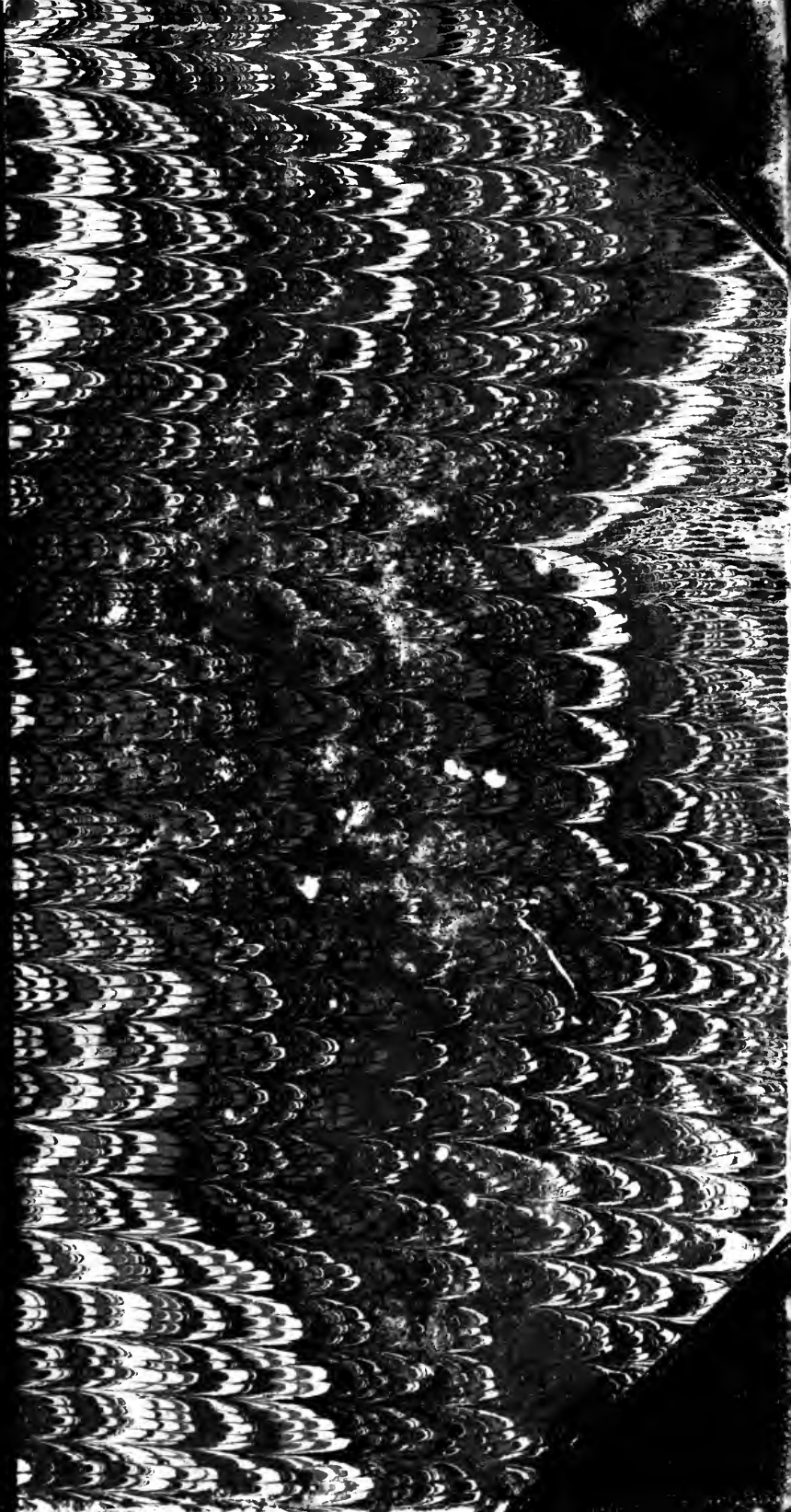


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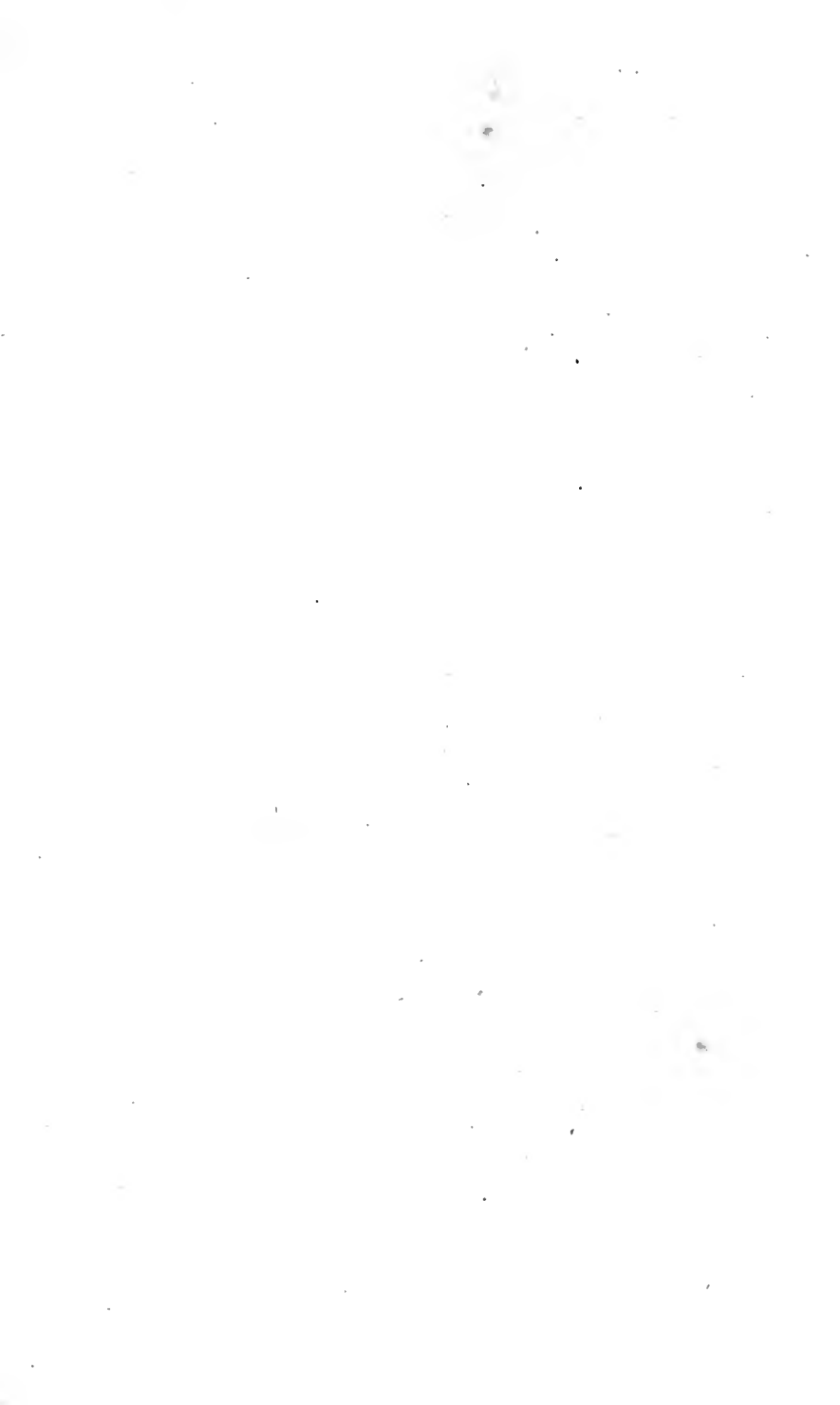


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THE
Theological and Miscellaneous
WORKS
OF
JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL. D. F. R. S. &c.
WITH
NOTES, BY THE EDITOR.



