in danger of suffering for any thing, as well as when they have the hope of gaining by any thing, they will give the closest attention to it. Their hopes or their fears cannot fail to keep their attention sufficiently awake.

When a man is willing to give up his property, and even his life, for the sake of any thing, he must set a high value upon it. He will cherish the thought of it, as what is dearer to him than any thing else. In such times, therefore, no man would for a moment forget that he was a Christian. The precepts and maxims of Christianity would be familiar to his mind, and have the greatest weight with him.

But this is not the case in such times as these in which we live. There is very little in a man's outward circumstances depending on his being a Christian, or no Christian. The behaviour of other persons towards him has no relation to that distinction; so that he has nothing either to hope or to fear from the consideration of it, there being nothing that necessarily forces, or that very loudly calls for, his attention to it. All the attention that, in these circumstances, he does give to it must be wholly voluntarily, the spontaneous effort of his own mind. If his mind be much occupied by other things, he will necessarily relax in that attention, and if he entirely drop his attention to the principles of Christianity; if all his thoughts, and all his actions, be directed to other objects, such as engage the attention and the pursuit of mere men of the world, there will be no real difference between him and mere men of the world. Pleasure, ambition, or gain, will be equally their principal objects, those for the sake of which they would sacrifice every thing else.

Christianity does not operate as a charm. The use of it does not resemble that of a badge, or a certificate, to entitle a man to any privilege. It is of no use but so far as it enters into the sentiments, contributes to form the habits, and direct the conduct of men; and to do this, it must really occupy the mind, and engage its closest attention: so that the maxims of it may instantly occur the moment that they are called for; and therefore in whatever it be that the true Christian and the mere man of the world really differ, the difference could not fail to appear. If there was any gratification or pursuit, that did not suit the Christian character, though others might indulge in it without scruple, and despise

all who did not; the true Christian would be unmoved by such examples, or such ridicule. His habitual fear of God, and his respect for the commands of Christ, would at all times render him superior to any such influence. Whatever his Christian principles called him to do, or to suffer, he would be at all times ready to obey the call.

For any principles to have their practical influence, they must at least be familiar to the mind, and this they cannot be unless they be voluntarily cherished there, and be dwelt upon with pleasure, when other objects do not necessarily obtrude themselves. Consider, then, how many objects are perpetually occupying the minds of men in the present state of things in the Christian world, and how forcible their hold is upon them, and consequently, how difficult it must be to prevent their all-prevailing influence, to the exclusion of that of Christianity.

I. The age in which we live, more than any that have preceded it, may be said to be the age of *trade and commerce*. Great wealth is chiefly to be acquired by this means. It is, at least, the most expeditious way of acquiring a fortune, with any regard to the principles of honour and honesty. But to succeed to any great extent in mercantile business of any kind, especially now that such numbers of active and sensible men are engaged in the same, a man must give almost his whole attention to it, so that there will be little room for any thing else to occupy his mind. If he do not literally, in the language of Scripture, [*Psalm cxxvii. 2,*] “rise up early,” and “sit up late,” it will occupy his thoughts when his head is upon his pillow. His anxiety will often keep him awake. Even at that season of rest he will be considering whether it will be prudent to make this or that purchase, whether this or that man may be safely trusted, whether there will not be too much hazard in this or that undertaking, and a thousand things of this nature.

If such a person's business allow him any leisure, he is fatigued, and wants amusement, and cannot bear any thing that makes him serious. He therefore engages in parties of pleasure, and various entertainments, that, even more than business, exclude all thoughts of religion. And in this course of alternate business and mere amusement or feasting, do many men of business proceed day after day, and year after year, till *Christianity* is as foreign to their thought as if they had been *Heathens*.

If the man of business have any turn for reading, and that not for mere amusement, it is history, or politics, something

relating to the topics of the day, but not the *Bible* that he reads. To this, if he have not read it at school, many a man of business is an utter stranger; and though in this book, God himself speaks to men, concerning their most important interests, their duties here, and their expectations hereafter, they will not listen even to their Maker. On *Sundays*, which the laws of most Christian countries prevent men from giving to business, many never go to any place of Christian worship; but to relieve themselves from the fatigues of the week, make that their day of regular excursion, in company with persons of similar occupations; and their conversation, if not irreligious and profane, is at least on topics altogether foreign to religion.

II. The business of *agriculture* is much less unfavourable to religion and devotion. It does not occupy the mind in the same degree; and it is attended with much less anxiety. Nay, the principal causes of anxiety to the cultivator of the ground, viz. the uncertainty of the seasons, and the weather, rather lead the thoughts to God, the author of nature, and of all its laws; from whom he expects every thing that is favourable to his employment; and he passes his time in the constant view of the works of God; so that they must in some measure engage his attention. And if he attend at all to the objects with which he is continually surrounded, they must excite his admiration and devotion. This, at least, is their natural tendency; though even here, other objects, and other views, foreign to his proper employment, may interfere, so that, in the language of Scripture, [*Matt. xiii. 13.*] *seeing, he shall not see, and hearing, he shall not understand*; and giving more attention to gain than to his employment in any other view, even the farmer may be as destitute of religion as the tradesman; and great numbers, no doubt, are so. This, however, is by no means owing to their employment, but to other influences, which affect all men alike, without distinction of classes or ranks. This employment I therefore consider, as of all others, the most favourable to the temper and spirit of Christianity.

III. In this advanced state of the world, and of society, the professions of *law* and *medicine* require more study and time than formerly. Laws are necessarily multiplied, and cases more complicated. The study of medicine requires more knowledge of various branches of science, as natural philosophy, chemistry, and botany, besides a knowledge of the learned languages, and other articles with which no physician of eminence can be unacquainted. Whether it be

owing to these circumstances, or to any other, it is remarked in *England*, and, I believe, in *Europe* in general, that but few either of lawyers or physicians are men of religion, though some few are eminently so. *Physicians* have an obvious excuse for not regularly attending places of public worship; and if men can spend the *Sundays* without any exercise of religion, the whole week will generally pass without any, and the subject itself will find little place in their thoughts.

IV. The times in which we live may, in a very remarkable degree, be said to be the age of *politics*, and, from the very extraordinary state of the world, it is in some degree necessarily so. Greater events are now depending than any that the history of any former age can shew; and the theory and practice of the internal government of countries, the circumstances that tend to make governments stable, and the people prosperous and happy, concerning which there is endless room for difference of opinion, occupy the thoughts of all men who are capable of any reflection. No person can even read the common newspaper, or see any mixed company, without entering into them. He will, of course, form his own opinion of public men and public measures; and if they be different from those of his neighbours, the subjects will be discussed, and sometimes without that temper which the discussion of all subjects of importance requires. Consequently, the subject of *politics*, in the present state of things, is with many as much an enemy to religion, as trade and commerce, or any other pursuit by which men gain a livelihood. Many persons who read find nothing that interests them but what relates to the events of the time, or the politics of the day.

This state of things might lead men to look to the hand of God, and a particular providence, which is evidently bringing about a state of things far exceeding in magnitude and importance, any thing that the present or any former generation of men has seen. And a person of an habitually pious disposition, who regards the hand of God in every thing, will not take up a newspaper without reflecting that he is going to see what God has wrought; and considering what it is that he is apparently about to work. To him, whatever wishes he may, from his imperfect view of things, indulge himself in, (which, however, will always be with moderation and submission,) all news is good news. Every event that has actually taken place, as it could not have been without the permission (which is in fact the appointment) of God,

he is persuaded is that which was most fit and proper for the circumstances, and will lead to the best end; and that though for the present it may be calamitous, the final issue, he cannot doubt, will be happy.

But mere men of the world look no farther than to men, though they are no more than instruments in the hand of God; and consequently, as the events are pleasing or displeasing to them, promising or unpromising, their hopes and fears, their affections or dislikes, are excited to the greatest degree; so as often to banish all tranquillity of mind and cool reflection. And certainly, a mind in this state is not the proper seat of religion and devotion. All the thoughts of such persons are engaged, and their whole minds are occupied by objects, which not only exclude Christianity, but such as inspire a temper the very reverse of that of a Christian, which is peculiarly meek, benevolent, even to enemies, and heavenly-minded, a disposition of mind which we should in vain look for in the eager politician of these times.

As to those who are concerned in conducting the business of politics, those in whose hands God has more immediately placed the fate of nations, it is not to be expected, (though there are noble exceptions,) that they will be eminent for piety and religion, or have any other objects than those of ambition, and often that of avarice. Their eagerness to get into power, their jealousy of all their opponents who wish to supplant them at home, and their negotiations with foreign powers, which must be intricate, must often keep their minds upon the rack, to the exclusion of every sentiment, not only of religion, but even of common justice and humanity: for such, all history shews to have been the character of the generality of statesmen and warriors, in all ages, and all nations. They have kept the world in the same state of ferment and disorder with their own minds. The consolation of a Christian, in this state of things, is, that the great Being, whose providence statesmen seldom respect, does, though with a hand unseen, direct all the affairs of men. He "ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." [*Dan. iv. 17.*] And even the *Pharaohs* and *Nebuchadnezzars*, are as useful instruments in his hands as the *Davids* and the *Solomons*.

V. It might be thought that *philosophers*, persons daily conversant in the study of nature, must be devout; and the poet *Young* says,

An undevout astronomer is mad;

yet we see in fact that men may be so busy all their lives in the investigation of second causes, as entirely to overlook the great First Cause of all, and even to deny that any such Being exists. Or, seeing no change in the course of nature at present, or in any late period, they hastily conclude that all things have ever been as they now are, from the beginning; so that if the race of men had a Maker, he has ceased to give any attention to them, or their conduct; and consequently, that they are at full liberty to consult their own interest, and live as they please, without any regard to him. Also philosophers, having all the passions of other men, the same love of pleasure, the same ardour of ambition, and the same attachment to gain that actuate other men, they have in these respects been, in the usual course of their lives, governed by passion more than reason, and have lived as much *without God in the world*, as thoughtless of his being, perfections, and providence, as other men.

VI. Even ministers of the Christian religion, though necessarily employed in the public offices of it, and in teaching the principles of it to others, are not necessarily influenced by them themselves; though the character they sustain in society obliges them to greater external decency of conduct, so as to lay them under some considerable restraint, at least with respect to a love of pleasure, and a taste for amusement. But if the profession was not the real object of their choice, from a sense of its superior excellence, even this duty may be discharged as any other task, as any other means of subsistence, or on account of some other advantages to be derived from it. In some cases, in which religion is supported by the state, and ample emoluments are within the reach of Churchmen, the Christian ministry (if in such a case it can be so called) may be chosen as the means of gratifying men's ambition or avarice.

In this state of things can we wonder at the progress of infidelity? Those who are entire strangers to it, see that it has little influence on the hearts and lives of those with whom they converse; so that whether it be true or false, they think it to be of little consequence, and not worth the trouble of a serious investigation. And many persons who had nominally Christian parents, giving no more serious attention to Christianity than they see their parents and others give to it; observing none of its exercises, or only in the most superficial manner; seldom attending public worship; never reading the Scriptures, or any book relating to religion, either explaining its evidences, or enforcing its

duties, which they find to interfere with their inclinations, get a dislike to the subject; and in this state of mind a mere cavil or a jest, such as are to be found in the writings of *Voltaire*, and other modern unbelievers, has the force of argument. With many persons, too, in the upper ranks of life, Christianity being the belief of the common people, on whom they look down with contempt, has more weight in their rejection of it than they will acknowledge, or than they may even be aware of themselves.

Now, as I observed before, Christianity, though not absolutely and expressly rejected, is of no *use*, unless it influence the temper of our minds and our conduct in life; if it lays no restraint on the love of pleasure, the love of gain, or the pursuits of ambition, but leaves men as worldly-minded in all respects as those who never heard of it; as much as if they had never heard of that future state which is brought to light by it, and which in the gospel is held up as a constant and most interesting object of attention and contemplation, to all Christians. We should never forget that religion is only a *means* to a certain *end*; and if we do not make this use of it, it would have been better for us never to have had it, or to have known it; since, then, we should have had one talent less than we now have to be accountable for. And if it be true that God has revealed his will to men, and sent messenger after messenger to promote the virtue and happiness of his rational offspring, he knew that such an extraordinary dispensation was necessary for us, and we cannot be innocent if we neglect to attend to it, and to make the proper use of it; unless we be so situated as never to have heard of it.

Such are the general causes of the prevailing inattention to the subject of religion, and which extinguishes, in so great a degree, the genuine spirit of Christianity. These, therefore, in proportion to the value we set upon our religion, and in proportion to the concern we have for our own improvement and that of others, we must endeavour, by every means in our power, to counteract; "exhorting one another daily, while it is called to-day," [*Heb. iii. 13; x. 25,*] lest we be carried away by the baneful torrent, which we see to be in danger of deluging, as we may say, a great part of the nominally Christian world.

The means by which this may be done, are sufficiently obvious. It is the application of them only that, in such an age as this, has any real difficulty in it. And certainly it requires no small degree of fortitude and resolution to

appear so singular, as a sincere and zealous Christian must sometimes do, among persons of a different character. He must be content to be thought *righteous over much*; to be considered as a man of a weak mind, and devoid of spirit, and of those qualities which recommend men to the admiration of the world. For though virtue, as it is commonly understood, has the sanction of general estimation, and persons accounted vicious are universally censured, the virtues that are most admired are not always Christian virtues, and give more indulgence to the passions, as to those of revenge, and a love of what is called pleasure, of various kinds, than Christianity allows. And there is not perhaps any vice besides that of a mean selfishness, that is equally condemned by Christianity and the voice of the world. We see that even murder, in the form of a duel, passes without any censure at all. Nay, the spirit with which men fight duels is applauded; while the meekness, though it be real magnanimity, shewing a due command of temper, which overlooks insults, and preserves a kindness for those who offer them, is branded as meanness of spirit. Voluptuousness to a really criminal excess passes with so light a censure that, when any person is said to be *no man's enemy but his own*, he is not thought at all the worse of on that account, especially as it is often accompanied with a contempt of money, and a love of society like his own. Profaneness is too generally considered as no vice at all, but only, at the worst, a foolish and unmeaning custom.*

In these circumstances, a profound reverence for the name and attributes of God, the great duty of *not living to ourselves*, but of the appropriation of the whole of a man's time, fortune, and ability of every kind to the good of others, the love of God with the whole heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, including in the word neighbour every person to whom it is in our power to render any service; the obligation of sacrificing every thing in life, and even life itself, for the sake of conscience, in the cause of truth and right, with a view to a recompence, not in this world, but another, which Christianity requires of us, are things quite above the comprehension of mankind in general. And whatever men cannot attain themselves, they

* Mr. Boyle, referring to *Matt.* xii. 36, remarks, "that curses are of so culpable a nature, that their very apology concludes them guilty, by pleading them to be idle words." *Dissuasive from Cursing*, p. 27, annexed to "A Free Discourse against Customary Swearing," 1695; written in 1647, when the author was only "twenty years old." See *Birch's Life of Robert Boyle*, 1744, pp. 88, 288.

think to be romantic and absurd, a kind of quixotism in morals, and a just object of ridicule and contempt.

Since, then, what is called *the world*, and the prevailing maxims and customs of the times in which we live, give us no assistance, but must operate as an impediment in our Christian course, we must surmount this great difficulty by our own voluntary exertions, taking to our aid those helps by which Christian principles are most effectually impressed and kept in view. Something of this kind is absolutely necessary, because no end can be gained without employing the proper means ; and if any thing that does not necessarily obtrude itself, requires to be *attended* to, it must be purposely brought before the mind by reflection, reading, or conversation ; to do this most effectually, some *time* must be set apart for the purpose. Also those intervals of time which are not engaged by necessary business, should not be wholly given to mere amusement, (though something of this kind is necessary for such beings as we are,) but be employed to some serious purpose.

David said, [*Ps.* lxxiii. 6,] that he *meditated* upon God “in the night watches,” and “upon *his* bed.” In the law of God, he says, [*Ps.* i. 2,] that a good man will “meditate day and night.” And whatever it be that we really take pleasure in, it will naturally occur to our thoughts when they are not necessarily occupied by other things ; being the most pleasing subjects of contemplation. The first exercise, therefore, that I would recommend to all Christians, is the frequent reading of the Scriptures.

Christians have far more, and more interesting subjects of contemplation and meditation than *David* had. We see much farther than he could, into the great plan of Providence, respecting the present and future condition of man. We are acquainted with many more instances of his intercourse with mankind, with more communications of his will, and a far more clear and explicit account of his designs respecting them. And what can be more interesting to man than his intercourse with his Maker, the great Being on whom we constantly depend for “life and breath, and all things ;” [*Acts* xvii. 25 ;] who is also our moral governor and our final judge ?

Since the time of *David*, there has been a long succession of prophets, and especially the appearance of the greatest of all the prophets, *Jesus Christ*, who “brought life and immortality to light,” [*2 Tim.* i. 10,] having not only given us certain information concerning a resurrection and a future

state, but exemplifying his doctrine in his own person, by actually dying and rising from the dead. There was also a most glorious display of divine interpositions in the time of the apostles, by which our faith in the gospel is abundantly confirmed, and our attention to a future state so much excited, that it might almost have been feared, that mankind would think of little else, and that the business of this life would have been too much neglected. For, what is the interest we take in all other histories, compared to our interest in this? Other histories are no doubt instructive; but the books of Scripture, besides being infinitely more curious and interesting, (as the transactions of *God*, compared with those of *men*,) may be said to be a title to an estate, to which any man may become an heir. In the Scripture we are informed of the certainty and the value of this great inheritance, and with the terms on which we may secure the possession of it. The books of Scripture are also the most ancient writings in the world, and penned with a simplicity of which we have no other example so strikingly beautiful; and they exhibit the manners of the primitive ages of mankind; so that there is in them every thing that can interest curiosity, as well as impart the most important information.

If, however, notwithstanding these recommendations, the Scriptures, and other works illustrative of their contents, have not engaged the attention, it behoves every person who really wishes to imbibe the spirit of Christianity, to make himself well acquainted with them, and to persist in the reading and study of them, till he find himself interested in their contents, and imbibe the pious and benevolent temper which is so conspicuous in the writers. And how irksome soever, through disuse and other causes, the reading of the Scriptures, and of other books which have the same tendency, may for some time be, perseverance will overcome it; and then, if I may speak from experience, no reading will be so interesting or pleasing, and the satisfaction will increase with every fresh perusal.

This circumstance enables us to account for the peculiar pleasure that *David* and other pious *Jews* appear to have derived from reading the Scriptures. They had few other books; so that if they read at all, they must have read them perpetually in their own houses, as well as have heard them constantly read in the synagogues, from the time that they had such places of public worship, which they certainly had from the time of the *Babylonish Captivity*. At this day,

there are so many other books to engage the attention, that, in too many cases, they totally exclude the reading of that which is of infinitely more value than all the rest.

But whatever be the leisure that any person can command for reading, some portion of it should by all means be appropriated to that kind of reading, the object of which is to increase the knowledge which relates to our profession as Christians. And this will lead to a course of reading both curious and interesting, especially such as makes us acquainted with the progress of Christianity in the world. No kind of reading tends so much to counteract the influence of the world and its principles as the lives of eminent Christians; and most of all, the *martyrs*, whose piety, patience, and fortitude, in cheerfully abandoning life, and every thing in it, for the sake of conscience, cannot fail to inspire something of the same excellent spirit; and this once fully imbibed, will enable a man to behave as becomes a Christian in every situation, of prosperity as well as of adversity, in life or in death.

Compared to the strong feelings with which such works as these are read by persons who have acquired a true relish for them, all other reading is perfectly insipid; and a truly pious Christian, who has few books besides the *Bible*, has little cause to envy the man of letters, in whose ample library, the *Bible* is not to be found. What is there of pathetic address in all the writings of the admired ancients, compared to the book of *Deuteronomy* by *Moses*? And what is all their poetry, compared to the *Psalms of David*, and some parts of *Isaiah*? And yet, such is the power of association and habit, that, by persons of a different education and turn of mind, those parts of Scripture which are by some read with emotions of the most exalted and pleasurable kind, will be perused with perfect indifference, and even disgust: and if such persons be advanced in life, so that their habits are confirmed, the endeavour to communicate to them a relish for such writings, will be altogether in vain. Of such persons we may say with *Bacon's* brazen statue,* *Time is past*.

So strongly is my mind impressed with a sense of the importance of the habitual reading of the Scriptures, both from considering the nature of the thing, and from the best attention that I have been able to give to particular characters and facts, that I do not see how those persons who neglect

* On Friar Bacon's *Brazen Head*, see *Biog. Brit.* I. pp. 434, 435.

it, and who have no satisfaction in habitually meditating on the infinitely important subjects to which they relate, can be said to have any thing of Christianity besides the name. They cannot feel the influence of its doctrines, its precepts, or its motives, when they give no attention to them; and, therefore, they cannot derive any advantage from Christianity, except such as accrues to all the nominally christianized part of the world, in improving the general character, manners and customs of it; but which, as it has not arisen from any attention that they have given to it, cannot entitle them to the character or rewards of true Christians; such as those who have lived as pilgrims and strangers here below, and as citizens of heaven; who, though living in the world, have had their affections on things above, whose treasure, the object of their chief care and pursuit, has been not in the things of this world, but in heaven. They may not be rejected by Christ as *workers of iniquity*, but they have no title to the appellation of *good and faithful servants* to a master whom they have never truly loved or respected, and hardly even thought of; and, therefore, cannot expect to partake in the joy of their Lord.

II. Besides other obvious uses of public worship, a person who wishes to cultivate the true spirit, and acquire the proper habits of religion, must not neglect it. We are social beings, and our joining in any scheme in which we are alike interested, is a mutual encouragement to persevere in it, and to pursue it with proper ardour. It likewise operates as a tie, not lightly to desert the profession, and such a tie, men, concerned in the multifarious business of this life, often want.

III. Private and habitual devotion is the life and soul of all practical religion. No man can be truly religious who does not, in his daily thoughts, respect the presence and government of God, and who does not regard him as the author of all things, and the sovereign disposer of all events, so as to *live as seeing him who is invisible*, as I have explained pretty much at large in a printed *Discourse** on this subject.

IV. Family prayer, if not of absolute necessity, is of great use in all Christian families. Dr. Hartley, one of the most judicious, as well as most pious of men, says, "I believe it may be laid down as a certain fact, that no master or mistress of a family can have a true concern for

* First published in 1782. See Vol. XV. pp. 104—121.

religion, or be a child of God, who does not take care to worship God by family prayer. Let the observation of the fact determine.”* I would not choose to express myself quite in this manner, since much must be allowed for the different circumstances of families; but thus much may certainly be said with truth, that if the practice of family prayer, or any other mode in which we give evidence to the world that we are Christians, be forborne through shame, or a compliance with the modes of the world, we have no just claim to the title and privilege of Christians, but fall under the awful sentence of Christ, (*Mark* viii. 38,) “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this—generation, of him *will* the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.”

Every practice by which we declare our belief of Christianity, such as attending Christian worship, receiving *the Lord's Supper*, or performing any other acknowledged Christian duty, tends to strengthen our faith, to inspire the proper spirit of the profession, and secure the performance of every duty which it enjoins, and, therefore, should by no means be neglected by us.

Thus should we be urgent, even to *exhort one another*, and all should gladly and thankfully *receive* “the word of exhortation;” [*Heb.* xiii. 22;] to “be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, *knowing that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.*” [*1 Cor.* xv. 58.]

The author of this epistle says, (*Ch.* x. 25,) We should exhort one another “so much the more as *we* see the day” (meaning, no doubt, the great day, or the second coming of Christ) “approaching.” If this motive had weight in the times of the apostles, it must have more now; since that great *day*, [*1 Cor.* iii. 13,] which will “try every man's work of what sort it is,” must be nearer than it was then; and though this time was not known to our Lord himself, but only the signs of its approach, many intelligent Christians, who are attentive to *the signs of the times*, are of opinion that it cannot now be far distant, and may be expected even in the present generation.† But since the coming is certain, though the time be uncertain, let us be *ready*, that, *when our Lord shall return, and take account of his servants, we may be found without spot, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

* *Observations on Man*, II. p. 336. (P.)

† See Vol. XII. (on *Dan.* xi. 34, 35), p. 340.

DISCOURSE II.

ON

FAITH AND PATIENCE.

HEB. xi. 13:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off; and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

THE great use of religion is to enlarge the minds of men; leading them to look beyond themselves, and beyond the present moment; to take an interest in the concerns of others, and to look forward to the most distant times. By this means men become less selfish, and at the same time more intellectual; being less governed by the impulses of mere sensual appetite, which is the characteristic of brutal nature, and also of a state of childhood.

This habit of mind cannot be imparted by instruction. It must necessarily be the fruit of experience. And since this advance in intellectual improvement implies the forbearance of immediate gratification, which is always painful, a state of suffering is an essential ingredient in this important discipline of the mind, and therefore ought not by any means to be complained of, by those who wish not to retard their progress towards perfection.

We see in the affections and conduct of children how injurious constant indulgence is to them, and how necessary to their own future happiness, as well as to the comfort of those who are about them, are frequent checks and restraints. The less is the gratification of their wishes restrained, the more eager are their desires, and the more confident their expectation of any desired event; and consequently, the more painful is disappointment to them. And since disappointment will necessarily come, from the absolute impossibility of gratifying all their absurd wishes, the more they must suffer from impatience and vexation in consequence of a want of early checks.

It is happy for men that, in a state of infancy, they cannot explain their wants; so that whatever they feel or wish, it has little or no connexion with what they experience. They must necessarily be many years under the absolute government of others. This lays a foundation for a habit of patience and forbearance, which is of infinite value to them, and which must be carried much farther as they advance in life, if they advance in intellectual and moral improvement.

We see not only in the case of indulged children, but in that of *kings*, and others who have many persons entirely subservient to them, that a habit of indulgence makes them incapable of brooking disappointment; so that they suffer infinitely more than persons who frequently meet with them, and who have by that means acquired a meek disposition, and a habit of patience and forbearance. These persons can enjoy the pleasures of life without suffering much from the evils of it; whereas they who have not been in a situation proper for acquiring this habit, not only suffer much from evil, but have little enjoyment even of good. This being nothing more than they always expect, and what from frequent indulgence they receive with much indifference, often bordering on disgust.

Hence it follows that, in exercising the faith and patience of men, God acts the part of a kind and judicious parent, attentive to the improvement of his children; not affected by their present temporary feelings, but consulting their happiness at a future period, and in the whole of their existence; this life, long as it may be, being only the infancy of mankind, in which are to be formed habits that are to qualify them for superior and more lasting enjoyment hereafter. Compared to eternity, what is time; what is the longest term of human life? If the whole of it should be passed in suffering, there is room for an abundant recompence in a future state. But our merciful Father has given sufficient proof of his benevolence in the provision that he has made for the enjoyment of this life, happiness greatly exceeding the misery that is so much complained of in it. From this, his disposition and his wish to make his offspring happy is sufficiently evident; and we have just ground to hope and believe, that all the sufferings of this life are in their nature preparatory to our happiness in another, provided they have their proper effect upon our tempers and dispositions.

We see most of the conduct of Divine Providence in the Scriptures, which are eminently calculated for our instruc-

tion; and we there see that the methods of the extraordinary providence of God, in his intercourse with mankind, is exactly correspondent to the plan of his general providence. We there see that, from the beginning of the world, he has been training men to virtue and happiness by a course of severe, but salutary discipline; some of the most eminent of our race, those whom we may call the greatest favourites of heaven, with whose history we are best acquainted, having been treated in such a manner as to exercise their patience to the utmost, before they were distinguished by any reward for it. As an attention to particular cases, such as are briefly recited in *Chapter xi. of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, will be eminently instructive, I shall enlarge a little on some of them, noticing such circumstances in their history as appear to be most remarkable.

Abraham, at the age of *seventy-five*, was commanded by God to leave his native country, on a promise that he would give him another which he would shew him, and that he would make his descendants a great nation. Accordingly, he left *Chaldea*, and went to *Haran* in *Mesopotamia*, and the year following he proceeded to the land of *Canaan*. (*Gen. xii. 4, 5.*) There God appeared to him the second time, [*ver. 7,*] telling him that that was the country destined for him. Ten years, however, passed without the appearance of any issue, from which the promised nation was to descend; and in the mean time he had been obliged by a grievous famine to go into *Egypt*.

At his return, the promise of his descendants' becoming a great nation was renewed, [*Gen. xiii. 14—17,*] and again, in a peculiarly solemn manner, after his rescue of *Lot*; [*xv. 5;*] but, having no hope of any son by his wife *Sarah*, he was prevailed upon by her to take her maid *Hagar*, and by her he had *Ishmael*, when he was *eighty-six* years old, [*xvi. 16.*] But this was not the son from whom the great nation was to descend; and it was not till he had arrived at the advanced age of *ninety-nine*, [*xvii. 24,*] that he was promised to have a son by *Sarah*, who was then *ninety* [*ver. 17*]; so that her conception was out of the course of nature. Notwithstanding this long delay, and the most unpromising appearances, his faith did not fail; and on this account he was highly approved by God. (*Gen. xv. 6.*) Accordingly he had a son the year following, but only one; so that, to all appearance, his having a numerous posterity was very uncertain.

To give the greater exercise to his faith, when this son,

so long expected, was arrived at years of maturity, the affectionate father received a command from God to sacrifice him; a command which he hesitated not to obey, though to appearance this act of obedience would put an end to all his flattering prospects. This, however, was merely a trial of his faith, and the order to sacrifice his son was countermanded.*

When *Isaac* was forty years old, and his father *one hundred and forty*,† he was married; but twenty years more elapsed before he had a son, so that *Abraham* was one hundred and sixty years old, and saw no more than two grandchildren, and when they were boys of fifteen he died.‡ His expectation, therefore, of a numerous posterity, could not have arisen from any thing that he saw, but altogether from his faith in the Divine promise.

After this, the hopes of the family were limited to *Jacob*, one of the sons of *Isaac*; and he did not marry till he was near fourscore years of age, and at his outset, he appeared to have been greatly inferior to his brother. For when he returned from *Padan Aram*, no mention is made [*Gen.* xxxi. 17, 18] but of his wives, his children, and his cattle, whereas his brother met him with “four hundred men,” [xxxii. 6,] and made very light of the valuable present that *Jacob* forced upon his acceptance. [*Ver.* 9.]

In the family of *Jacob* we see, however, at length, the rudiments of a *clan*, or nation; and when they went into *Egypt* they mustered seventy males, [*Gen.* xlvi. 27,] but their situation in servitude, to which they were soon reduced, was very unpromising with respect to any future greatness. The life of *Jacob* himself had little in it to be envied. After leaving his parents, where though he was the favourite of the mother, he was by no means so of the father, he served his uncle *Laban* twenty years; and by his own account he underwent great hardships, and was grievously imposed upon. At his return he suffered much from the fear of his brother's resentment. The behaviour of several of his sons must have been a source of much affliction to him, and the loss of *Joseph* must have gone near to break his heart. In this state he continued fifteen years, when near the close of his life he was comforted by the recovery of his favourite son, and the settlement of all his family in a plentiful country. But though he knew, from the warning God gave to *Abraham*,

* See, on *Gen.* xxii. 2, 12, Vol. XI. pp. 82, 83.

† See, on *Gen.* xxiv. 1, *ibid.* p. 84; *Gen.* xxv. 20.

‡ See, on *Gen.* xxv. 7, Vol. XI. p. 87.

that his descendants would soon be reduced to a state of great oppression, and would continue in it many years, he died in the firmest faith that they would in future time become a great and flourishing nation; and he distinctly foretold the fate of each of his sons, as the heads of great tribes, of which that of *Judah* would be the most distinguished.*

Joseph, the most pious and virtuous of his sons, was exercised in the severest manner. After being the favourite of his father till he attained the age of seventeen, he was sold for a slave; and in consequence of a false accusation, confined in prison several years. But these unfavourable circumstances were probably those that contributed most to the peculiar excellences of his character; disposing him to be humble and serious, wholly resigned to the will of God; and believing that his providence had the disposal of every thing, he entertained no sentiment of revenge on account of the injuries that had been done to him. Looking forward to the future greatness of his descendants, and confiding in the Divine promise, that the family would become possessed of the land of *Canaan*, he ordered that he should not be buried in *Egypt*, but be embalmed, in order to be carried to the promised land, when they should remove thither. †

Though the descendants of *Jacob* multiplied greatly in *Egypt*, yet no person, seeing the state of abject servitude to which they were there reduced, could have imagined that they were destined to rise superior to their proud masters, and make the figure they afterwards did, under *David* and *Solomon*, and much less that they would become the most distinguished of all nations, which, if the predictions concerning them have their accomplishment, they are to be. The *Israelites*, in general, seemed to have abandoned all hopes of the kind, and to have acquiesced, through despair, in their servile condition.

Moses, their future deliverer, fled from the country at the age of forty, and continued forty years more among the *Arabs*, where he married, and evidently never thought of returning to join his brethren; ‡ when the Divine Being appeared in a most extraordinary manner in their favour, delivering them, as it is said, [*Deut.* xxvi. 8,] “with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm,” from the power of the *Egyptians*, at a time when there were no visible means of accomplishing it.

* See, on *Gen.* xlix., Vol. XI. pp. 118—122.

† See, on *Gen.* i. 25, Vol. XI. p. 123.

‡ See, on *Exod.* iii. 11, *ibid.* p. 128.

But though the nation was in this extraordinary manner delivered from their state of servitude in *Egypt*, yet, wandering as they did no less than forty years in the *Wilderness*, surrounded by warlike nations, they could not, except in reliance on the Divine favour by which they were conducted, have expected to make the conquest of such a country as *Palestine* then was, fully peopled, and by nations in the habits of war, with all their considerable towns fortified. Yet in this manner was the favourite nation training up for their future greatness, when to an indifferent spectator, their condition would have appeared very uncertain and hazardous; not likely to make any greater figure than one of the *hordes of Arabs*, and having nothing but the very worst and least cultivable part of *Arabia* to settle in; every fertile spot in the country being already occupied.

The people in general at this time thought so ill of their situation and prospects, that nothing but very extraordinary interpositions in their favour could have prevented their returning into *Egypt*, which they again and again wished to do. The faith, however, of the more pious among them never failed; and after the expiration of the forty years, they were put into the possession of a considerable tract of country on the *East* of the river *Jordan*. But at this time not only were the descendants of *Esau* a well settled and considerable nation, but even those of *Moab* and *Ammon*, the two sons of *Lot*, though they were destined to bow to the superiority of the wandering *Israelites*.

After they got possession of the land of *Canaan*, in a manner as extraordinary as their emancipation from their bondage in *Egypt*, they made no considerable figure for the space of about four hundred years; and during a great part of it they were in subjection to some or other of the neighbouring nations, in consequence of their apostacy from their religion; so that in all this time there was far from being any appearance of their being what they were in the reigns of *David* and *Solomon*; and this state of prosperity did not continue quite a century. After this they relapsed into their former inconsiderable state, and they were finally conquered, and carried into captivity, by the kings of *Assyria* and *Babylon*; when to all appearance there was an end of the nation of the *Israelites*, as there was to those of the *Moabites*, *Ammonites* and *Philistines*, which never rose to any degree of power or independence.

Of all the kings of Israel, *David*, whose piety was most exemplary, though, from the strength of his passions, his

failings were very great, was exercised with the greatest trials, both before he was king and afterwards, of which many of his *Psalms*, composed in a mournful strain, are a sufficient evidence. He was anointed king of *Israel* when he was very young; but though he soon distinguished himself as a warrior, he was immediately exposed to the jealousy and persecution of *Saul*; so that during the remainder of his reign he was obliged to take refuge in the neighbouring countries; and after the death of *Saul* he was seven years at *Hebron*, acknowledged by the tribe of *Judah* only.

On the other hand, *Solomon*, who had, no doubt, every possible advantage of education, and arrived at the most splendid situation without any difficulty, was not only excessively luxurious, but swerved from his duty in an article with respect to which his firmness might have been least of all suspected; not only indulging his wives in the idolatrous worship of the countries from which he had taken them, but joining them in it.

After this seeming annihilation of the *Israelites*, as a nation, in the captivity by *Nebuchadnezzar*, they were, according to express prophecies, restored to their own country, though they never rose to the height from which they had fallen; and in consequence of their relapsing into vice, though not into idolatry, and rejecting the great prophet, *Jesus Christ*, the vengeance predicted long before by *Moses* came upon them to the uttermost. They were conquered by the *Romans*, and soon after entirely driven from their country to every part of the habitable world; and in this state they remain to this day, but they are not destroyed. They preserve their peculiar customs, and never lose sight of their relation to their great ancestors, or the promises of God to them, that they are to be once more, and finally, settled in their own country, and to be the most respectable of all nations. Though they are treated with the greatest contempt by all other people, they are justly proud of their descent, and of their peculiar relation to God. Whatever be the vices with which they are chargeable, they are not deficient with respect to faith. Their most necessary virtue is fully exercised and improved by the severe discipline to which they have been subjected.

This is the more remarkable, as none of all their calculations, or conjectures, concerning the time of their deliverance and exaltation have been verified; so that they now desist from forming any opinion on the subject, but wait with patience for the accomplishment of the promises, not-

withstanding the most discouraging aspect of things, and in perfect uncertainty with respect to the time.

The *Messiah*, who was first promised to them, with any distinctness, in the time of *Isaiah*, they fully expected, from their interpretation of the prophecies of *Daniel*, about the commencement of the *Christian æra*, when they became subject to the *Romans*; a situation which they brooked very ill. *Jesus* was the predicted *Messiah*, but his first coming was not to be that glorious one, with which they fondly flattered themselves. And with respect to his second coming, *Christians* themselves have their faith as much exercised as is that of the *Jews*. It was by many, fully expected soon after the age of the apostles. After this disappointment, they fixed upon later dates; but, like the *Jews*, we have flattered and deceived ourselves, again and again. Our faith, however, does not fail, especially as our Saviour has apprized us that the time of his second coming was not known even to himself, but to the Father only; [*Matt.* xxiv. 36;] and that when it will come, it will be as unexpected as that of a thief in the night. [*Ver.* 43.]

If the faith of the founders of the *Jewish* nation, and that of the nation itself, has been so much exercised, that of *Jesus Christ* and his followers has been no less so. *Christ* himself was made "perfect through sufferings;" (*Heb.* ii. 10;) his followers cannot reasonably expect to be trained to virtue and happiness in any other way. He was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." [*Isaiah* liii. 3.] During the whole course of his benevolent ministry, in which he continually "went about doing good," [*Acts* x. 38,] he met with more opposition from the envy and malice of his powerful enemies, than if he had been the pest of society. Though he gave the rulers of his nation no cause of offence, besides that of reproving them for their vices, they never ceased to persecute him till they had put him to a painful and ignominious death; and he faithfully apprized all his disciples, [*Matt.* xvi. 24,] that if they would follow him, they must *take up their cross to do it*; and [x. 22] that they would be "hated of all men for *his name's sake*," but that they ought to rejoice in being so distinguished; since in consequence of being "persecuted for righteousness' sake," [v. 10,] "*great would be their reward in heaven*." [*Ver.* 12.] If they *suffered with him*, they would, as the apostle says, [2 *Tim.* ii. 12; *Rom.* viii. 17,] "*reign with him*," and "*be also glorified together*."

The apostles, and the primitive Christians in general, found this to be a faithful and true warning. In following the steps of their Master they were persecuted as he had been; and Christians received no countenance from the powers of the world for the space of three hundred years. And after this, the professors of a purer Christianity, (for it was never more than a corrupt species of it that was patronized by princes and states,) continued to be exposed to cruel persecution, in various forms. Indeed they suffered much more from nominal *Christian* powers than they had ever done from the *Heathen* ones. It has, therefore, been true in all times, that "through much tribulation *men have entered* into the kingdom of God;" [*Acts* xiv. 22;] and consequently, whenever the world smiles upon us, there is just ground for suspicion that all is not right with us.

Looking through the history of Christianity, from the beginning, we shall find that the most distinguished characters, those we look up to with the greatest reverence, as patterns of piety, benevolence, and constancy, have been those who have suffered the most. This was eminently the case of the apostles in general, and especially of *Paul*, the most active of all the propagators of Christianity. For ardour of mind, and indefatigable exertion in the cause of truth and virtue, he stands unequalled in Christian history. But what did he not suffer, after he embraced Christianity, from the malice of the *Jews*, and false brethren among *Christians*!

Speaking of some who undervalued him, in the church of Corinth, he gives the following brief enumeration of his labours and his sufferings. *2 Cor.* xi. 23—30: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more. In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods. Once was I stoned. Thrice I suffered shipwreck."* (And this was written before the shipwreck of which a particular account is given in his history.) "A night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the Heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea. In fastings often, in cold and nakedness, besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the

* On *ver.* 24, 25, see Vol. XIV. pp. 186, 187.

care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory *in* the things which concern my infirmities." After this he was imprisoned two years in *Judea*, conveyed to *Rome* as a prisoner, and suffered shipwreck at *Melita*. He was two years more a prisoner in *Rome*, though not in strait confinement; and though he was at that time acquitted, he afterwards suffered martyrdom.