VOLUME XXI.

CONTAINING

MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS :

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH ;
TO THE PHILOSOPHERS AND POLITICIANS OF FRANCE ;

OUTLINE OF THE

EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION ;

Addresses to Protestant Dissenters ;

DEVOTIONAL OFFICES AND CATECHISMS,
&c. &c.

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P R E F A C E

BY THE

EDITOR.

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HAVING been delayed by some unexpected difficulties in procuring copies of Dr. Priestley's smaller publications, for several of which I am indebted to very friendly attentions, I now bring before the Subscribers, after an interval much longer than I had designed, the *Twenty-first* Volume; containing the remainder of that part of his Works which has been distinguished as Theological.

This Volume may deservedly excite some peculiar interest, as connecting, through more than thirty years, the Author's early and latest publications. Their subjects he justly regarded as of paramount consequence, and even as reducing to comparative insignificance the value of highly important scientific attainments, for which the name of Priestley has been honoured universally, or, at least, through every part of the civilized world, except among a few of the *Priests* and *Courtiers* and *Court-minions* of his own country.

When the first Article of this Volume passed through the press, I was ignorant of any published account respecting Mr. Thomas Morgan, whose "Appeal to the Common Sense of Plain and Common Christians" is noticed in that article. I have since learned, from "the Protestant Dissenters' Magazine" (VI. 320), that "in his earlier years Mr. Morgan was settled at Henllan, in Carmarthenshire, and was frequently styled the *Welsh Cicero*; but from the year 1763, he lived at Morley, near Leeds," where he died "July 2, 1799, in the 80th year of his age. He was," adds his biographer, "one of the most popular and generally

acceptable preachers in the Presbyterian connexion ;” while “as a man and as a Christian, his conduct through life was highly honourable and exemplary.”

The memory of Mr. Morgan will be further respected on account of his son, the late Dr. Thomas Morgan, who professed, and recommended by a consistent practice, that faith which his father had conscientiously opposed. Dr. Morgan, of whom there are some notices in the *Monthly Repository*, (XVI. 492,) died July 21, 1821, at the age of 68 years, the latter part of which he had passed as Librarian in that valuable establishment for the preservation and advancement of knowledge which bears the name, as it was raised by the well-applied munificence of the eminent Nonconformist, Dr. Williams. I need not inform any person who has availed himself of the liberal provisions of that Library, how well Dr. Morgan was prepared to fulfil the Founder’s intention, by his previous literary and theological occupations, his courteous readiness to communicate information, and his valuable habits of orderly attention.

The other Articles in this Volume will sufficiently appear by the *Contents* to be numerous and very miscellaneous. On the questions discussed in some of them I have not forborne to use one of the very few occasions I can yet allow myself to expect, to express my entire concurrence with the Author, as to their important influence on the social Christian character ; and the inconsiderable practical attention they receive, especially from those who are distinguished by unpopular, however scriptural, opinions from the majority of their fellow-christians.

The Twenty-second Volume is designed to contain the whole of the Author’s various pieces on Civil Policy, including, as might be expected from such a writer, what we inaccurately call Religious Liberty, but which is rather to be regarded as the most valuable of Civil Rights.

Clapton, April 19, 1822.

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MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS.



1771—1803.



LETTERS AND QUERIES,

ADDRESSED

TO THE ANONYMOUS ANSWERER

OF

AN APPEAL

TO

The Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity;

TO THE

REV. MR. THOMAS MORGAN,* AND TO MR. CORNELIUS CALEY.

—————
"In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves."
2 TIM. ii. 25.

—————
[Leeds, 1771.]

PREFACE.