In the same epistle, however, in which he gives this account of his sufferings, he says, (2 *Cor.* vii. 4,) "I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation;"* and he frequently exhorts the Christians to whom he writes, [*Phil.* iv. 4.] "to rejoice in the Lord always." *Rom.* xii. 12: "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation." When he was preaching to some churches in *Asia Minor*, (*Acts* xiv. 22,) exhorting the disciples to continue in the faith, he reminds them that "through much tribulation *they must* enter into the kingdom of God."

With what true heroism and satisfaction does he reflect upon his labours and sufferings, in the epistles which he wrote from *Rome*, towards the close of his life, when he was in expectation of a violent death! In these circumstances he thus writes to *Timothy*: (2 *Epistle* iv. 5—8:) "Watch thou in all things. Endure afflictions. Do the work of an Evangelist. Make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought *the* good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."†

Can any thing now be wanting to reconcile us to any hardships to which we can ever be exposed, either in the ordinary course of Providence, or in the cause of truth and a good conscience? What is all that we can suffer, in these times of rest from open persecution, compared to that, to which either the ancient *martyrs* in the time of *Heathenism*, or those in the time of *Popery*, were continually exposed? How many thousands of them suffered death in every frightful form, besides being the objects of ridicule and insult, as if, instead of being the benefactors of mankind, they had

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 173, 174.

† See, on vers. 6, 8, *ibid.* pp. 302, 303.

been the greatest pests of society ; a treatment which to many persons is more painful than death itself, and very often would be intolerable, were it not that the attachment of friends is a balance to the contempt of enemies.

It is true, however, that something of this kind of persecution still remains to those who resolutely bear their testimony, at the same time, in favour of Christianity, and against the manifold corruptions of it with nominal Christians, even those who call themselves *reformed*. In this case we cannot expect to escape the ridicule of the philosophical part of the world on one hand, and the hatred of bigots on the other. In some situations it requires no small degree of fortitude to bear this with a temper becoming Christians ; pitying the ignorance and prejudices of men, without bearing them any ill-will ; and taking every method of removing their ignorance and prejudices, in a manner the least offensive to them ; always joining the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocence of the dove ; the seriousness of the Christian, with the ease and cheerfulness of the benevolent man ; free from that offensive austerity which gives many persons an aversion to religion, as if it was an enemy to human happiness, and the parent of gloom and melancholy.

Let us more particularly apply this doctrine to the great object of Christian hope, the second coming of Christ, with power and great glory, to raise the dead and to judge the world, when he will render to every man according to his works. We are apprized by the apostle Peter, (2 *Ep.* iii. 3, 4,) that “ in the last days,” there will be “ scoffers,” as we now find, who will say “ Where is the promise of his coming ? For, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” But, as he observes, [*vers.* 8—10,] “ one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” that he is “ not slack concerning his promise,” and that *that day* “ will come though as a thief in the night.”

Let us then be ever “ looking for,” as we are “ hastening unto, the coming of *this great day* of God ;” [*ver.* 12 ;] and “ be diligent, that *we* may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” [*Ver.* 14.] That greatest of all events is not the less certain for being delayed beyond our expectation. The *Israelites*, no doubt, expected to enter the promised land immediately after their leaving *Egypt* ; but, though they passed forty years in the Wilderness, they nevertheless were put in the full possession of it when that

time of their probation expired; so that we read, (*Joshua* xx. 43—45,) “The Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers.—There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass.” In like manner, no doubt, we shall all have occasion to say the same in due time, when our eyes, and every eye, shall see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, be the distance of that time from the present ever so great. Let us, therefore, live as if it was near at hand. With this prospect before us, “what manner of persons,” as the apostle *Peter*, [2 *Ep.* iii. 11,] says, “ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?”

But, as individuals, we have no occasion to enter into any speculations about the time of this greatest of all events, in which we are so much interested. To each of us it must be very near. For, since we have no perception of time during a profound sleep, we shall have none while we are in the grave. The sleep of *Adam* will appear to him to have been as short as that of those who shall die the day before the second coming of Christ. In both cases, alike, it will be as a moment; so that our resurrection will seem immediately to succeed the closing of our eyes in this world. What a sublime and interesting consideration is this! “For, what is our life,” but, as the apostle says, [*James* iv. 14,] like “a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?” and immediately after this, the great scene opens upon us.* May we all be so prepared for it, that when our Lord shall return, and *take account of his servants, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

* See Vol. II. pp. 60, 258 (*Notes*), 354—359; Vol. XIV. pp. 18, 19; Vol. XV. pp. 443, 453. “In the year 1530, *William Tyndall* answered Sir *Thomas More*'s Dialogue [concerning heresies, and matters of religion]. *More* objected to *Luther* that he held, ‘that all soules lye and sleep till domes-day.’ *Tyndall*—acknowledges it for the doctrine of the *Protestants*, grounded on Scripture, as appears by his answer.

“And ye in putting them in heauen, hell, and purgatory, destroy the argumentes wherwith Christ and Paul proue the resurrection.—The true faith putteth the resurrection, which we be warned to looke for enery houre. The Heathen philosophers denying *that*, did put, that the soules did euer lye.’ And again, ‘If the soules be in heaven, tell me wly they be not in as good case as the angels be? And then what cause is there of the resurrection?’

“Again. *More* objects thus: ‘What shall he care, how long he liue in sinne that beleueth *Luther*, that he shall after this life feel neyther good nor euill in bodye nor soule, untill the day of dome.’ *Tyndall* answers, ‘Christ and hys apostles taught no other, but warned to looke for Christe’s comming agayne euery houre.’ *Tyndall’s Works*, by *Fox*, 1573, pp. 324, 327.” *Blackburn’s Hist. View*, Ed. 2, 1772, pp. 15—17.

DISCOURSE III.

ON THE

CHANGE WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE CHARACTER OF THE
APOSTLES AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS iv. 13 :

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled: and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

THERE is nothing in all history, and certainly nothing within the compass of our own observation and experience, that shews so great a change in the views and characters of men, as we find to have taken place in the apostles after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, or rather, after the descent of the *Holy Spirit*, on the day of *Pentecost*. [Acts ii. 4.] They appear to have always been honest, virtuous, and pious men; but having imbibed the prejudices of their nation, they expected a temporal prince in their *Messiah*; and supposing their Master to be that *Messiah*, and being in favour with him, they, with the ambition that seems to be natural to all men, hoped to be advanced to the first places in his kingdom, and, seemingly, without considering whether they were qualified to fill them or not.

With these views, and no higher, they attached themselves to Jesus, after being convinced by his miracles that he was a true prophet; and, conceiving the idea, though without its having been suggested by himself, that he was the *Messiah* they were looking for. They had frequent disputes among themselves on this subject; and two of them were so impatient, and presumed so much on their superior merit, that, without regarding the offence it would necessarily give to the other apostles, they actually applied to Jesus for the distinction of sitting “the one on *his* right hand, and the other on *his* left,” when he should be in the possession of *his* kingdom.*

* *Matt. x. 22.* See Vol. XIII. pp. 133, 134.

Though Jesus never failed to repress these ambitious views, and never gave the least encouragement to them in any of the apostles, not even in *Peter*, whose pretensions seem to have been the best-founded, they all retained this idea till the time of his death. This event, so contrary to their expectations; disconcerted and confounded them, and necessarily obliged them to give up all their fond expectations of worldly preferment. But after his resurrection their ambition revived, and they could not forbear to ask him (*Acts* i. 6) if he would then “restore the kingdom to Israel,” expecting, no doubt, to share in the honours and emoluments of it.*

That he was destined to be a king, and that they were to partake of the honours of his kingdom, he had never denied. Nay, he had given them positive assurance of it, saying, (*Matt.* xix. 28,) that, when he should “sit upon the throne of his glory, they also should sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” But at the same time he gave them sufficient intimation that his kingdom was not to resemble “the kingdoms of this world,” in which *the great mass of the people were subservient to the gratification of a few*. For that, on the contrary, the persons the most distinguished in his kingdom would be those who should be the most assiduous to promote the happiness of others, or that they would be, in fact, in the capacity of *servants*, as he himself in reality was.

Whether they clearly understood his meaning, does not appear, but it is probable they did not; for still their chief expectations were confined to the honour and advantage that would accrue to themselves, without attending to any obligation they would be under to promote the good of others. Whatever was meant by this kingdom, in the honours of which they were to partake, he never gave them any information concerning the *time* of its commencement. Nay, he expressly told them that this was not known even to himself. After his resurrection he professed the same ignorance, and, repressing their curiosity on that subject, he said, (*Acts* i. 7,) “*It was not for them to know the times and seasons which God had reserved to himself.*”

Reflection, however, on the death of their Master, on his resurrection and ascension, without his having given them any promise of his speedy return, and the recollection of

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 388, 389.

the persecutions to which he had constantly apprized them that they would be exposed, as that they "would be hated of all men for *his name's sake*,"* and that *they who should kill them would think they did God service*,† could not fail to satisfy them that they had nothing of advantage to look for in this life, and, therefore, that the kingdom which he had promised them, and of the *certainty* of which they entertained no doubt, must be in another after death. And when, after this, they found themselves impowered to work miracles as Jesus had done, in confirmation of his doctrine, they, naturally timid as they had been before, assumed the courage of the ancient prophets, no more overawed by men in power than they or their Master had been, and making light of, nay, glorying in all the sufferings to which they were exposed.

This natural effect of their new situation, and new and more enlarged views, astonished their adversaries, who wondered how men in some of the lower classes of life, without fortune or education, should appear so fearless; and, without respecting any human authority, despising their threats and their punishments, boldly preach what they thought themselves authorized by God to do, though in the most peremptory manner forbidden by them.

From this time also, so far were they from envying one another, or contending, as they had done before, about the chief places in their Master's kingdom; having now no distinct idea of any difference that would be made among them hereafter, they considered one another as brethren, standing in the same relation to their common Master; and, being equally exposed to persecution on that account, their attachment to one another was such as the world had never seen before. Remembering at the same time the great stress that their Master had laid on *brotherly love*, and the mutual kind offices that flowed from it; and considering all the things of this world as wholly insignificant in comparison with their glorious expectations in another, many of them made no difficulty, in the first ardour inspired by their situation, of giving up all their worldly property to those of their brethren who stood in need of it, in sure expectation of receiving their reward in heaven.

This most remarkable and sudden, and yet permanent change in the temper and disposition of the apostles, and

* *Matt. x. 22.* See Vol. XIII. pp. 133, 134.

† *John xvi. 2.* See Vol. XIII. p. 326.

other primitive Christians, furnishes no inconsiderable evidence of the truth of Christianity, as it implies the fullest possible conviction in their minds of the truth of the great facts on which it depends ; facts which immediately preceded this change, and must have been the proper cause of it, and they were certainly the best judges in the case. If they had not all known, to the greatest certainty, that Jesus was actually risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and that the powers with which he had been endued were transferred to them, they must have been the same men that they were before, acting upon the same principles, and in the same manner, especially as they were not very young men, and some of them pretty far advanced in life ; consequently, their worldly ambition, and their envy and jealousy of each other, must have been the same that it had been before. Whereas, now we find every thing of this kind quite changed, and this change was not momentary, but continued through life, with them all. The low passions and narrow views, and their consequent envy and jealousy, never returned, but they continued to the latest period of life what they appear to have been presently after the remarkable events above-mentioned.

That such men as they evidently were, and especially in the middle and lower classes of life, unlearned, and so many of them, should concur in any imposture, and one so suddenly formed as theirs must have been, whatever had been its *object*, cannot be supposed, and much less an object that had nothing in it that mankind in general value in this life ; and especially that they should all act in such perfect harmony so long. That not one of them, though urged by the fear of death, or the hope of reward, should have made any discovery to the prejudice of their former associates, and that none of their enemies, sagacious and inveterate as many of them were, should have been able to detect their imposture, adds infinitely to the improbability of its being one.

When these new and great views first opened upon the converts to Christianity ; when they saw their cause to be that of God, by the evidence of the miracles which supported it, and they were themselves occasionally under supernatural influence, this extraordinary fervour, and the effects of it, especially in acts of beneficence to their brethren, was natural. But, as first impressions are always the warmest, this zeal would, in a course of time, as naturally

abate, especially as miracles became less frequent; and their intercourse with the world would gradually tend to produce the same attention to the things of this world by which other persons were influenced.

In this situation, many of them would require to be reminded of their great views and expectations in another world, by which they had at first been so much impressed, and to be exhorted to the virtues to which they lead. Accordingly, the apostles, seeing, no doubt, this unfavourable influence, and aware of the tendency and progress of it, do not fail in their epistles to warn them on the subject; and this they do with a distinctness and energy of which we find no example before their time.

And as we, at this distance from the time of the first propagation of Christianity, who receive all our impressions of it from reading and meditation, and especially as we live in a season of rest from all persecution, (a situation which has its disadvantages as well as its advantages,) are naturally less under the influences of its principles, and more exposed to those of the world at large, it may be useful to collect, and particularly attend to all that the apostles have urged on this most interesting of all subjects; that we may see the firmness of their faith in the great doctrine of a resurrection and a future state, and the influence which they evidently thought it ought to have on men's sentiments and conduct.

It will also be pleasing, as well as useful, to observe the difference which these views made in the state of their own minds. What a wonderful change was produced in them after the death and resurrection of their Master! so that they were no longer the same men.

I shall begin with the *epistle of Peter*, the chief of the apostles, but who had, no doubt, been as much under the influence of worldly ambition as any of them, as may be suspected from his observing, (*Mark* x. 28,) that they had *forsaken all to follow* Jesus, and desiring to know what they should receive as a compensation for the sacrifice; at that time, no doubt, expecting it in this life. What were his views and expectations afterwards, and to the close of a long life, we shall now see. At the same time we cannot fail to perceive a peculiar dignity and energy in the language of this apostle, worthy of the chief of them. The faith of *Paul* was equally strong, and led him to act with the same disinterestedness and courage, and it is probable

that he went through more labour, and in the course of his preaching suffered more; but his language on the same subject has not quite the same dignity and force.

With what confidence and exultation does this apostle speak of the sure hope of Christians in another world, and how justly and forcibly does he urge it as a motive to bear with patience and cheerfulness all the persecutions to which they were exposed, in the following passages of his epistles!

[1 *Pet.* i. 3—9]: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who*, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again* unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now, for a season, *ye be* in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith (being much more precious than of gold which perisheth)—*may* be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ, Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

1 *Pet.* iv. 12—14, 16, 19: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, † as if some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; ‡ that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God § resteth upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.—If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. || —Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls ¶ unto him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator.”

2 *Pet.* i. 10, 11: “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.** For if ye do these things, ye shall

* See, on *ver.* 3, Vol. XIV. p. 401.

† See, on *ver.* 12, *ibid.* p. 411.

‡ See, on *ver.* 13, *ibid.*

§ “The glorious spirit of God.” See, on *ver.* 14, *ibid.*

|| See, on *ver.* 16, *ibid.* pp. 411, 412.

¶ “Their lives.” See *ibid.* p. 412.

** See another *reading*, in *ibid.* p. 415.

never fall ; for so an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 1 *Pet.* v. 10: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." *Ver.* 4: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." i. 13: "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace* that is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Well, then, might he say, (iii. 14,) "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye. Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

With what noble magnanimity does this apostle contemplate the dissolution of the present state of things, and the commencement of the glorious one that is to follow it, adopting the language of the ancient prophets, in describing great revolutions in the world.

2 *Pet.* iii. 11—14: "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness ; looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."†

The consideration of the *time* when the great and happy event is to take place, gave him no concern, since he depended upon the *certainty* of it ; and when we are dead, the time of the resurrection will be a matter of perfect indifference to all of us ; for whatever be the time of our death, that of the resurrection will appear to us to be contiguous to it;‡ and the reason for the seeming delay, and of the uncertainty with respect to the time of the resurrection and future judgment, are very rationally and satisfactorily given by him, on the principle of this being a state of trial and discipline, in which it behoves us to be in continual expectation and preparation for an event so infinitely momentous.

2 *Pet.* iii. 3, 4, 8, 9: "There *will* come, in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell

* See another reading, in Vol. XIV. p. 402, Note*.

† See Vol. XIV. pp. 419, 420.

‡ See *supra*, p. 445.

asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation.—But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise,—but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Such is the animating and consoling language of this great apostle, addressed to his fellow-christians, then in a state of persecution, which left them no prospect of peace or comfort in this life. And, surely, it must have been effectual to answer its purpose. The writings of this apostle are such as we may quote as *authority* for the truth of this great doctrine of another life, as he received it from Jesus, and it was confirmed by miracles wrought by himself, as well as by his brother apostles, who were endued with the same powers of which they had been witnesses, in their common Master.

The apostle *John* was one of the two brothers, the sons of *Zebedee*, whose eager ambition led them openly to solicit the most distinguished honours in the kingdom of their Master, though at the evident risk of giving the greatest offence to the rest of the twelve, all whose pretensions must have been nearly as good as theirs. But how changed do we find him at the time of writing his epistles! Here we are far from perceiving any marks of worldly ambition. On the contrary, no man could appear to be more weaned from any attachment to this world, or more desirous to wean others from it. “Love not the world,” says the heavenly-minded apostle, (1 *John* ii. 15—17,) “nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world: and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.”

Such is the change that new views and principles can make in men. It is not now any thing in this life which is so uncertain, but that *eternal life* promised by Jesus that is the object of his pursuit; and this he thus earnestly recommends to others: “This,” says he, (1 *John* ii. 25,) “is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” *Ver.* ii. 13: “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.—These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”

With what joyful expectation does he now look forward to the return of his Master, in his glory and kingdom! iii. 2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." ii. 28: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

In the book of *Revelation*, interpreting this glory, he says, (Ch. i. 7,) "Behold, he cometh *in the clouds*, and every eye shall see him, and they also *who pierced him*, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him;" meaning, no doubt, his enemies,* and by no means his friends, to whom it will be a season of the greatest joy and triumph. There, as Jesus said before, (*John* xvi. 20, 22,) their "sorrow *will* be turned into joy.—Now ye *are in* sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Then *the glory which his Father gave to him, he will give to them.* (Ch. xvii. 22.)

James, the other ambitious brother, was the first of the apostles who died a *martyr* to Christianity, being beheaded by *Herod Agrippa*, fourteen years after the death of Christ;† so that there cannot be a doubt but that he had abandoned all views to advancement in this world, as well as the rest of the apostles. Though this *James* died the first of all the apostles, his brother *John* long survived them all; for he lived some time after his banishment to the Isle of *Patmos*, in the reign of *Domitian*, which was probably in A. D. 94. From the fate of *James*, the rest of the apostles might see what they had to expect in this life; and yet it is evident that it did not operate as a discouragement to them. They all persisted in the same persecuted cause, and most of them probably with no better treatment than he met with.

The other apostles of whom we have any writing left, are *James* and *Jude*. The former, called *the brother of Jesus*, (being either his natural brother of the same parents, or some near relation,) breathes the same exalted spirit with *Peter* and *John*, earnestly exhorting his brethren to bear with patience and fortitude all the sufferings of this life, in the joyful expectation of receiving an abundant recompence in another.

"My brethren," he says, (Ch. i. 2,) "count it all joy

* See Vol. XIV. p. 445.

† See, on *Acts* xii. 1, 2, Vol. XIII. pp. 435, 436.

when ye fall into divers temptations ;” (or rather *trials* ;) and again, (*ver.* 12,) “ Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (*Vers.* 7, 8) : “ Be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rains. Be ye also patient, establish your hearts ; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

Jude, to the same purpose, says, (*ver.* 21,) “ Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal *glory* ;” and he concludes his short epistle in the following animating manner : “ Now unto him *who* is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy ; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever.”

Except *Matthew*, the author of the Gospel which bears his name, no other of the twelve apostles were writers. They were not ambitious, nor indeed were those whose writings we have, at all ambitious to be known to the world, and to be celebrated as such. They only wrote what their circumstances, and those of their disciples required ; being content to wait for every honourable distinction till the return of their common Master. We cannot, however, doubt but that their disciples being, wherever they were, in the same circumstances with those to whom the epistles of the other apostles were addressed, they exhorted them on the same principles, referring them to that great day when the wicked will receive a due punishment, and the righteous an ample reward ; and teaching them, as the other apostles did, not to place their affections on any thing in this world, or to be disturbed at any sufferings to which they should be exposed here, since they could only be for a time, and would bear no sensible proportion to the advantage they would derive from bearing them as became Christians, that is, with patience, fortitude, and with meekness, and without any ill-will to their persecutors ; and at the same time contributing every thing in their power to lessen the sufferings of their brethren.

How different is this disposition from that which is admired by the world at large, but how superior is it in the eye of reason, as it implies a greater command of temper,

less governed by things present, and arising from a more extensive and enlarged view of things, the only proper evidence of our advance in intellectual, above sensual life.

With this, we, as well as all other animals, necessarily begin our career of existence, and the brutes never in general get much beyond it; but experience and observation lead *men* to extend their views, to reflect upon the past, and look forward to the future; and in this progress we pass from selfishness to benevolence, and from the contemplation of nature to the veneration and love of the great Author of nature, both in doing and suffering, without any regard to what may be the consequence in this life; assured that, by such sentiments and such conduct, we shall not finally be any losers; but that, when we shall have done the will of God, and have seen his goodness here below, an abundant entrance will, in due time, be administered to us into his everlasting kingdom and glory.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE

CHANGE WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE CHARACTER OF THE
APOSTLES AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS. iv. 13:

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

IN the preceding *Discourse*, we considered the very remarkable change in the views and character of the twelve original apostles in general, and especially of those whose epistles furnish the proper evidence of it, viz. those of *Peter, James, John, and Jude*. We have seen that from being men of worldly ambition, expecting honours and rewards, under the *Messiah*, in this world, they suddenly abandoned every prospect of the kind, looking to nothing but a reward in heaven; and that, in the firm belief and expectation of *this*, they bore themselves, and exhorted others to bear all

the sufferings to which, for the profession of Christianity, they could be exposed.

The clearness and energy with which they express themselves on this subject, is most interesting and animating, and deserves as much attention in our days of *peace* as in theirs of *persecution*. For if their situation required motives to patience and fortitude, ours requires constant admonition, lest the cares of this world should wholly exclude, as they naturally tend to do, all consideration of another. I shall, therefore, proceed to give as particular an account of the sentiments and exhortations of the apostle *Paul*, on this subject, as I did of those of the other apostles.

The change in the conduct, though not perhaps in the character of *Paul*, was as great and as sudden as that in the other apostles. Since, from being a most violent persecutor of Christianity, he not only became a Christian himself, but a most active and successful propagator of Christianity, especially in countries distant from *Judea*; and he seems to have gone through more hardships, and to have suffered more persecution of various kinds, on that account, during the course of a long life, than any other of the apostles; and at last, according to ecclesiastical history, he suffered martyrdom at *Rome*.

Of the worldly ambition of *Paul*, we have no other evidence than the indirect one which arises from his entering into the views of the leading men of his nation, and being the most active instrument they could employ; from which he would, no doubt, expect such rewards as men in power usually bestow; though, at the same time, his chief motive might be a genuine zeal for his religion, of the divine authority of which he entertained no doubt, and to which he thought the principles of Christianity were hostile. He therefore believed it to be a duty which he owed to God and his religion, as well as to his earthly superiors, to do every thing in his power to suppress it. In other respects, his general moral character was as unimpeachable as that of the other apostles. They were alike men of piety, integrity, and sobriety, though misled by the prejudices of their countrymen, who all expected a temporal prince in their *Messiah*, and, therefore, looked for such honours and emoluments as temporal princes have it in their power to bestow.

Thinking, as I have observed, that we in this age stand in as much need of admonition and exhortation concerning our interest in a future world as the primitive Christians, I shall lay before you what the apostle *Paul* advanced on this

subject, and we shall see it to be no less explicit and animating, and furnishing more information with respect to it, than we find in the writings of the other apostles. In zeal and courage Paul yielded to no man; he derived his knowledge from the same source, viz. from Jesus in person, and his writings tend in an eminent degree to inspire the sentiments which he entertained himself. As the passages in the writings of the apostle relating to a future state are numerous, I shall recite them in the order of time in which they were written, beginning with the epistles to the *Thessalonians*, which were the first.

In *Thessalonica*, Paul preached but a short time, probably not more than three weeks; (*Acts* xvii. 1—10;) and so ill was he received there by the unbelieving Jews, who represented him and his companions as men who “turned the world upside down,” [*ver.* 6,] that he was persuaded to leave the place by night. The shortness of the time, therefore, would not admit of the converts there being fully instructed in all the principles of the new religion; and happily for us they had so far misunderstood what he had taught them concerning the resurrection, that he found it necessary to explain himself further on the subject, in an epistle which he wrote to them as soon as he reached *Athens*;* since by this means we are acquainted with some circumstances concerning it which we could not learn from any other of the books of scripture.

It was a custom with the *Heathens* to make loud lamentations over their dead, which, if they had any value for them while they lived, was natural, as they had no expectation of seeing them any more. This custom *Paul* thought unbecoming Christians, and therefore he says, (*1 Thess.* iv. 13—18,) “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them *that sleep*, that ye sorrow not even as others *who* have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also *who* sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we *who* are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent” (or rather shall not have any advantage over) “them *who* are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we *who* are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet

* Rather *Corinth*. See Vol. XIV. pp. 6, 7.

the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”*

This was, indeed, a source of consolation abundantly sufficient for the purpose, and peculiar to them as Christians; so that they had no occasion to lament the death of their Christian friends as the Heathens did theirs, since they might depend upon seeing them again after the resurrection, and in circumstances far more advantageous than any they had known here.

It appearing that these Christians at *Thessalonica* were still under some misapprehension about the doctrine of the resurrection, and especially about the *time* of it, conceiving it to be much nearer than it was, the apostle saw reason to address to them another epistle, not long after writing the first; and to correct the mistake they were under, he says, (2 *Thess.* ii. 1—3,) “now we beseech you, brethren, by† the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled—as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, *unless there be* a falling away first.” He then proceeds to point out to them an *antichristian* power‡ that was to arise in the church before the coming of Christ, from which they might gather that this great event could not be so near as they had imagined.

As this Christian church at *Thessalonica* was soon exposed to much persecution, the apostle encourages the members of it to bear their sufferings with patience and fortitude, from the consideration of the abundant recompence that would be made to them at the coming of Christ, which would be as dreadful to their enemies as it would be joyful to them.

“We are bound” he says, [2 *Thess.* i. 3—10,] “to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you, in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer. Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that

* See *supra*, p. 102.

† Concerning. See Vol. XIV. p. 28.

‡ See, on *ver.* 3, Vol. XIV. p. 28.

trouble you ; and to you who are troubled, rest with us ; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ : who shall be punished with everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

With great reason did the apostle exhort these Christians, (1 *Thess.* iii. 3, 4,) not to "be moved by *their* afflictions. Yourselves," says he, "know that we are appointed thereunto.† For, verily, when we were with you, we told you before, that we should suffer tribulation : even as it came to pass, and ye know."

If it was happy for us that the *Thessalonian* Christians mistook the meaning of the apostle with respect to the resurrection, it is more so that those at *Corinth* perverted it by a false philosophy ; because we derive more advantage from the conceit of the latter, than from the ignorance of the former, as it gave occasion to the apostle to explain himself still more fully on the subject in his epistle to them : for in this he leaves little that we could reasonably wish to know concerning it.

The Christians at *Corinth*, misled by the principles of the *Greek* philosophy, were disposed to treat the doctrine of a resurrection with contempt, as a most improbable thing, as it also appeared to the *Gnostic* Christians, and imagined that the apostle in announcing it must have had some other than a literal meaning. They held *matter*, and the *body* which is composed of it, in great contempt, and thought it a happy circumstance for the immaterial soul to be delivered from it by death, so far were they from wishing for a reunion with it at the resurrection. But the apostle, who, with the Jews, expected no future life but in the supposition of a proper resurrection, paid no attention to this *Grecian* philosophy ; and therefore he considered the disbelief of the resurrection to be the same thing with the disbelief of a future state altogether ; saying, (1 *Cor.* xv. 17,) "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins."‡ For he justly observed, that, if there be no general resurrection, there are no particular ones, not even that of Christ, whereas there was the most direct and abundant evidence of the reality of his resurrection, which is the assurance of ours.

* See, on ver. 9, Vol. XIV. pp. 25, 26.

† See, on ver. 3, *ibid.* pp. 12, 13.

‡ See Vol. XIV. p. 111.

On this account he particularly enumerates most of the appearances of Jesus after he was raised from the dead, and especially his appearing to more than *five hundred* of his disciples at one time, [ver. 6,] most of whom were then living, and could attest it. But the resurrection of Jesus is a pledge of ours. Consequently, the apostle calls him (ver. 20) "the first-fruits of them that *sleep*;"* the great *harvest*, to which he alludes by the mention of the *first-fruits*, being the resurrection of all his followers. It has pleased God, he observes, [vers. 21, 22,] that as "by man came death, so by man *comes* also the resurrection of the dead," and that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."† And as all power is to be put into the hands of Christ, and all his enemies are to be subdued by him, the last of them is death.

After this he proceeds to answer several objections that were made to the doctrine of the resurrection, especially with respect to the kind of body with which men will rise; and he observes that, as every kind of corn that men sow and reap is renewed after being buried in the ground, it will be the same with men, but with this advantage, that our future bodies will not be like the present ones, liable to corruption, disease, and death; for that, with respect to it, they may be called spiritual, like the glorified body of Jesus.

The same advantageous change he observes will take place in those who shall be alive at the coming of Christ. [Vers. 51—53]: "We shall all not sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." After this, in the language of triumph, he adds, [vers. 55, 57,] referring to a passage in *Isaiah*,‡ "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—Thanks be to God *who* giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

On this glorious doctrine he immediately grounds this natural exhortation: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour *shall not be* in vain in the Lord."§ Indeed there cannot be any more

* See Vol. XIV. p. 112.

† See *ibid.*

‡ Ch. xxv. 8. See Vol. XII. p. 182; Vol. XIV., on 1 Cor. xv. 52, p. 119.

§ See, on ver. 58, Vol. XIV. p. 119.

powerful motive to the diligent practice of our duty, and a steady perseverance in it.

This was the great encouragement and support to *Paul* himself under all the trials that he underwent in the propagation of the gospel, as we see in this epistle. "If" he says, (*ver.* 32,) "after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, *what advantage have we*, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."*

In his *second* epistle he has recourse to the same animating prospect as that which supported him under all his tribulations. "We are troubled on every side," he says, (*2 Cor.* iv. 8—11,) "yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we *who* live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. [*Ver.* 16—18; *Ch.* v. 1]: "For which cause we faint not; but though our *outer* man perish, yet the *inner* man† is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal.‡ For we know that if our earthly house of this our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."§

There is a peculiar energy in all the epistles that *Paul* wrote from *Rome*, where he was two years a prisoner, expecting his condemnation or acquittal at the tribunal of the emperor, to whom he had appealed from his prejudiced judges in *Judea*. Then, too, he was far advanced in life, and sensible that his continuance in it could not be long. In these circumstances his epistles are like the dying advices of an affectionate parent, urging upon his children such considerations as he then felt would be of the most importance to them. And a view to a future state of rest and reward would naturally be uppermost in the mind of one who had laboured and suffered, so much as he had done, in the cause of Christianity. Accordingly, we find that a view of

* See *supra*, p. 183; Vol. XIV. pp. 114, 115.

† See *ibid.*

‡ See *ibid.*

† See *ibid.* p. 166.

this was constantly upon his mind, and that he was upon every occasion directing the views of his fellow-christians to it.

In the Christians at *Philippi*, Paul had found his most generous friends, who, it appears, had been more particularly attentive to him than those in other places. The *Philippians*, as well as himself, had been exposed to peculiar hardships, from their first reception of the gospel. But how light did he make of all his sufferings, thereby intimating that they ought to make as little account of theirs in the same cause, when he says, (*Phil.* iii. 8, 10, 11,) “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung that I may win Christ;*—that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”† *Vers.* 20, 21: “Our conversation‡ is in heaven; from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorified body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

We have no account of *Paul* ever preaching at *Colosse*, but by some means or other the gospel had been preached and received there, as indeed it soon was in all the cities of *Asia Minor*. To these Christians the apostle now writes from *Rome*, and in his epistle he does not neglect to remind them of their great interest in a future state, as a recompence for all their good deeds and sufferings in this. *Col.* i. 3—5: “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,§ praying always for you, since we heard|| of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have for all the saints; for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.”

Timothy was a favourite disciple and fellow-labourer with this apostle, who, after travelling with him, as an assistant and an evangelist, resided at *Ephesus*, a city of the greatest note in *Asia Minor*, and the metropolis of *Asia Proper*. This, therefore, was a station of peculiar importance; and accordingly the apostle, in the epistle which he wrote to him from

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 316, 317.

† *Citizenship.* See *ibid.* p. 319.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 324.

† See *ibid.* p. 317.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 323, 324.

Rome, which is the second, (for the first epistle to him was written long before, when *Paul* was at *Corinth*),* takes great pains to encourage and animate him, urging more especially the consideration of their future glorious prospects. "Be not thou, therefore," says he, (2 *Tim.* i. 8—10,) "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.† But be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God, who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,‡ but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."§

As a farther encouragement to him, he expresses his own satisfaction in the near view of his death. "I suffer," he says, (ii. 9—12,) "as an evil-doer—but the word of God is not bound" (as he then was). "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. *This* is a faithful saying, *that*, if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he also will deny us."||

In this near view of death he rejoices in the prospect of it, as the termination of all those labours which would entitle him to a glorious recompence. 2 *Tim.* iv. 6—8: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought *the* good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing."¶

From these weighty considerations he gives *Timothy* the most solemn charge to attend to his duty as an evangelist, with a view to this great reward. "I charge thee before God, (2 *Tim.* iv. 1,) and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom. Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."***

* See Vol. XIV. p. 122.

† "The testimony concerning our Lord, or of me, a prisoner because of him." *Newcome in Impr. Vers.* See Vol. XIV. p. 291.

‡ "Before the ancient dispensations." *Newcome in Impr. Vers.* See Vol. XIV. pp. 291, 292.

§ See *ibid.* p. 292.

|| See *ibid.* p. 294.

¶ See *supra*, p. 443.

*** See Vol. XIV. p. 302.

Titus was another disciple and fellow-labourer with *Paul*, and was by him stationed in the isle of *Crete*. Him likewise, he earnestly exhorts to diligence, reminding him, as he had done *Timothy*, of the "hope of eternal life, which" he says, (*Titus* i. 2,) "God, *who* cannot lie, promised before the world began."* ii. 11—14: "The grace of God—hath appeared to all men; † teaching us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world: looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ‡ who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."§

The *Jewish* or *Hebrew* Christians were from the first exposed to grievous persecution from their bigotted countrymen, and a great proportion of them appear to have been in low and distressed circumstances, so as to stand in need of the benefaction of the more wealthy *Gentile* converts. To these the apostle holds out the most comfortable prospects in futurity. "Here," he says, (*Heb.* xiii. 14,) "we have no continuing city, || but we seek one to come." And again, (xii. 28,) "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, ¶ whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

We see in the language of the apostles, and in their sentiments and conduct which corresponded with it, the infinite advantage that Christians, and even unlearned Christians, had over the most enlightened of the Heathens, with respect to the troubles of life and the fear of death, in consequence of the firm belief of the former in the great doctrine of a future state, which was not only to be the termination of all their sufferings, but, under the righteous moral government of God, a certain means of obtaining an abundant recompence for all their sufferings in the cause of virtue here, whereas the Heathens had little knowledge of any moral government of God, or of a providence here, and no knowledge at all, that could be of any practical use, of a future state. To them all beyond the grave was abso-

* "Before the ancient dispensations." *Newcome in Impr. Vers.* See *supra*, p. 464; Vol. XIV. p. 145, Note †.

† "The favour of God hath appeared, which bringeth salvation to all men." *Newcome in Impr. Vers.* See Vol. XIV. p. 148, Note †.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 149.

§ See *ibid.*

|| See *Le Clerc*; Vol. XIV. p. 385, Note †.

¶ "Let us hold fast the blessing." *Newcome in Impr. Vers.* See Vol. XIV. p. 84, Note †.

lute darkness, but to Christians it is the most resplendent light.

The Christian sees the hand of God, of his God and Father, in every thing that befalls him here; and he expects a greater display of his perfections, and more evident and uninterrupted marks of his favour hereafter. These views enable him to consider all the troubles of life as a part of that excellent and benevolent discipline which is to prepare him for future happiness, a discipline which he is taught to believe as necessary to him, as the controul and discipline of a child is to his acquiring the proper sentiments and conduct of a man; qualifying him to be happy in himself, and disposed to make others so; which without this controul and discipline in the time of childhood and youth, it was impossible that he should be. And the near approach of death, which at the best cannot but afford a gloomy prospect to a Heathen and an unbeliever, is consequently regarded by him not as an object of alarm or despondence, but a source of joy and triumph; so that when he leaves the world, which he believes to be at the call and appointment of Him that made him, and sent him into it, he can, with the apostle, sing the triumphant song, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—Thanks be to God *who* giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The difference between the moral writings of the Heathens, and those of the apostles, to the advantage of the latter, cannot but appear upon the slightest attention; as these, besides being superior in point of clearness, have, from the fulness of their persuasion on the subject, which the Heathens had not, infinitely more of animation; so that the perusal of their writings cannot fail to excite the same sentiments in others.

As I have purposely confined myself to the subject of courage and perseverance, in bearing sufferings of every kind, and even persecution unto death, from the prospect of a future glorious reward which was wholly unknown to the Heathens, I shall now recite a few passages from the epistles of *Paul*, in which mention is made of the sufferings to which he was exposed, and of his magnanimity in bearing them, without any immediate view to a future reward, though no doubt it was constantly on his mind.

At *Corinth*, the Christians seem to have been so numerous and respectable, in the time of the apostle, or their fellow-citizens so much more civilized than those of many other

places, that they were less exposed to persecution than the Christians in other places; and they had among them some eloquent declaimers, who seem to have derived pecuniary emolument from their harangues. The apostle, therefore, represents their situation as enviable with respect to that of other churches, and on this account he seems to have chosen to describe his own situation by way of contrast with theirs. "Now," says he, (1 *Cor.* iv. 8,) "ye are rich; ye have reigned as kings without us; and I would to God, ye did reign; that we also might reign with you." And he immediately adds (*vers.* 9, 11—13) the following affecting account of his own situation: "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death:* for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.—Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat. We are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."†

This was in his *first* epistle to this church. In the *second*, which was written not long after it, he still reminds them of his sufferings, to which it is probable they had not been sufficiently attentive. 2 *Cor.* i. 8—10: "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God *who* raiseth the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." 2 *Cor.* vi. 4, 5, 8—10: "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;—by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."‡

As a contrast of his situation with that of the eloquent speakers in this church of *Corinth*, who seem to have been much at their ease, he gives the following affecting account of his labours and sufferings: 2 *Cor.* xi. 23—33: "Are

* See Vol. XIV. p. 68.

† See *ibid.* pp. 68, 69.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 172.

they ministers of Christ?—I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen—in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.* The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who* is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king, kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me; and through a window, in a basket, I was let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.”†

In his epistle from *Rome*, written in the near prospect of death, after enduring, as we have seen, such a series of hardships as few men have ever gone through, he thought proper to remind the churches to which he wrote of what he had suffered, that they might not be surprised or discouraged, if they met with no better treatment in this world than he had met with.

To the *Ephesians* he says, (*Ch.* iii. 13,) “Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory;” intimating that so far from being discouraged, or ashamed, they ought to be proud of these proofs of his affection for them, and of his zeal in the common cause.

To the *Colossians* he says, to the same purpose, (*Ch.* i. 24,) I “rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind, of the afflictions of Christ,‡ in my flesh, for his body’s sake, which is the church.” As if a certain portion of suffering had been necessary to establish Christianity, and as if that of Christ had not been sufficient, he took the remainder upon himself. The same idea occurs, though not so distinctly, in his epistle to the *Galatians*, written long before this. *Ch.* ii. 20: “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in

* See *supra*, pp. 442, 443.

† See Vol. XIV. p. 187.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 328.

me." Wherefore, (vi. 17,) "let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks* of the Lord Jesus."

The Christians at *Philippi* had suffered much. Writing to them from *Rome*, he expresses the greatest indifference and contempt of all that could befall him. "In nothing," he says, (*Phil.* i. 20,) "shall I be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. I have learned," he says, (iv. 11—13,) "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and—how to abound. Every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ *who* strengtheneth me."†

The general sentiment of the duty of patience and fortitude under the evils of life may, no doubt, be found in the writings of *Marcus Antoninus*, *Seneca*, and other *Heathens*; but the feelings they convey are very different; quite feeble and inefficacious. The *Heathens* could not have the *motives* to patience and fortitude. Those of Christians are infinitely more efficacious, and far more *natural*, as they are taught to look beyond them, to objects which in similar cases do not fail to enable men to bear hardships of any kinds, viz. to a certain advantage accruing from them, and to which they are necessary. If the Christian suffers here, especially in the cause of virtue and truth, he is taught to expect a certain recompence in a future state. Compared with this, the patience and fortitude of *Heathens*, especially in the near view of death, cannot be much more than mere obstinacy, arising from the consideration of the necessity of bearing what they cannot avoid; and therefore of the folly of complaining where it cannot answer any good end.

Let the writings of the *Stoics* on this subject be compared with those of the apostles, and the difference must be striking. In the sufferings of Christians we see there is a source of joy. *Paul* speaks of *rejoicing in tribulation*,‡ but for this the *Stoic* could not have any motive. The apostles did not deny that painful sufferings were evils. They acknowledge that they were not in themselves "joyous, but grievous;" [*Heb.* xii. 11;] but they worked out for them "a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory." [*2 Cor.* iv. 17.] According to the apostles, [*1 Pet.* i. 6,]

* See Vol. XIV. p. 55, Note*.

† See *ibid.* p. 321.

‡ "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation." *Rom.* xii. 12.

it is only *for a time*, and “if need be,” that we are to be *in sorrow through divers trials*, and to the end of this time they were well able to look; and, like their Master, for *the joy that was set before them*,* they endured every affliction, and even the pains of death itself.

Let us now hear *Marcus Antoninus*, on the subject of the fear of death, to which he frequently adverts in his *Meditations*, and from which we may infer that it was much upon his mind. After enumerating the duties of life, which he says, “every man is under obligation to discharge,” he says, (B. ii. S. xvii.) “he must expect death with a benevolent and calm mind, as a dissolution of those elements of which every animal consists. And if nothing uncommon happen to these elements, and they be only changed, as all elements continually are, into others, why should we dread the event, or be disturbed at that change and dissolution which is the lot of all?† For it is according to nature, and nothing that is natural is an evil.”

How poor is the consolation which this language holds out compared with that of the apostles, which has now been recited! His reasoning about the indifference with which we should regard the duration of life is unsatisfactory; and indeed manifestly absurd, if life be of any value. “If any of the Gods,” he says, (B. iv. S. xlvi.) “should tell you that you should die either to-morrow or the day following, you would not be disturbed at it; unless you were of a very cowardly and abject disposition. The difference between to-morrow and the day following is indeed a trifle; but for the same reason you should not make any account of the difference if it should be either to-morrow, or a thousand years hence.”‡ I doubt not, however, but that if the emperor himself had had the choice of dying either after one more day of life, or of living, I do not say, a thousand years, but to the usual time of human life, he would not have hesitated to shew, by his actual choice of the latter, that he thought it was not a matter of so much indifference as in his writings he represents it.

How thankful, then, should we be for the gospel, which gives us such an unspeakable advantage over the most enlightened of the Heathens with respect to what must interest all men the most, the troubles of life, and the fear of death!

* See, on *Heb. xii. 2*, Vol. XIV. p. 381, Note ¶.

† “Why should one suspect any harm in the changes and dissolution of them all?” *Glasgow*, 1742, p. 74.

‡ “Whether you are to die, in extreme old age, or to-morrow.” *Ibid.* p. 108.

Under these the Heathens could at the best only *acquiesce*, as in things that were unavoidable; and being, as *Antoninus* says, *agreeable to nature*, must be the best with respect to the whole system; but not for them in particular. They had nothing to look to beyond the business and the troubles of this life, and no hope at all after death. And their arguments for patiently acquiescing under the evils of life, and in the view of death, would never have any weight with the bulk of mankind, and whatever they might pretend, could only be affected, by the philosophers themselves. Whatever they might teach, or write, they must have *felt* like other men in the same circumstances, having no more expectation of surviving death, or ever seeing any better state of things, than other men.

Being, then, through the goodness of God, possessed of this superior knowledge, this *treasure* so long hidden from the greatest part of the world, this *pearl of great price*, let us value it in proportion to its real worth, converting this *knowledge* into useful *feelings* and *practice*, by living agreeably to the light with which we are favoured. Otherwise, it would have been better for us to have continued ignorant *Heathens*, as we should then have had less to answer for; and woe will be to those who, when this "light is come into the world," [*John* iii. 19,] shew by their conduct that they "love darkness *better* than light, because their deeds are evil." To our Christian knowledge, let us, with the apostle, add all the proper virtues of the Christian life. These exceeding great and precious promises are given to us, that, as the apostle *Peter* says, we may thereby become "partakers of a divine nature,* having escaped the corruption that is in the world. Giving all diligence," as he exhorts, let us "add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, *universal* charity.† If these things," as he says, [*2 Pet.* i. 8,] "be in us, and abound," we shall not be "unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us, then, my Christian brethren, "give diligence to make *our* calling and election sure:‡ for," as the same apostle adds, [*vers.* 10, 11,] "if we do these things, we shall never fall; for so an entrance *will* be administered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

* See, on *2 Pet.* i. 4, Vol. XIV. p. 414.

† See, on *vers.* 5—7, *ibid.*

‡ See *supra*, p. 451, Note **.

Single Discourses.

UNITARIANISM EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED,

IN A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN

THE CHURCH OF THE UNIVERSALISTS,

AT PHILADELPHIA, 1796.

“ That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” JOHN xvii. 3.

“ To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things.” 1 COR. viii. 6.

“ By evil report, and good report ; as deceivers, and yet true.” 2 COR. vi. 8.

[Philadelphia, 1796.]

P R E F A C E.

THE former *Discourses** I have printed separately, that those persons who wish to peruse them, may have an opportunity of doing it without having any thing that would be offensive to them obtruded upon them at the same time. Except what I have advanced concerning the doctrine of a soul, † those *Discourses* contain nothing that can give offence to any Christians, let their peculiar opinions be what they will ; and if I have not been misinformed, even what I observed on that subject did not prove to be so offensive as

* *Supra*, pp. 14—194. The conclusion of the last *Discourse* on the *Evidences*, was in 1796, prefixed to this *Preface*. See *supra*, p. 195.

† See *supra*, pp. 102—106.

I had apprehended. Indeed, the firm belief of the doctrine of a *resurrection* must, with the truly considerate, make any difference of opinion which can only affect the doctrine of an *intermediate state*, of little consequence.

In general, *Unitarians* have a particular claim to the candour of their fellow-christians, as their devotional services are such as any other Christians may join in. But it necessarily happens that they cannot conscientiously join in the devotion of others, who, believing both *Jesus Christ* and the *Holy Spirit* to be, each of them, possessed of all divine attributes, as well as the *Father*, make them (as, to be consistent with themselves, they ought to do) equally the objects of their worship. This, Unitarians necessarily consider as *idolatry*, as much as the worship of the *Virgin Mary*, or any other saints in the *Popish* calendar. In consequence of this, Unitarians are often much embarrassed, and when they are few in number, their case is deserving particular consideration.

I shall probably be asked, what is to be done by conscientious *Unitarians*, who, as such, cannot join in *Trinitarian* worship; but who, as Christians, would not *forsake the assembling themselves together* for the purpose of public worship, who are yet without a regular or learned minister, and have not the means of procuring one? I answer, the same that the primitive Christians did when they were in the same situation. They formed themselves into societies for prayer, reading the Scriptures, and mutual exhortation, and with far less advantage than Unitarians are now possessed of.

It is, in reality, nothing else than *superstition* that has made *regular ministers*, as they are called, so necessary as they are now become; there being nothing that is done by them that may not be done, and with as much effect, without them. It will at this day be readily admitted, that there are no peculiar powers conferred by *ordination*, or any peculiar sanctity in the character of *ministers*. Christian ministers become so by the choice of the *people*, to whom they officiate, and, like other *servants*, they cease to be ministers, when *they* think proper to dismiss them. And, without the assistance of any person of learning and ability to compose sermons or prayers, they will find helps for this purpose abundantly sufficient for the occasions of any society whatever; and superior to any that myself, or any other person, could undertake to supply them with. The best that I could compose for the use of Unitarian congregations are

already before the public,* and there are various excellent *liturgies* for those who prefer that mode of worship.

My advice, therefore, would be that, for the present, the *Unitarians* in this city should form themselves into societies, though in small numbers.† Let a few persons, who, as in primitive times, may be called *elders*, be chosen to direct their affairs; let them meet every Lord's-day for public worship, when any compositions approved by the society may be read, and baptism and the Lord's supper administered.

Hereafter these societies may be united under a regular minister, which will, no doubt, be more respectable, and more advantageous to the common cause; when a proper place of worship may be provided for them. But by no means let the important object of *public worship*, and the holding up to the view of the world, *Christian* and *Unitarian* principles, be abandoned, or long suspended, for want of such a convenience.

The opinion and practice of individuals in private life have little effect for want of *notoriety*; but a *church*, and a place of public worship, known to all, and open to all who choose to attend it, is like a *city that is set on a hill*, that *cannot be hid*. By joining such churches, or assemblies, we likewise make that *open profession* of our principles, which the gospel requires of us. Let those, then, who have a just zeal for their *Christian* and *Unitarian* principles, confer together, and it may please God that a small beginning may lead to a great and valuable end. They will, at least, have done their duty, and may with more satisfaction acquiesce in whatever the sovereign and wise Disposer of all things shall determine, with respect to the final issue.

I shall take this opportunity of observing, that the superstitious idea of the necessity of *ordained* ministers to *Christian* congregations is of great prejudice, in those parts of this country, in which, at the first forming of a settlement, there are not families enow to maintain a minister. For, without stated meetings for reading the Scriptures and public worship, there is great danger that not only all sense, but that all knowledge of religion will in time be obliterated. But this may easily be prevented by the method that is here proposed.

* In "Forms of Prayer, and other Offices, for the use of Unitarian Societies," 1783.

† This advice was speedily acted upon. See the following *Address*.

DISCOURSE.

ACTS xvii. 18—20 :

Some said, What will this babbler say?—He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears. We would know, therefore, what these things mean.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

MY situation in this country, excluded on my arrival in it from almost every pulpit,* as if I were suspected of holding, and of being disposed to propagate some strange and mischievous doctrine,† so strongly brought to my mind the similar situation of *Paul*, at *Athens*, that I intended, if ever I should have an opportunity of addressing myself to any of its inhabitants, (an opportunity which the liberality of this congregation has now given me, and which would have been given me at that time, if this place had then been ready,) to address them from that part of the gospel history which I have now recited. The case being new to me, I could not help suspecting, either that I was not in a *Christian* country, or that I was not considered as a *Christian* in it. For, let Christians differ ever so much from one another, they have many things, and those of the greatest importance, in common, and on these common topics it is certainly very possible for any Christian minister to address a Christian audience, to their mutual edification.

Not doubting, however, but that I was among *Christians*, for I attended public worship in various places, and found it to be Christian, I necessarily concluded, that I was not myself considered as a Christian, or one that was deserving of the name; and as I flattered myself that this idea of me arose from some misconception of my principles, I thought it might not be improper to take some opportunity to give

* I was, however, desired to preach at Princeton. (P.)

† See *supra*, p. 196, Note.

an explicit account of them. I therefore now consider myself as in the situation of *Paul* before the council of *Areopagus*, at *Athens*, called upon to give an account of the *strange doctrines* that I hold.

To the people of this country I must suppose that, like *Paul*, I have been represented either as a *setter forth of strange gods*, or some strange and dangerous doctrine concerning God. For nothing short of this can account for the treatment that I met with. But, in reality, like *Paul*, I only preach *Jesus and the resurrection*; this, rightly explained, having ever been the sum and substance of all my preaching, maintaining the divine mission of *Jesus*, or his authority from God to instruct mankind, and especially to teach, and in his own person exemplify, the great doctrine of a resurrection from the dead, and a state of righteous retribution after death. Of this I hope I have given sufficient evidence in the discourses I have already delivered.

What are the great principles of all religion, as far as it can influence *practice*, (in which respect alone it is of any real use and importance to rational beings and members of civil society,) but the doctrines concerning God, his attributes, his providence, and a future state, concerning our duty in this life, and our expectations in another? And why is revelation of more advantage than mere natural religion, as I have already shewn that it is, and, therefore, a blessing to mankind, but as it teaches the doctrines concerning these interesting subjects in a clearer manner, and with more satisfactory evidence?

Whatever *nature* may be supposed to have taught, it is a fact, that, without *revelation*, mankind were universally idolaters, worshipping a multiplicity of gods, and by means of rites highly injurious to morality, some of them abominably impure, and others shockingly cruel; and their notions concerning a future state were never such as could be of much use to the cause of virtue. With this light of nature they were likewise miserably bewildered, and misled by various superstitious practices, such as those of *divination*, *magic and necromancy*,* arising from their ignorance of the laws of nature, and of the true causes of events.

Infinitely are mankind indebted to revelation for delivering them from their servile bondage to these superstitions, informing them concerning the Unity of the Divine nature, the creation of the universe by one intelligent Being, and

* See *supra*, pp. 56—60.

his constant providence, extending to all events, together with his fixed purpose to reward virtue and punish vice, if not in this world, surely in another. But especially are we indebted to Christianity as the means of *bringing life and immortality to light*; teaching us to look above and beyond this world, to consider ourselves as pilgrims and strangers here, and as *citizens of heaven*, where it, therefore, behoves us to have our treasure, our hearts, and our conversation.

When this was done for mankind, what more remained to be done, but to make these great subjects familiar to the mind, by frequent exhibitions and happy illustrations? To illustrate the Scriptures, in which these great and practical truths are conveyed to us; to unfold the various duties of man with respect to God, his neighbour, and himself, (which requires some knowledge of human nature and human life, as well as of the Scriptures,) and to enforce the observance of them by proper motives, is the great business of a Christian minister; and such has been the usual strain of my preaching to the age to which I am now arrived;* and such, I may therefore venture to say, would be the usual strain of my preaching, were I to resume the employment.

At the same time, however, I acknowledge that there are religious truths, though not of primary, yet of secondary, and of considerable importance, on which, for various reasons, I have thought it my duty not to be silent, especially in an age abounding with unbelievers. Christianity, besides being proved to be true, and, indeed, as a necessary step in the proof of its truth, must be shewn to be *rational*, such as men of good sense can receive without abandoning the use of their reason, or making a sacrifice of it to what is called *faith*. The author of our religion required no such sacrifice. He required of his disciples that they should both *hear and understand* (*Mark* vii. 14) what he delivered; which implies that he taught nothing that they were not capable of understanding, and which it was not their duty to endeavour to understand.

But many doctrines have been taught under the name of Christianity, which it is not pretended that men can ever understand. Against all such doctrines, the offspring of ignorance or artifice, it is the duty of every intelligent Christian to enter his protest, as the bane of genuine Christianity, and what is in danger of bringing it into universal discredit.

* Dr. Priestley had just reached his grand climacteric.

They are as a mill-stone about its neck, and unless detached from it, must inevitably sink it.

Permit me, then, thus called upon by the circumstances in which I find myself, to mention with perfect ingenuousness those doctrines which I have seen reason to reject from the creed of Christians, as having been introduced into Christianity from Heathen religions and Heathen philosophy, and which I conceive to be the *tares* which our Lord foretold [*Matt.* xiii. 25] would be sown by an adversary among his good seed. These, however, having been now of long standing, are retained with peculiar obstinacy by the bulk of professing Christians; so that they who reject them, and adhere to what they conceive to be the simple and genuine gospel of Jesus Christ, are treated as enemies of the gospel, and are the objects of general suspicion and alarm. But in the same light appeared *Luther*, *Calvin*, and many others, who, because their sentiments are now generally approved, have obtained the honourable appellation of *Reformers*; and, therefore, this circumstance, which, if what we preach be the truth, will only be temporary, should not discourage *us* any more than it did *them*. It is only *time* that is requisite to establish every reformation. Nothing can be more depended upon, than that, whatever is *true* or *right* will, in due time, prevail and establish itself, notwithstanding all possible opposition.

You may ask, if the doctrines that I allude to do not belong to the gospel, how came they to be considered in that light, and to have kept their place so long in the Christian church? But I may ask, how was *Polytheism* introduced into the world after the institution of a purer religion by *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *Moses*; and how were the errors and abuses of Popery introduced into the pure gospel of Christ? It is part of the unsearchable mystery of Providence to permit the introduction, and even the long continuance of many *evils*, though no doubt for the sake of the *good* that will ultimately be more firmly established by their means. And, in due time, God never fails to raise up men of superior wisdom and spirit to revive lost truth, and to restore his true worship. Thus *Paul* says, (*Acts* xvii. 30,) at the time of Heathen "ignorance, God winked," but then "commanded all men every where to repent." So also at the time of Christian ignorance and darkness, God long winked; but by means of various Reformers he has begun to call on the Christian world to repent of their

manifold corruptions of the holy religion delivered to them by his son Jesus. And permit me to add, he now commands with a voice that will be heard. Reason and Scripture equally enforce the command.

What, then, you ask, is the principal of what I deem to be those corruptions and abuses of the gospel which were left untouched at the period which we call *the Reformation*, but which so greatly disfigure the gospel, and endanger its very existence, by promoting infidelity. I answer, that the first and greatest of these corruptions is the idolatrous *worship of Jesus Christ, as God equal to the Father*. This is a direct violation of the first and greatest of the Ten Commandments, (*Exod. xx. 3.*) "Thou shalt have no other gods *besides me*." Now who was the speaker in this case? Certainly *one person*, whoever he was, and not *two*, or *more*; for then the phrase would have been *besides us*; and, therefore, the admitting of any other person to equal honours with this one great Being, must be *idolatry*. If this one Being was the Father, the maker of all things, as, no doubt, it was, *he* is the sole object of religious worship, and not *Christ*, any more than *Moses*, or any other person or being whatever. If, as some suppose, it was Christ who spake from Mount *Sinai*, we ought not to worship the Father, and in this the *Moravians* are consistent, for they address all their prayers to Christ. The followers of *Swedenborg*, considering Christ as the only one God, reject with indignation the doctrine of a proper Trinity; and their worship is uniformly conducted on that principle.

There is no subject on which the Scriptures are so clear and emphatical as they are on this. The worship of one God, and that one God the maker of all things, styled in the *New Testament*, and by our Saviour himself, *his God and Father*,* (*John xx. 17.*) was the one great object of the whole *Jewish* dispensation. The *Hebrew* nation was chosen and set apart from the rest of the world, on purpose to be the repository of this great truth, while all other nations were sunk into idolatry, and the corrupt practices universally connected with it. The doctrine of the strict Unity of God was considered as the most fundamental principle of all religion, by the whole body of the *Jews*, in our Saviour's time. They were then entirely free from idolatry,† and

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 371, 372.

† See Dr. John Taylor's *Scheme* (Ch. xxxvii. *ad init.*), 1762, p. 368; *Lardner*, VII. p. 213; *Law's Theory*, 1784, p. 99; *Evanson's* "Letter to Bp. Hurd," 1777, pp. 115, 116. *Dodson* finds "great reason for differing in opinion from these learned men." See his *Isaiah*, (ii. 8,) *Notes*, pp. 156—161.

dreaded the worship of any other Being than one ; and by means of prophets, of the Jewish nation, will the worship of the one true God be restored over the whole world.

But as mankind have always shewn a propensity to the worship of a multiplicity of deities, imagining that the powers of one Being were not equal to every thing that required the attention of divinity ; and as the Jews themselves, though taught of God, fell into the idolatrous worship of their neighbours, so the Christians, though they were taught the same doctrine by Christ and the apostles, yet being corrupted by Heathen principles, gradually adopted the worship of many beings, beginning, naturally enough, with Christ, whose person, as thereby less disgraceful to themselves, they wished to magnify. But not stopping there, they proceeded to the worship of the *Virgin Mary*, and of so many other saints and angels, as makes their catalogue of deities, (for such the objects of prayer necessarily are,) as numerous as that of any of the Heathens. This practice had also the same effect with them as with the *Heathens*, in withdrawing their regards from the "one God and Father of all,"* and thus reducing him to a mere cypher in the universe ; for the zealous Catholics hardly ever address any prayer to the *Father*, and indeed not many to *Christ*, but chiefly to the *Virgin Mary*, or some other inferior saint, to whom they particularly devote themselves.

To defend the doctrine of the *Trinity*, on the pretence that *three divine persons* make no more than *one God*, is just as absurd as to say that three human persons may make no more than one man. If each of these persons had only a part of the attributes of divinity, as the *reason*, the *memory*, and the *will*, (to which they are sometimes compared,) constitute the thinking part of man, the three might compose but one God. But while the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Spirit*, separately considered, are each of them maintained to be true and very God, without the least deficiency of any one attribute of divinity, they cannot, in common sense or common arithmetic, make less than three gods.

To defend the doctrine of the *Trinity*, on the literal interpretation of any particular passages of Scripture, is no better than to defend the doctrine of *Transubstantiation* in the same way ; for the sacramental bread, is expressly said to be the *body* of Christ, and the wine, his *blood*. But the understanding of man is, and must be the interpreter of

Scripture ; and, as in other writings, one part must not be construed so as to be inconsistent with another ; and in this respect there is no more difficulty in the interpretation of the Scriptures than of any other writings, if prejudice be out of the question.

When our Saviour said, again and again, (*John* v. 19,) that *of himself he could do nothing*,* but that *the Father within him did the works*, (*John* xiv. 10,)† meaning his miracles ; that his disciples were one with him, as he was one with the Father ; (*John* xvii. 11 ;) that *he did not know the time of the day of judgment, but the Father only* ; (*Mark* xiii. 32 ;) ‡ when, after his resurrection and ascension, he is styled by the apostle *Peter*, evidently speaking of him in the highest terms, (*Acts* ii. 22,) “ a man approved of God, by signs and wonders, which God did by him,” § and *whom God raised from the dead* ; [*ver.* 24 ;] when the apostle Paul so explicitly says, “ To us,” (*1 Cor.* viii. 6 ; *1 Tim.* ii. 5,) “ there is but one God, the Father,—and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ;” || and when all the sacred writers uniformly speak of God and Christ, as distinct persons, and the latter always as subordinate to the former, surely we should not, from any construction of a few passages of Scripture, deduce a doctrine contrary to this, but interpret obscure passages by plainer ones, and the general sense of the whole. But there is no real difficulty in the interpretation of any of those passages of Scripture which have been supposed to favour the doctrine of the Trinity, as I have shewn in various publications, especially one that has been reprinted in this country, entitled “ A familiar Illustration of certain Passages of Scriptures,” ¶ relating to this subject, as well as some others.

In what manner, and by what steps the Christian world, beginning with the worship of God the Father only, came to consider Christ as God, and how they proceeded afterwards to the worship of the *Virgin Mary* and other saints, I have explained at large in my “ History of the Corruptions of Christianity,”** and my “ History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ.” ††

It will be said, there is danger in lessening the personal dignity of Christ, and that if he be not God, he cannot be an all-sufficient Saviour. But is there not danger, on the

* See Vol. XIII. p. 165.

† See Vol. II. p. 397 ; Vol. XIII. p. 298.

‡ See Vol. XIV. pp. 80, 126, 127.

•• See Vol. V. pp. 13—76, 180—214.

† See *ibid.* pp. 314, 315.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 393, 394.

¶ See Vol. II. pp. 449—472.

†† See Vols. VI. VII.

other hand, in taking from the *one God and Father of all*, the honours that are peculiar to *him*, and which he has expressly declared *he will not give to any other*?* Was *Moses* an insufficient saviour or *deliverer*, (for so he is called † with respect to the *Israelites*,) because he was not God? Did not both he and *Jesus* execute the commissions on which they were respectively sent, and thereby fully answer the end of them? It is God alone that, in both the cases, was the proper Saviour. He was the Saviour of the *Israelites* from the *Egyptian* bondage, by the instrumentality of *Moses*, and it is he also who saves us from sin and death by the gospel of *Christ*, which is therefore called [*Titus* ii. 10] the “doctrine of God our Saviour.” Supposing the *Jews*, out of reverence for *Moses*, had paid *him* divine honours, before, or after his death, would they not have been guilty of idolatry, as much as if they had worshipped *Baal*? If, therefore, *Christ* was in himself a man, or any created being whatever, it is no less idolatry and impiety to worship him.

Another doctrine, highly injurious to God, and which cannot have any favourable effect on those who propose to imitate him, and what, in a great measure, flowed from the doctrine of the *Trinity*, is that of *atonement*, which supposes that God cannot forgive sins without *satisfaction* being made to his offended justice, by the death of *Christ*; when the uniform and plain language of Scripture represents him as forgiving sins *freely*, and requiring no satisfaction whatever, besides the repentance and reformation of the sinner.

The first and most solemn declaration of the Divine character to *Moses*, (*Exod.* xxxiv. 6, 7,) is that of “the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering,—forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.” ‡ *David* constantly prays for the pardon of sin, for God’s “mercy’s sake,” (*Ps.* xliv. 26.) and his “name’s sake,” (xxv. 11,) not for the sake of *Christ*, or the *Messiah*; and our Saviour, in his various discourses and parables, never represents God in any other light. What satisfaction did the father of the *prodigal son* require, but his return to his duty? § Did he not, even when his son

* See *Isaiah* xlii. 8, xlvi. 11.

† By *Stephen*. See *Acts* vii. 35.

‡ “From whence,” says *Penn*, “I shall draw this position, that since God has proclaimed himself a gracious, merciful, and forgiving God, it is not inconsistent with his nature to remit without any other consideration than his own love; otherwise *He* could not justly come under the imputation of so many gracious attributes, with whom it is impossible to pardon, and necessary to exact the payment of the utmost farthing.” *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, 1812, p. 18. See *Matthew’s Recorder*, 1803, II. p. 72.

§ See, on *Luke* xv. 11, 22, Vol. XIII. pp. 246, 247.

“ was yet a great way off,” *run* to meet him, *fall upon his neck, and kiss him*? [Luke xv. 20.] Did not the master of the servant, (*Matt.* xviii. 24,) who “ owed him ten thousand talents,” forgive him *freely*, (*ver.* 32,) only *because he entreated him*?*

Besides, as the famous Mr. Penn, the founder of this colony, in his excellent treatise, entitled “ The Sandy Foundation Shaken,”† observed, if the justice of *God the Father* required satisfaction, did not that of *God the Son* require an equal one, and what satisfaction was made to *him*? And it is absurd to suppose that he made it to himself, for then God the Father might have done the same. ‡

The original doctrine of *Satisfaction*, after this term began to be considered as something more than a figure of speech, was more rational than that which obtains at present; it being considered that, by means of sin, men were in the power of the devil, from which they were to be delivered or redeemed, God gave to him the price of their redemption, in the death of his Son. This was the doctrine which generally prevailed till the time of the celebrated *Austin*, who also held it. § It was not till after this time that the generality of Christians considered the price of man’s re-

* “ But the same treating his fellow-servant without the least forbearance, the king condemned his unrighteousness, and *delivered him over to the tormentors*. But how had this been a fault in the servant, if his king’s mercy had not been proposed for his example? How most unworthy, therefore, is it of God, and blasphemous, may I justly term it, for any to assert that forgiveness impossible to God, which is not only possible, but enjoined to men!” *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, 1812, p. 21; *Recorder*, II. p. 74. See Vol. XIII. pp. 199, 200.

† “ Or those so generally believed and applauded Doctrines of one God, subsisting in three distinct and separate Persons; the impossibility of God’s pardoning Sinners, without a plenary Satisfaction; the Justification of impure Persons by an imputative Righteousness, refuted, from the Authority of Scripture Testimonies and right Reason, by William Penn, a Builder of that Foundation which cannot be moved.” 1668. *Republished* in his works “ by the Society of Friends,” 1726, 1771, and 1782, in Matthews’s *Recorder*, 1805, II. pp. 56—97, and separately, 1812.

This *Tract* “ soon excited so much attention, that the author was committed to the Tower, by a warrant signed by Lord Arlington, the principal Secretary of State, on account of the ‘ offence it had given to some then at the helm of the Church.’ ” *Editor’s Preface*, 1812, p. v. See *Recorder*, II. p. 98.

‡ Dr. Priestley here, I apprehend, had a reference to the following passage, where Penn inquires, “ Whether, to use the *Satisfactionists*’ own terms, Christ satisfied as God or man, or both.”

“ If Christ pay the debt as God, then the Father and the Spirit being God, they also pay the debt. Since God is to be satisfied, and that Christ is God, he, consequently, is to be satisfied; and who shall satisfy his infinite justice? But if Christ has satisfied God the Father, Christ being also God, it will follow, then, that he has satisfied himself (which cannot be). But since God the Father was once to be satisfied, and that it is impossible he should do it himself, nor yet the Son or Spirit, because the same God; it naturally follows, that the debt remains unpaid, and these Satisfactionists, thus far, are still at a loss.” *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, p. 25; *Recorder*, II. pp. 77, 78.

§ See Vol. V. pp. 134—138.

demption as paid to *God the Father*, by *the Son*.* But the only rational doctrine on the subject is, that Christ died a *sacrifice* only in the figurative sense of the word, as men are said to sacrifice their lives in any cause, in which they expose themselves to certain death.†

By the rules of the gospel we are required to forgive others, as we ourselvss hope to be forgiven; that is, we are to conform to the rule of the Divine conduct, in our behaviour towards our offending brethren. Consequently, the maxims of his conduct are no other than those of ours. But are *we* to require *satisfaction* of an offending brother? By no means. Our Saviour himself says, (*Luke xvii. 3.*) that, "if he repent," though the offence be repeated ever so often, we must "forgive him." Surely, then, this doctrine of *Atonement* implies the greatest reflection on the character and conduct of Almighty God, and sinks it below that of a man.

There are other doctrines which have been engrafted on Christianity, but they are so exceedingly discordant to it, that, though the greatest stress was formerly laid upon them, as much as is now laid on the doctrines of the *Trinity* and *Atonement*, they begin to be discarded by *Protestants*. I mean the doctrines of *Original Sin* and *Predestination*,‡ which imply that man has not naturally the power of doing what God requires of him, which of course represents him as the most unreasonable and unjust of all beings, expecting to *reap where he has not sowed*, [*Matt. xxv. 26.*] and without any regard to character, arbitrarily destining some to everlasting happiness, and others to everlasting destruction, which it never shall be in their power to avoid. The mere mention of such things is enough, one would think, to fill any reasonable beings with horror. Can we wonder that Christianity is rejected, when such doctrines as these are supposed to belong to it?

It is, indeed, high time to *cry aloud and not spare*, when doctrines so absurd as those which I have recited are publicly preached and insisted upon, as essential parts of the Christian religion. There is no saving the tree, without cutting off these vile excrescences. But this being done, the evidences of revealed religion will challenge the closest investigation. It stands upon *a rock*, and *the gates of death shall not prevail against it*. But some would place its

* See Vol. V. pp. 139—143, 145—151.

† See Vol. II. p. 398.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 388—390, 407—409, 440—449; Vol. V. pp. 166—179.

foundation upon *the sand*, and this gave Mr. Penn the hint of calling that excellent tract, in which he refuted those doctrines, "The Sandy Foundation Shaken." Being, however, put into prison for this meritorious work, he acted a part unworthy of Christian firmness, by explaining away his meaning, in another piece entitled, "Innocency with her open Face," in order to obtain his liberty. Let us follow the example of this great man in freely investigating the doctrines of the gospel, and imparting to others whatever light we are able to procure for ourselves; but let us not copy him in his weakness, influenced by the fear of man, in a case which respects God and conscience.*

Think not that, in objecting to the opinions of certain classes of Christians, I divest myself of Christian charity. True charity consists in wishing well to all persons, in doing them every kind office in our power, and thinking as well of them as we can. And certainly the greatest errors in judgment are consistent with the best dispositions, and consequently, with the most perfect acceptableness with God, who looks only to the heart, and to the opportunities which he has afforded to every man for the discovery of truth.

A love of truth is an essential part of a good moral character, and, consequently, an earnest endeavour to divest ourselves of every prejudice in our search after it. They, therefore, who are either negligent in their own inquiries, or who in any degree persecute others, on account of their difference of opinion, are highly censurable. But such is the force of prejudice, especially in favour of opinions in the belief of which men have been educated, and which they have long held sacred, that the greatest allowance is to be made even for their undue attachment to them, and for every natural consequence of that attachment. At the same time, therefore, that I regard with horror such doctrines as those of *Transubstantiation*, the *Trinity*, *Atonement*, and other corruptions of Christianity, (the purity of which it must be allowed we all ought to have at heart,) I regard the *men* who hold them with the greatest respect, and I entertain for them the greatest good-will. Though they

* It has been questioned whether the second Treatise "were intended as an apology" for the first; "it was not so considered by Penn's contemporaries." See *Foster's Narrative*, 1813, p. 13; *Appeal*, 1815, p. 58, *Note*; *Recorder*, II. pp. 98—101.

Penn, writing to a friend, in 1688, attributed his being "released out of the Tower," in 1669, "where he had been imprisoned seven months, to the "particular favour" of King James, when Duke of York. See *Pref. to Sandy Foundation Shaken*, 1812, p. viii.

differ so much from me, they may be greatly my superiors both in understanding and in piety. This, however, is no reason why I may not believe that, in consequence of my own researches after truth, I see the errors-into which they have been led. As the best of men have their failings, which others ought to avoid, the wisest of men may have their errors, which their inferiors ought not to copy.

Christians may respect and love one another though they cannot worship together. For certainly no *Unitarian* can conscientiously join in worship with *Trinitarians*; since they have not the same object of worship. A Trinitarian may join in worship with me, because the Being to whom I address myself in prayer he allows to be God, and that I ascribe to him no more than he believes to be his due. But I cannot join in prayer to *Christ*, as *God*, if I do not believe him to be God. On the contrary, zealous as I ought to be for the honour of the one true God, I ought to be filled with horror at the impiety of it. A Trinitarian, however, is not only justified in his adoration of Christ, but under a natural obligation so to do; because, being in his idea, in all respects equal to the Father, he must be entitled to the same adoration with the Father himself, and it is injustice to him to withhold it from him. We are to worship and bow down before the Lord, *our Maker*. If Christ, then be the Lord our Maker, we ought to worship and bow down before *him*.

Unitarians, therefore, ought by all means to have places of worship peculiar to themselves. They ought to come out of a corrupt and idolatrous church, and be separate. Indeed, by this means only will it appear to the world that Christians are not universally idolaters, and that our religion is not that system of absurdity and impiety which unbelievers think themselves authorized to reject without examination. This is a duty which we owe to religion and to mankind, whom we ought to instruct by every means in our power, by example, as well as by precept.

This is the only method of drawing due *attention* to any set of important principles, and of promoting that inquiry, and free discussion, which is favourable to the propagation of truth. For other sects of Christians, having the same zeal for their peculiar principles, will naturally preach and write in defence of them; and the world at large will thereby have an opportunity of judging, by comparing the arguments on both sides, and considering the temper with which they are urged, and which are more just, and more

truly Christian. And happily, in this free country, where the State does not interfere with the matters of Religion, free discussion may be expected to produce its natural effect, and consequently, that whatever shall appear to be true, will finally prevail, and establish itself, notwithstanding all the opposition it may meet with.

May the *God of truth* lead us into all truth.

Having thus given an account of my faith with respect to articles of the greatest secondary importance, I shall take the liberty, (especially as I have been indulged with an opportunity of pleading what I believe to be the cause of truth, in this place,*) to express my concurrence with the minister, and the congregation worshipping here, in their opinion concerning the final happiness of all the human race, a doctrine eminently calculated to promote alike, gratitude to God, and benevolence to man, and consequently, every other virtue; and since this doctrine is perfectly consistent with the belief of the adequate punishment of all sin, it is far from giving any encouragement to sinners.

The doctrine of *eternal torments* is altogether indefensible on any principles of justice or equity; for all the crimes of finite creatures, being of course finite, cannot in equity deserve infinite punishment. The Judge of all the earth, who appeals to men that *all his ways are equal*, [Ezek. xviii. 29,] we may rest assured will do that which is *right*. Nay, *in the midst of judgment he ever remembers mercy*, and "he retaineth not his anger for ever." [Micah vii. 18.]

But I do not lay much stress on particular texts of Scripture in this case, because it does not appear to me to have been the proper object of the mission of Christ, or of any other prophet, to announce this doctrine, nor does it appear that any of them considered the subject in its full extent. But it may be inferred from the general maxims of God's moral government, and from the spirit and tendency of the whole system of revelation. Since all the dead are to be raised, the wicked as well as the righteous, it is highly improbable that this will be merely for the sake of their being punished, and then consigned to annihilation, as if they were incapable of improvement.†

No human beings can be so depraved as that it shall not be in the power of proper discipline to reclaim them, so as to

* "The Universalist Church." See *supra*, p. 472, Note §.

† See Vol. II. p. 64, Note; Vol. XIV. pp. 509, 510.

make them valuable characters. What great things have the excellent regulations of the public prison in this city effected in this respect! * They are regulations worthy to be imitated in all the *United States*, and through the whole world. How often do vices arise from false views of things, occasioned by the circumstances in which men are unavoidably placed, which, therefore, a more favourable situation and better information would easily cure! The natural operation of all punishment here, is the reformation of the offender; and if human nature will continue to be the same thing that it now is, it must have the same operation hereafter, and the *time* that is often the only thing wanting to produce its proper effect at present, will not be wanting then.

Many vicious persons, and especially unbelievers, are men of great natural talents and powers, capable of the happiest exertions, if only well directed; and is their Maker incapable of giving them that due direction? After having made use of them for the wise and benevolent purposes of his providence here, in promoting, as they indirectly do, the virtue and happiness of others, will he cast them away, as of no further use? For, as I have observed, moral as well as natural evils are necessary in this state of trial and discipline. Would not any man be justly censured for destroying any animal that might be rendered useful, merely because he was vicious? Or would any parent abandon a child for any fault that he could be guilty of? It would be said that judicious treatment would cure those vices, whatever they were. And is the Divine Being less skilful, or less benevolent, than man?

Consider, farther, how it is possible for good men, to whom the happiness of heaven is promised, to have any enjoyment of that happiness themselves, if those for whom they cannot but have the strongest affection, especially their children, and other near relations and friends, be, I do not say, consigned to everlasting torments, † but even annihilated, or in any other way only excluded from all possibility of attaining such a state as will make their existence a blessing

* See two remarkable instances of reformation by *prison-discipline*, in Philadelphia, adduced by my friend Mr. Favell, in "A Speech on the Propriety of Revising the Criminal Laws, delivered Dec. 10, 1818, before the Corporation of the City of London," 1819, pp. 38, 39.

† Yet *Calvinism* can steel the mind, and prepare it even for this contemplation. Thus, according to *Jonathan Edwards*, "however the saints in heaven may have loved the damned while here," their *eternal damnation* will serve to increase "a relish of their own enjoyments." See *supra*, p. 355, Note †.

to them. If David lamented as he did, the death of his rebellious son Absalom, what would he have felt in the idea of his utter destruction! A parent myself, allow me to speak to the feelings of others who are also parents. But is not God the true parent of us all? Are not our children as much his, as they are ours? And is an earthly parent, who is deserving of the name, incapable of wholly abandoning any of his children; and will God, "whose tender mercies are over all his works," (*Psalm* cxlv. 9,) and whose love and compassion far exceed ours, abandon any of his? Like a true parent, he will ever correct in *measure*, and with *mercy*.

I shall conclude with a quotation from Dr. Hartley's *Observations on Man*, in which the doctrine of the final happiness of all men is ably defended. It is the *Conclusion* of his great work.

"I have now gone through with my *Observations on the frame, duty, and expectations of man*, finishing them with the doctrine of ultimate, unlimited happiness to all. This doctrine, if it be true, ought at once to dispel all gloominess, anxiety, and sorrow, from our hearts; and raise them to the highest pitch of love, adoration, and gratitude, towards God, our most bountiful Creator, and merciful Father, and the inexhaustible source of all happiness and perfection. Here self-interest, benevolence, and piety, all concur to move and exalt our affections. How happy in himself, how benevolent to others, and how thankful to God, ought that man to be, who believes both himself and others born to infinite expectation! Since God has bid us rejoice, what can make us sorrowful? Since he has created us for happiness, what misery can we fear? If we be really intended for ultimate, unlimited happiness, it is no matter to a truly resigned person, *when*, or *where*, or *how*. Nay, could any of us fully conceive, and be duly influenced by this glorious expectation, this infinite balance in our favour, it would be sufficient to deprive all present evils of their sting and bitterness. It would be a sufficient answer—to all our difficulties and anxieties, from the folly, vice, and misery, which we experience in ourselves, and see in others, to say, that they will all end in unbounded knowledge, virtue, and happiness; and that the progress of every individual, in his passage through an eternal life, is from imperfect to perfect, particular to general, less to greater, finite to infinite, and from the creature to the Creator."

AN

ADDRESS,

TO THE

Unitarian Congregation,*

AT PHILADELPHIA;

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY, MARCH 5th, 1797.

 [Philadelphia, 1797.]

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

I cannot leave this city, as I soon shall, without taking an opportunity of expressing the great satisfaction I have received from your conduct, in standing forth, as you have done, in the cause of important truth, by forming yourselves into a society professedly *Unitarian*, in a part of the world in which no such thing existed before, and this without waiting for the concurrence of the great, the wealthy, or the learned, or even that of any considerable number of persons of any class. Such was the truly glorious conduct of the primitive Christians, who, mindful only of their obligation to *confess their Lord before men*, [*Matt. x. 32; Luke xii. 8,*] nobly disregarded all calumny on account of *singularity* or reputed *heresy*. Though considered as a "sect every where spoken against," [*Acts xxviii. 22,*] and their teachers as men who "turned the world upside down," [*xvii. 6,*] they steadily persevered in their course.

* Mr. Thomas Christie represents this "Unitarian Society" as "having been formed at Philadelphia, on the plan recommended by" Dr. Priestley, in the foregoing *Discourse*. Mr. C. adds, "What a pity that a religious society so formed, and having such an instructor, should have been of short duration! The yellow fever is said to have diminished their number, and scattered them." *Mem. pp. 767, 778.* That fever so "prevailed in Philadelphia," during the year, (1797,) that "the burials in the city and liberties in August, September, and October, were 988." *Amer. Ann. II. p. 406.*

For an account of the revival of the public profession of *Unitarianism* in Philadelphia, in 1807, and its encouraging progress in that city, to which Mr. Christie has been greatly assistant, see *Mon. Repos.* Vol. III. pp. 688—690; VIII. 349, 350; X. 657—659, 764, 765; XII. 448, 444.

The state of the world in those times was such, as, it is now generally acknowledged, required to be *turned upside down*, and such, in a great measure, is its state at present. Idolatry has found its way into the Christian, as it did into the Heathen world. And though the Protestants have purged their temples of many of their idols, they have all retained one object of divine worship, who, if he could himself interfere in the affairs of the world, would reject the impious homage with the greatest indignation.

By this you are aware that I mean the Son and faithful servant of God, whose *meat and drink* was to do his will; [John iv. 34;] who having "finished the work" that was given him to do, [xvii. 4,] is now *ascended* "unto his Father and our Father, and to his God and our God," [Matt. xx. 17,] and to whom "all power is given in heaven and in earth." What was then *given* him, as the reward of his faithful services, he was the last to arrogate, having uniformly declared that he could "do nothing of himself," [John v. 19,] but that *the Father, who was in and with him, did the works* [xiv. 10;] those great and miraculous works which proved his divine mission. The man who used this language could not certainly, at that time, have had any knowledge or suspicion that he would ever be worshipped as *God*, in all respects *equal to the Father*; whose servant he ever esteemed it his greatest honour to be.

From churches so fundamentally corrupt, though nominally Christian, you do well to separate yourselves, and to do it in the most public manner. This it would have been our duty to do, though we should have run the greatest risk in so doing; because the fear of God, and a regard to important truth, should be a principle of action superior to any other. But happily, in this free country, the discharge of this duty is comparatively easy, but therefore of stronger obligation. Here the doctrine of the Trinity is not guarded by pains and penalties, and the denying it is not deemed to be *blasphemy*, punishable with confiscation of goods and imprisonment, as in *England*;* and in many other countries with death. The extreme impolicy of such measures is universally reprobated here, and inquiry on the subject of religion being perfectly free, truth has all the advantage that its warmest friends can wish it to have. You will, I doubt

* Where this violation of civil right to religious freedom was tenaciously upheld, by the legislature, till 1813; when *Unitarian Christians* were relieved from those penalties, which now only remain to affect the persons and property of *Unbelievers*, and thus to recommend Christianity to their acceptance. See Vol. X. pp. 494, 495; Vol. XIV. pp. 514, 515, Note **; Vol. XV. p. 391, Note *.

not, shew that there is no danger whatever to any state, from this liberty as enjoyed by Unitarians, any more than by any other denomination of Christians, by your being equally the friends of peace and good order, and by the exercise of meekness and candour towards those who differ from you.

At the same time that you shew a just zeal for your peculiar principles, as *Unitarians*, do not fail to discover a still greater attachment to the common principles of Christianity. All Christians, notwithstanding this great difference, and many other relatively important differences of opinion, hold all that is most essential, in common. For, whatever they may think concerning the *person* of Christ, all Christians believe the divinity of his *mission*, the reality of his miracles, of his death, resurrection, and ascension. None of them have any doubt with respect to his second coming to raise the dead, to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works in a future state of existence. And these articles of faith are all that are of much practical use, supplying motives for the due discharge of our duty in this life, and thereby preparing us for another and a better.

Respect, then, all Christians as such, and as you have opportunity, make yourselves masters of the rational evidences of your religion, that, as the apostle says, [1 *Pet.* iii. 15,] you may be "ready always to give—a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;" that is, in a modest and respectful manner. And it is, my brethren, for the honour of *Unitarians*, that no other denomination of Christians have stood forth as they have done in the defence of Christianity, especially of late years, when infidelity has reared its head in a manner unknown in former times.

Indeed, my brethren, we have a peculiar advantage in our principles, for the defence of Christianity with rational unbelievers, because they are unquestionably such as are more consonant to reason than those of other Christians. We have nothing to do with the great, the insuperable difficulty of reconciling to the common sense of mankind; how *three divine persons* can make only *one God*, how a God of infinite goodness and mercy should require an infinite satisfaction for the sins of imperfect man; or with maintaining the *plenary* inspiration of all the books which contain the records of our religion. We can, therefore, allow much to our adversaries, without losing any real advantage in the strength of our arguments.

We confine ourselves to the historical proof of the mira-

cles which prove the divine missions of *Moses* and of *Jesus*. And this being done, all other difficulties may be safely left to future discussion. If the miracles were really wrought, our religion is of God, having the sanction of the Author of nature, who alone can have the power of controuling its laws; and whether we can answer any particular objection or not, we cannot be at liberty to give up our faith; but must content ourselves with acquiescing in them, as we are obliged to do with respect to many similar difficulties which occur in the consideration of the constitution of nature, and the events of common providence, but which a closer examination helps us to reconcile ourselves to, more and more. Let us, then, by all means, take the advantage which our peculiar principles give us, in the defence of our common Christianity, and do that for those who arrogantly appropriate to themselves the appellation of *orthodox*, which they are unable to do for themselves, at the same time that we have that charity for them which they have not for us.

I cannot forbear expressing my satisfaction in another important consequence which cannot fail to accrue from your forming yourselves into a society, and having all Christian ordinances, and every thing that is essential to a Christian church, within yourselves, without waiting for the assistance of any who are called *regular ministers*. By this means you cut up by the roots a miserable superstition, by which the Christian world has been too long enslaved; almost all Christians having been led to think that there is something peculiarly *sacred* in the character of such ministers, something imparted to them by their forms of ordination, without which their administration of Christian ordinances, and especially that of the *Lord's Supper*, is not valid.

If this validity consist in their producing any good effect, leading to just sentiments and a suitable conduct, I hope it will soon appear that all Christian ordinances are as valid when administered by you, who are called *laymen*, as by any *clergy*, of whatever denomination, Episcopalian or Presbyterian. The fullest proof of this it is in your power, my brethren, to give; and I doubt not you will do it, by the uniform regularity of your lives; and it is the excellent and rational rule of our Saviour, [*Matt. xii. 23; Luke vi. 44.*] to judge of the tree *by its fruit*. If you maintain habitual piety to God, benevolence to man, and a due government of your appetites and passions, there will remain no question about the right administration of ordinances. In these

things it is that true religion alone consists. For "what doth the Lord *our God* require of *us*, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly" before him? [*Micah* vi. 8.] Only conduct yourselves like good men, and good Christians, shew the effect of Christian principles, and there cannot be any doubt with respect to the cause which produced it.

If any persons will pretend to an invisible operation of Christian ordinances, which can only be imparted in the administration of them by ministers regularly ordained, let them give proof of it by more visible effect; by their superior holiness, and not by mere pretences. Let them manifest their superior holiness, not by their austerity and mortifications, still less by their virulent censures of others, but by something of which all the world can judge, by its superior happy effect on their tempers, dispositions, and lives. The inquiry at the last day will not be in what manner, or by what means, we became what the gospel requires, but whether we have really become so; whether we have been possessed of the true Christian character, and whether it was manifest by its proper effects; whether we have denied all "ungodliness and worldly lusts," and have lived "soberly, righteously, and *piously*, in this present world." [*Titus* ii. 12.]

Excuse me if I, who am an old man, advise those of you more especially who are young (as with much pleasure I see the greater part of you are) to have particular respect to this great object of the gospel; and to consider every thing else, the belief and profession of Unitarianism, and even of Christianity itself, as only subservient to this, as means to an end. You live in an ensnaring as well as a censorious world, and Divine Providence is not to be complained of, on this account. Much as we lament the numerous vices, and consequent misery, of mankind; they contribute to furnish us, as far as we can judge, with the very best means of forming excellent characters. They make the virtues of self-command, circumspection, and fortitude, peculiarly necessary. Our Saviour himself was made "perfect through sufferings." [*Heb.* ii. 10.] The unreasonable malevolence and violence of some men, exercise our patience, forbearance, meekness, generosity, and every distinguishing Christian virtue. The more we see the minds of others engrossed with the things of this world, as we cannot but at the same time see the unhappy effect of it, the constant anxiety and misery they occasion to them-

selves and others by that disposition, and the conduct to which it leads, the more attentive should we be to guard against it, and to cultivate a spirit of heavenly-mindedness; to “set *our* affections not on things on the earth,” but “on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;” [Col. iii. 1, 2;] remembering that, if we be really Christians, we are only “strangers and pilgrims” here below, [Heb. xi. 13,] and properly citizens of heaven; and that therefore we should not make ourselves anxious about *laying up treasures on earth*, subject to numerous distressing accidents, but in heaven, and that “where *our* treasure is, there *should our* heart be also.” [Matt. vi. 19, 21; Luke xii. 34.]

The business of this life must, no doubt, be done, and according to the apostolic advice, [Rom. xii. 11,] we must not be *slothful* in doing it; and *he that is unwilling to work should not eat*. [2 Thess. iii. 10.] It is the just, but the wise and benevolent sentence of our Maker, [Gen. iii. 19,] that *in the sweat of our brows we must eat bread*. But we must not confine our attention to these things. We ought not to *labour* so much “for the bread which perisheth,” as “for that” which, our Saviour says, [John vi. 27,] “endureth unto everlasting life.”

There is little danger of excess in this, since *the things that are seen* have an unspeakable advantage over those that are *unseen*, though the former are but *temporal*, and the latter *eternal*. But it becomes rational beings, capable of reflection, to oppose *faith* to *sight*, in order to give the things which will certainly take place in future, the same weight and influence as if they were present, which in due time they will be.

It is the peculiar advantage of Christianity, that it tends to enlarge the mind, by extending the foresight of man. The true Christian *walks*, as the apostle says, [2 Cor. v. 7,] “by faith, not by sight.” Thus, though God be invisible, the Christian lives as if he constantly saw him. He sees God in every thing, and he sees every thing in God, or in relation to him. More especially, his frequent contemplation on the second coming of Christ, and the state of things which will commence at that greatest of all events, makes him consider it as if it was near at hand; and in consequence of this, the things of time and sense make but little impression upon him; the attention that he habitually gives to things of greater moment, especially when he withdraws himself from the bustle, and the fascinating influence of the world, to give scope to religious meditation, infinitely

overpowering any effect they can have upon his mind ; and in consequence of it he has a joy, a serene, constant source of joy, such as *the world can neither give nor take away*. It is, as the apostle says, [1 *Pet.* i. 8,] a “ joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

But you must ever bear in mind that so great an *end* as this is not to be gained without the use of proper and adequate *means*. In order to cultivate this Christian and devout temper to advantage, you must sometimes retire from the world, and shut your eyes to its various allurements. You must find leisure for religious meditation, and the reading of such books as inculcate Christian principles, and more especially the Scriptures, with which you cannot make yourselves too well acquainted. You ought to have their infinitely valuable contents almost by heart ; and the more you read them, the more will you be charmed with the excellent spirit which the writers breathe, and by this means you will catch the same, and be animated by it, as they were.

I hope you will never fail in a regular attendance on the duties of *public worship*, at least every *Lord's-day* ; as the apostle exhorts all Christians, (*Heb.* x. 25,) “ not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together.” The happy effect of this practice you must have found by your own experience. We see that ardour in any common cause, even civil and political, is always kept up and inflamed by similar means. Besides, no person is so well informed with respect to his principles, or his duty, as not to find the benefit of being frequently reminded of them ; as the apostle *Peter* says, (*2 Ep.* i. 12,) “ Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.”

In consequence of the neglect of these *mechanical means*, as they may be called, of omitting public and private devotion, and the reading of the Scriptures, living wholly in the world, conversing with the men of the world, and always about the things of the world, you will necessarily become *worldly-minded*, like them. Your minds will become debased by low occupations, and heavenly things and the thoughts of religion will become irksome to you. You will even insensibly contract a prejudice against it, be glad of any pretence for throwing it aside, and at length, perhaps, take your place in *the seat of the scorner*, taking delight in drawing others into the same state with yourselves.

In this age, every person who is at present sensible of the

value of religion, should be jealous over himself, and assiduously cultivate a religious and Christian temper, by every proper means, and more especially those persons whose business leads them into the world, and of course exposes them to temptation. With some, trials from this source are very great. But let such always bear in mind the advice of the apostle, [1 *Cor.* xvi. 13,] “Stand fast in the faith,” and the assurance of our Saviour, [*Matt.* x. 22,] that “he that endureth to the end, shall be saved.” If firmness in almost any cause be the subject of praise, firmness in the best of causes is surely entitled to it; and whatever the world may say of us, the man who secures the approbation of his own mind, that of the men who are most worthy of his esteem, and especially that of his Maker, will not be much affected by it. He will rather, with the apostles, [*Acts* v. 41,] rejoice that he is “counted worthy to suffer shame,” as well as to incur any other inconvenience, in so glorious a cause. What is the censure of the profane and irreligious part of the world, when weighed against the sentence of our final Judge? [*Matt.* xxv. 21]: “Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!”

I shall take the farther liberty to advise you, not only as individuals, but as members of a Christian church, to attend to the religious instruction of your children. There is no church regularly constituted, and whose affairs are well conducted, in which there is not some express provision for catechising the children belonging to it. Some parents are inattentive to this important duty, some are not qualified to conduct it properly, and all parents will give more attention to it in private, when it is known that the effect of it will appear in public. Appoint, then, out of your body, those who are most able and willing to undertake the conduct of this business. I have myself had much experience in this way, and you will see the plans that I found to be most effectual for the purpose in the *Preface* to a Sermon which I delivered at Hackney, on accepting the Pastoral Office in that place.* I need not say any thing, in this place, of the importance of religious instruction. You cannot look abroad without seeing the lamentable effects of the want of it, in the ignorance and rudeness, I may add the profaneness, of too many children and young persons; and nothing con-

* See Vol. XV. pp. 69, 458—461.

tributes so much to civilization, and the general prevalence of decent and pleasing behaviour, as religious instruction.

Lastly, as many of you are, like myself, refugees from England, from which we were driven by a spirit hostile to liberty, civil and religious;* let me congratulate you and myself, on the asylum we have found here; and whether you choose to be naturalized in this country, or, with myself, to continue in the situation of strangers,† seek the peace, and respect the governors of it. And permit me to observe, that whatever opinion we may form of public measures, it does not become strangers or new comers, to take any active part in the affairs of it; nor do I in the least suspect that any of you have done so. Let our behaviour shew that we are deserving of protection, if of no other encouragement; and let us give what assistance we can to others, who, like ourselves, have been obliged to leave their native country, but in less favourable circumstances than we have done.

Let us also look back to *Europe* with our best wishes and prayers for the welfare of its inhabitants. There the times are critical, and extremely calamitous; and there is but too great a prospect of their becoming more so. I cannot help being persuaded that we are on the eve of the accomplishment of some very remarkable prophecies, which announce convulsions of the most tremendous nature, perhaps the very time to which our Saviour alluded, when he said, (*Matt.* xxiv. 29, 30,) “the sun *would* be darkened, and the moon not give her light,” when “the stars *should* fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens *should* be shaken,” after which will appear “the sign of the Son of Man in heaven.” This account of those appearances in the heavens, is not to be interpreted literally. According to all commentators on the Scriptures, they signify great revolutions in the civil state of the world, the subversion of established governments,‡ and more especially the monarchical ones, at least those into which the Roman empire was resolved, and which are typified in the prophecies by the image of *the beast with ten horns*, and which is said to be devoted to destruction.§

Let us contemplate the great scene that seems to be

* See Vol. XV. pp. 519—532.

† Dr. Priestley “never was naturalized, nor did he take any part, directly nor indirectly, in any election. He persevered in the same sentiments, even when (in 1799) he was under reasonable apprehensions that he should be banished as an alien.” Mr. Priestley’s *Continuation*, 8vo. pp. 199, 200, 12mo. p. 180.

‡ See Vol. XIII. p. 296.

§ *Rev.* xvii. 11. See Vol. XIV. p. 490.

opening before us, with awe, but at the same time with secret hope and joy; since it is to terminate in *the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ*, a state of things in which will be the reign of truth, of righteousness, and of peace; when “nation shall no more rise up against nation,” and when *they will learn war no more.* [Isaiah ii. 4; Micah iv. 3.]

But the state of things previous to that happy period, besides being always described as peculiarly calamitous, is also said to be distinguished by the prevalence of vice and irreligion. When Christ shall return, he intimates, [Luke xviii. 8,] that he will not *find* much “faith in the earth.” And surely, never was infidelity, joined with profligacy, both as cause and effect, so prevalent as it is at this day. In these circumstances, when the love of many waxes cold, our zeal should burn with a brighter flame. Let us do what we can to stem the overwhelming torrent. And with whatever success our labours may be crowned, they will not be *in vain in the Lord.* We shall have delivered our own souls. And *when our Lord shall return, and take an account of his faithful servants, we shall not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

THE CASE
OF
POOR EMIGRANTS,
RECOMMENDED IN
A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT

THE UNIVERSITY HALL IN PHILADELPHIA,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1797.

[*Philadelphia*, 1797.]

EXOD. xxiii. 9:

Thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger.

DEUT. x. 19:

Love ye, therefore, the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

FROM these passages in the books of *Moses*, recommending to the *Israelites* the case of *strangers*, as peculiarly entitled to their compassion and kind offices, since they had themselves been strangers; permit me, who am myself a stranger among you, to recommend to your favourable notice and charitable assistance, the various strangers, or *emigrants* from different parts of *Europe*, and the *West-India* islands, who are now crowding to the shores of *America*.

In the Scriptures, the case of the *stranger* frequently accompanies that of the *fatherless* and *widow*, as being often equally destitute, and standing in equal need of assistance; and therefore, having a natural claim upon those who have it in their power to give them assistance, though they should not have been in the same situation themselves. For all

persons, who have the common feelings of men, may form an idea of distress, though they should not have felt one particular species of it ; and from a principle of benevolence, natural to all men, may be moved to give relief. But they who themselves have had experience of distress, and especially of distress of the same kind, may be expected to enter with more feeling into the case, from their having a clearer idea of it, and therefore to afford a more prompt and effectual relief.

Now all of you who now hear me, may be expected to have this sympathy for strangers and emigrants, in some degree ; since, if not yourselves, yet your fathers, or not very remote ancestors, were also strangers, and not in a distant country, as *Egypt* was, with respect to the *Israelites*, but in this very country, in which we are now met. We should, therefore, behave to one another, in this land in which we may all be said to be equally strangers, as brethren ; brethren, not merely as partaking of the same human nature, but brethren in affliction, difficulty, and trials. And therefore those who, by the favour of a kind Providence, have surmounted their difficulties, and now find themselves at their ease, with something more than is necessary for the supply of their own wants, should remember those who are yet struggling with theirs, and *give* out of what they can well spare *to him that needeth*.

This is agreeable to the excellent plan of Divine Providence, which has wisely appointed this life to be a state of discipline to us all, and which, with equal wisdom, makes the greatest use of men, as the instruments of this discipline for the improvement of men. For this reason it is that some are rich, and others poor ; some knowing, and others ignorant ; some powerful, and others weak. Not that the Supreme Being, our common parent, shews any partiality to one more than another, or distinguishes any persons, as his favourites, by this unequal distribution of his gifts ; but because the good, and especially the moral good, of the whole, requires that there should be these distinctions. His design evidently is, that these advantages should be more equally distributed by the parties themselves, since that will have a better effect than if it had been done immediately by himself.

The rich, therefore, reflecting on the wise intentions of Providence, should not suppose that they have an absolute exclusive *right* to their superfluity ; the *wise* should not be *wise for themselves* alone, nor should the *powerful* protect

themselves only, from insults and injuries. Our common Parent had far other and more extensive views in appointing this inequality. It was no less than to bind all the parts of the great whole, more strictly together, to make the one more dependent upon the other; and by an exchange of good offices, easy to some, and necessary to others, give scope to the increase of generosity on one side, of gratitude on the other, and of benevolence on both; thus to advance them in real dignity and excellence of character, and thereby bring them to a near resemblance to himself, the pattern of all perfection and excellence, to him who is supremely, and, strictly speaking, *alone good*, as being the source of all goodness, who *is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works*.

Had all men been equally well provided for, they would have been independent of one another, and of course unsocial and unfriendly, and therefore might have been disposed to avoid, rather than to court, that society of which they stood in no need; and a spirit of envy and hatred might have been the result. But the wants of some teach them humility, patience, and gratitude, excellent moral qualities; and the sight of distress softens the heart, and excites to acts of kindness in others, which strengthens the principle of benevolence, and thus meliorates the disposition, consequently the characters of both are improved, and it is not easy to say which is the more so, by this circumstance of inequality in the distribution of the gifts of Providence.

Let not the rich man make a boast of his charity, as if he gave what he was under no *obligation* to give; for, strictly speaking, it is a *debt* which he owes to the needy. Benevolence being the great law of our natures, and the happiness of all being the great object of the Divine Government, whatever it be that promotes this end, is the proper *duty* of all, according to their respective abilities to contribute to it; and any person is guilty of a breach of trust, who refrains from doing it. All the good that any man *can* do, he *ought* to do. The Divine Being, our common parent, expects it of him, as a member of his large family; and if he "judge the world in righteousness," as he assuredly will, [*Acts xvii. 31.*] he will punish the person who does less than it was in his power to do, as having neglected a duty that was incumbent on him.

In whatever manner any person becomes possessed of wealth, it is the gift of God. If it have accrued to him from superior ingenuity, or superior industry, that very

superior ingenuity, and spirit of activity, are alike the gift of God, who makes one man to differ in these respects, as well as others, from another man; so that, as the apostle says, (1 Cor. iv. 7,) God may say to any man, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" And "if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" Consequently, not to make that disposition of our wealth which the giver of it *intended* that we should, is to be guilty of ingratitude to God, and real injustice to man. It is to act the part of an unfaithful steward. For in this light, and no other, ought we to consider ourselves with respect to every thing that we have to spare, after the supply of our own wants.

Neither let the rich boast of their *independence* with respect to the poor. In fact they are more dependent upon the poor, than the poor are upon them; and were all persons reduced to a level, every advantage of which they now boast would vanish. They must then labour for themselves, and do for themselves those menial offices which are now done for them by others. But, happily for us all, there is such a foundation laid in the course of nature and the order of Providence, for that inequality in the conditions of men, which has so excellent an effect in binding us all together, in making our connexion both necessary, and mutually advantageous, that no institutions of man can destroy it; though, as we are in duty bound, we may lessen the evils that necessarily arise from it.

Since, then, the rich, who really wish to act the part that in strict duty they are bound to do, have only a choice to make of objects on whom to bestow their superfluity, and there are many of them, so that some may apply themselves to the relief of one species of distress, and others of another, or of several in different degrees, according as their attention is attracted to them. I only plead, on this occasion, that the poor *emigrants* are entitled to a share. Not that I wish to have a fund so open to them, as that they should have a claim upon it as a *legal right*. That circumstance, as we see in the case of the poor of *England*, would soon defeat the very object of the charity. The more poor of any kind you provide for in this way, the more you will create; the more you may burden yourselves, and that without limit, and the more distress you will occasion in others. By this most injudicious system you would only encourage idleness, improvidence, insolence, and profligacy of every kind. But let there be a fund provided, on which,

though no person shall have a legal claim, yet from it, persons of discretion may, as they shall see occasion, give temporary relief to such emigrants as really want it.

Observe also, that I only say *temporary* relief, so as to put the poor emigrants in the way of relieving and providing for themselves; and, to do *this*, some assistance may be absolutely necessary. It might not even be amiss to make the sums afforded them a debt, which the institution might reclaim, if the parties relieved should afterwards, as it is hoped most of them will, be in a condition to refund it, and also with interest, for the benefit of others. But that, in some way or other, many poor emigrants are entitled to assistance, will appear to every person who shall consider their situation.

1. It may be depended upon that in general, emigrants are of the more industrious class of people; for the enterprising, as the emigrants in some degree must be, are chiefly of that character; the indolent, as well as the timid, stay at home, content to starve, rather than make any attempt that shall appear in the least degree hazardous, to better their condition. The weak and the sickly, the aged and infirm, however willing, cannot leave their country, and the friends on whom they depend. It is, therefore, probable that with a little seasonable assistance, the poor emigrant, being disposed to industry, will soon be in a condition to provide for himself, and even to reimburse his benefactor.

It may be said that persons must be very thoughtless and improvident to leave their country, though ever so poor, without a certainty of finding subsistence in another, and therefore, that on persons of so little foresight, money will be thrown away. This, no doubt, may be the case; but many, and we may well suppose the greater part, of the necessitous and helpless persons, whose cause I am pleading, were only misinformed with respect to the country to which they have emigrated, and it is by no means easy, especially for persons in their low situation, to procure good information.

Those *emigrants* who had friends in this country will, of course, find employment with them, or assistance from them, and these are no objects of the present charity; but even some of these may find their friends dead or removed, or on some other account incapacitated to give them the assistance they had reason to expect; and many came without any friends at all, but with high expectations from such accounts as were given them of this country, as, that they would meet

with no difficulty; that, if they were able and willing to labour, they could not fail to find employment; and that all labour would be abundantly rewarded. But many of these were manufacturers in their own country, and now find, to their great surprise, that their skill and industry are not wanted here, and can be of no service to them, and that there is no kind of labour to which they have been accustomed, or to which they are equal, by which they can, at least immediately, get a living.

Also, many *emigrants* have suffered extremely during the voyage; they are landed in a sickly condition, or soon become sickly by the change of climate, so that, for a long time, they are unable to do any thing at all; and they find expenses at inns and lodging-houses much greater than they had any idea of, so that the little money they might bring with them is soon expended, and they are left wholly destitute. In this case, if they meet with no relief from the charitable and well-disposed, they must inevitably perish. Whereas, with a little assistance and encouragement, which is often of more real use than money, they may soon recover their health, strength and spirits, and with proper advice with respect to the disposal of themselves, they may in a short time become useful citizens.

For I would observe, that the benefit of this institution is not confined to giving pecuniary assistance to *emigrants*. Advice how to dispose of themselves to the most advantage, directions to cheap places of accommodation, some care to see that they are not imposed upon, and especially direction where to find employment, are often of much more use to them than money. And the persons who give their attention to the business of this institution, are particularly assiduous in this respect, and by this means contribute more to its real utility than those who only give money. Few persons, however, are qualified to serve the institution in this way. They can only give money. But this money, in the hands of persons who can give their time, and employ their knowledge of the country to this purpose, will be of unspeakably more use than if it had been given by themselves as mere charity. For this, without putting the poor emigrant in the way of providing for himself, would soon be expended, and then he would be as destitute as ever; and if there was no public institution to which he could have recourse, conducted by persons qualified to give him the best advice, he would be reduced to the necessity of begging from door to door, and thereby become a nuisance instead of a benefit to society.

Hence we see the use of a *public institution*, which being generally known, necessitous emigrants will of course be directed to it; and thus none of their time will be lost, or their money needlessly expended. But no institution of this kind can be supported without funds, as well as proper officers; and therefore this institution, the utility of which is so apparent, has a just claim to the benefactions of those who wish to employ what they can spare, to the most advantage for the service of their fellow-creatures.

2. The present calamitous and oppressed state of *Europe* should more particularly draw the kind attention of the inhabitants of this country to the *emigrants* from that part of the world. Europe is not only overburdened with poor, but oppressed with servitude; so that the poor are not only unable to subsist by their labour, but lie under great restrictions with respect to civil and religious liberty. They are even in a great measure deprived of the satisfaction of expressing their feelings, of making complaints, or applying for redress of their grievances.

Many persons of better condition in those countries, especially in *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, unable to bear the encroachments that are continually making on their liberties, civil and religious, and despairing of doing any good by any exertions of theirs, are now coming hither, bringing with them very considerable capitals, by which this country is enriched. In consequence of the purchases that foreigners of various descriptions, and especially of this class, who have the greatest confidence in this government, are making, the price of your lands is daily rising, and your labourers and artisans are getting higher wages. This circumstance adding much to the wealth of the country in general, you are better able out of the emolument accruing to yourselves from *European* persecution, to assist those who are distressed, in consequence of it. The poor emigrants, therefore, in fact only ask of you some part of that which you have gained by their more opulent brethren. These more opulent emigrants, will, no doubt, exert themselves in behalf of their distressed countrymen; but it is not reasonable that the whole of the burden should lie upon them. Many of them suffer considerably in their fortunes, by the disadvantageous sale of their property in Europe, and the greater expense at which they are obliged to live here.

Let those, then, whose ancestors, if not themselves, were driven from *Europe* by the same spirit of persecution which still prevails there, feel for those who are now in a

similar situation, though it must be acknowledged, and with gratitude, that they now come with much better prospects. *America* is not at this day as it was then, an inhospitable desert, or inhabited only by savages, at whose mercy they were, and of whom they consequently lived in continual dread, finding there nothing but that *liberty* which they wanted at home, but destitute of every thing else. But even then, the natives of this country, before their jealousy was excited and their passions inflamed by the improper conduct of *Europeans*, afforded much relief to some of the first settlers, and behaved to them with great kindness. *America* is now, to a great degree, peopled by *Europeans*, who have formed an excellent constitution of free government, having learned, by the example of the governments of *Europe*, what to aim at, and what to avoid, in their own institutions, and they are flourishing, in all respects, to a degree that was never known in any part of the world before.

For this you are indebted to a good Providence, seconding your virtuous and strenuous endeavours, in your late hard, but successful struggle for liberty. Receive then, with open arms, those who, at a distance, were praying for your success, and in various ways, though not by fighting, contributing to it, and for which they now suffer; for the crime of wishing well to the liberty and independence of *America* will never be forgiven by the *Court of Great Britain*. The friends of *America* in *Europe* hope, and I trust they will not hope in vain, to find the Americans friendly to them, while they come, breathing the same generous spirit, and rejoice, whenever they shall be enabled to do it, to add to the wealth and respectability of the country to which they have long been looking with the most earnest expectation.

There is, however, another class of *emigrants*, of a different character from those that I have now described, but, notwithstanding, greatly entitled to your charitable assistance. They are those who come from *France*, and perhaps other countries, from which they have found it necessary to withdraw themselves, on account of their having thought it their duty to oppose the changes that have been made, or that were expected to be made in their forms of government. And though the friends of liberty will think they did wrong in this; that the change which they opposed was really a happy one, and one that would eventually have been advantageous to themselves, they can only think that they judged ill; but must respect the principle upon which

they acted. The government which they supported was such as they approved, and preferred to the intended change. And though the majority might find it necessary to treat with rigour those who opposed their measures, thinking every thing to be hazarded by the opposition which a powerful minority might be able to make to them,* this is no reason why they should not be viewed with kindness here, where, whatever be their principles, they cannot possibly do any harm, because their numbers are comparatively inconsiderable.

It is only a reasonable apprehension of danger to ourselves that will justify any severity to others; and what harm can a small number of the most violent friends of *monarchy* or *aristocracy*, on the one hand, or of the most furious and undistinguishing advocates for *democracy*, in the most obnoxious sense of the word, on the other, do here, where the great body of the people are so fully enlightened with respect to the principles of good government, that they easily discern the just medium between them; and what is more, daily see them exemplified, to their own unspeakable advantage, in practice? In this state of things, those *emigrants* themselves will soon learn to correct their own errors.

Receive, then, with equal humanity, the *persecuted* of every description. Let your object be simply *distress*, and not political principles of any kind; and indulge no fear, jealousy, or suspicion, with respect to yourselves. The emigrants will, no doubt, form their opinion with respect to your government, and the administration of it; and finding themselves in a free country, they may express that opinion; and this opinion, being perhaps hastily adopted, may be very erroneous and unjust; but it is impossible it should do you any real injury. If the emigrants be men of information and discernment, you may even receive benefit

* I am here reminded of the humane counsel given to *Republican France*, when, at length, triumphant; in some spirited verses which appeared in the *Cambridge Intelligencer*. The following stanzas I quote from memory, and perhaps not *verbally* exact:

“ Then fold in thy relenting arms,
The wretched outcasts, where they roam;
From pining want and war's alarms,
O call the child of mis'ry home!

Then build the tomb, yet not alone,
Of him who bled in freedom's cause;
With equal eye the martyr own,
Of faith rever'd and ancient laws.”

from the lights they may give you. Where there is perfect liberty of speaking and writing, no principles can be dangerous. In these circumstances, *truth* has a decided advantage, and will certainly prevail in the end.

But some distressed *emigrants*, you will say, are men who have fled from their creditors, perhaps from the justice of their country; are these entitled to our assistance? Answer, that these cases cannot now be many, and it is not possible for us at this distance to distinguish them. Besides, the most vicious in one country, and especially a distant one, being separated from their former connexions, and entering into new ones, of a better cast, may become reformed and useful citizens. Our natures being the same, the greater advantage to which the best of us appear, is owing chiefly to our education and connexions, for which we are indebted to a kind Providence. Let us, then, shew our gratitude to that Providence which has favoured us, by our good-will and liberality to those who, in this respect, as well as others, have been less favoured. Seasonable kindness may awaken the dormant seeds of virtue, especially in a country like this, in which there are few temptations to vice. How many respectable as well as opulent families in *America*, have arisen from the most indigent and the most profligate in *Europe*! And this is so far from being the subject of reproach, that it is a just ground of praise.

To give you some idea of the benefit that has already accrued from this Society, I can inform you, from the reports of the acting committee, that, since its formation, it has been enabled to give such information to sixty-seven *emigrants*, on their arrival, as to obtain for them almost immediate employment. It has afforded pecuniary assistance to one hundred and twenty persons in actual distress, and to many of them advanced money to purchase working tools, &c., that they might follow their respective occupations. From the reports of the physician, it appears that the Society has granted both pecuniary and medical assistance to between sixty and seventy sick and needy emigrants, many of whom laboured under infectious diseases, and who would most probably have been lost, but for the timely and unremitting attention that was given to them. And no distinction has ever been made to any emigrant's country,* his religion or his political principles.

* *Morse* mentions, as established at *Philadelphia*, "A Society for German Emigrants." *Amer. Geog.* 1792, p. 327. This had probably been enlarged into the

Here then, my brethren, an opportunity offers itself, which the truly benevolent and pious would think themselves happy to find, though it should cost them some pains to seek; an opportunity of disposing of some part of their superfluity, in a manner highly honourable to themselves and useful to others, and of course what will give them the most satisfaction to reflect upon hereafter. It is acting the part of good *brothers* in that great family of which God is the parent and head; a part that *cannot* but be pleasing to him to whom we all, whether we be rich or poor, natives of any particular country, or foreigners, stand in the same relation. Is not every parent, who is deserving of the name, pleased to see his children act the part of true brothers to each other, that is, a friendly and benevolent part from real affection and feeling for each other, and at the same time from a sense of duty to their common Parent? And we are all the offspring of God.

In having such an opportunity as now presents itself to us, we ought to think ourselves greatly honoured. To give and to befriend is God-like; for God is the universal benefactor with respect to all his creatures. And though, when in want, we ought not to refuse favours, but be thankful for them, since otherwise none could be bestowed; yet, of the two, "it is," as our Saviour said, [*Acts xx. 35,*] "more blessed to give than to receive." Rejoice, then, my brethren, in having it in your power to choose the better, the more honourable, and the more God-like part. And remember, that though the *widow's mite* will be accepted, and is a just subject of praise, when it comes from a widow, or any poor person, who can barely spare it, he who, as the apostle says, [*2 Cor. ix. 6,*] "soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully;" while he who "soweth sparingly, shall reap *but* sparingly."

The blessedness of giving is not confined to the present world, but chiefly respects that which is to come. Our Saviour, in his first sermon, [*Matt. v. 7,*] pronounced a blessing on the *merciful*, saying that "they *should* obtain mercy;" and in his account of the proceedings of the last day, [*Matt. xxv. 35, 36,*] the only inquiry said to be made into a person's conduct is, whether he has *fed the hungry, clothed the naked*, or administered to any other of the wants

Society whose object Dr. Priestley now advocated. Their humane occupations were soon multiplied. According to Dr. Holmes, "in September, 1797, 190 emigrants arrived from Londonderry, in Ireland, at Newcastle on the Delaware, and 140 from Hamburg." *Amer. Ann.* II. p. 405.

of his fellow-creatures. The apostle *James*, also, [i. 27,] defines “ pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, to be *the visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction*, as well as *keeping ourselves unspotted from the world*. Certainly, therefore, a most essential part of true religion must consist in doing kind offices to all who stand in need of them, and especially to the most destitute and the most deserving; and such I think I have shewn the distressed emigrants in general to be. Consider, then, their hard case with the attention that it deserves, and *may God supply all your need out of his abundant fulness in Christ Jesus*.

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END OF VOL. XVI.
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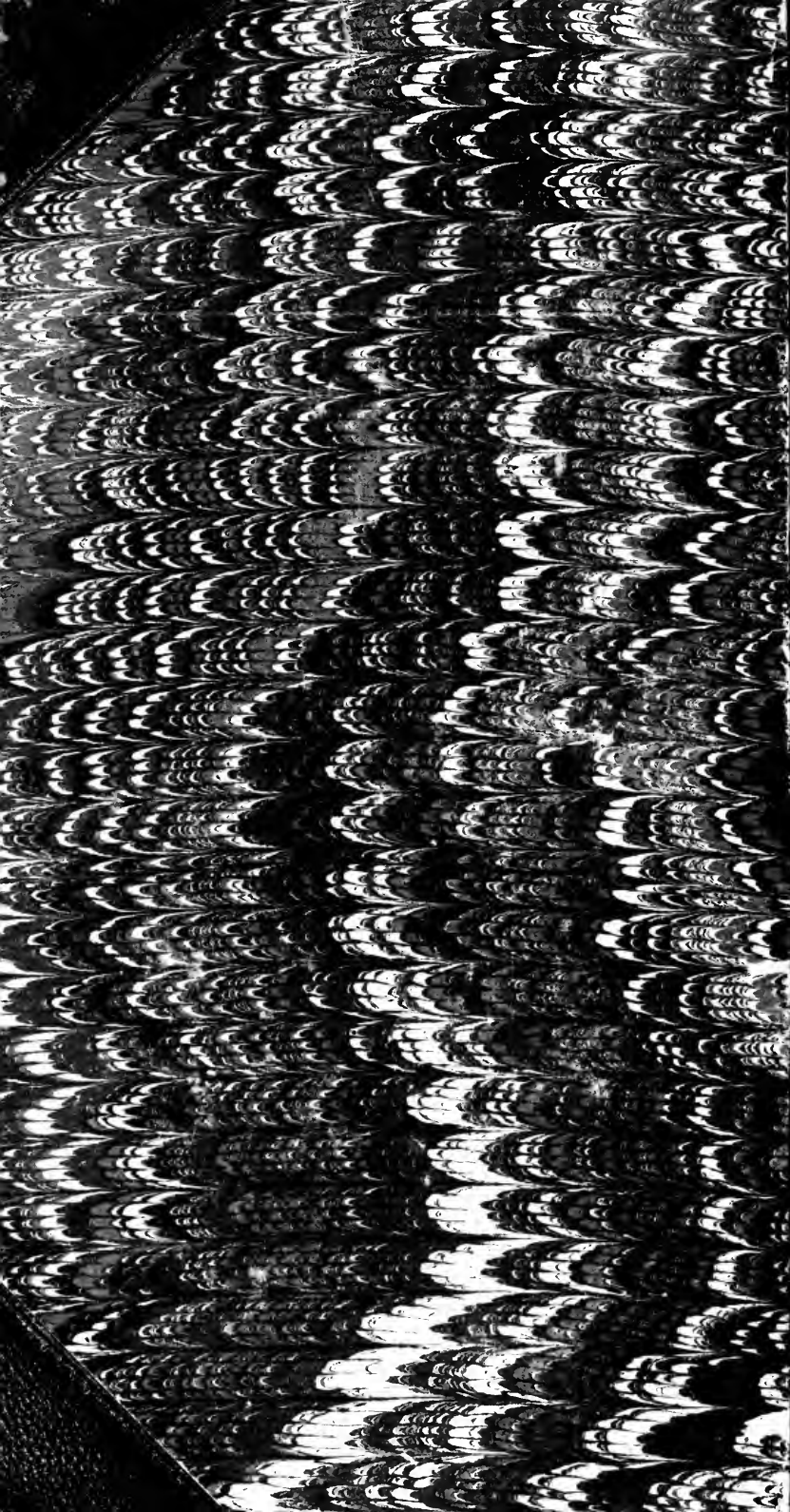
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