HAVING endeavoured, in two small pamphlets, one of which is entitled, "An Appeal to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity," † &c., and the other, "The Triumph of Truth," ‡ to communicate instruction, on subjects of considerable importance in religion, to such people

* Minister of "Morley Chapel," near Leeds, where he had just printed, (1771.) for gratuitous distribution, "An Appeal to the Common Sense of plain and common Christians, in Behalf of the *Old Christianity* of the Gospel: Addressed to a Protestant Dissenting Congregation: Intended as a Preservative against the Principles and Practice of the Infidels and Enthusiasts of the present Age." On the back of the title-page, Mr. Morgan made "The Apology" which follows:

"Whereas it has been insinuated and asserted by some persons, 'that all the *Dissenting Ministers* of the *Presbyterian* class in this country, are *Arians* and *Socinians*; otherwise, that they would not associate together as they do:' Be it known to the world, that this charge is false in fact. It is as unjust as to say, that all the Clergy of the Established Church are *Arians* and *Socinians*, because some of their brethren have published books in that strain. The *Orthodox* among us, must allow their brethren the same liberty which they enjoy themselves, whatever use they make of it; and for that they are answerable to God and not to men. The unhappy differences among us, and some of them relating to subjects of the last importance in religion, is not a case peculiar to us, but it is common to all the denominations of Christians in this kingdom. Uniformity of sentiments will never prevail in a land of liberty."

† Vol. II. pp. 383—404. See *ibid.* p. 432, Note.

‡ *Ibid.* pp. 417—429.

in this neighbourhood as have neither much *money* to spare for the purchase of books, nor *time* for the reading of them ; I shall, in the same mode of publication, put a few *Queries* to those persons who have endeavoured to defeat my design.

I am not so little acquainted with human nature, as to expect any great success in this attempt to overturn long-established errors ; and least of all can I hope to convince those who refuse to read, or to hear, on whom even miracles could produce no effect ; but the restoration of Christianity to its primitive purity and efficacy, after so long and so radical a corruption (which was foreseen and lamented by the inspired writers of the *New Testament*), is so great and so worthy an object, that every man who has the interest of religion at heart, will rejoice in every opportunity that Divine Providence affords him for promoting it, with respect to ever so few, or even a single individual of his fellow-creatures.

A zeal for the truth, and even to “ contend earnestly” for it, does, certainly, well become a Christian. Since, however, the inspiring of a *Christian spirit* is the great purpose to which purity of *Christian faith* is subservient, he will be particularly careful not to lose the *end*, while he is contending for the *means*. “ With meekness” he will instruct “ those who oppose themselves ;” and that zeal which arises from the love of truth and of mankind, will easily be distinguished from that spirit which actuates those whom *St. Paul* [1 Cor. i. 20] calls “ the disputers of this world ;” a spirit which savours strongly of *pride*, *hatred*, and *malice*, and which often induces them to have recourse to unfair and unworthy *artifices* in order to gain a victory.

To those who think the writers against the *Appeal* altogether unworthy of notice, and that their productions are such as cannot fail to defeat their own ends, I would observe, that, with respect to all who will give proper attention to the subject, I believe that to be the case ; but they should consider, that minds which have been long under the influence of any prejudice, do not readily apprehend the full force of arguments that are levelled against it, and that they are apt to be staggered even with trifling cavils and objections ; and as the *Appeal* was written for the use of such persons, the writer of it thinks it his duty not to leave them to struggle unassisted, with the difficulties which have been thrown in their way. He will think no trouble too much, and no channel of communication too mean for him, provided he can have any reasonable prospect of enlightening the minds

of his fellow-creatures. The *Gospel-sower* must cast his seed promiscuously, on all kinds of ground, in hopes that, in some, it may yield a good increase, though he must lay his account with its being lost, and even worse than lost upon others.

Of those who have endeavoured to frustrate the design of the *Appeal*, I shall chiefly distinguish the *anonymous answerer*, because he writes with the most confidence, and assumes most of the air of a champion for the cause. Besides, his production is the most laboured, and is somewhat superior in point of composition to the other two. I shall, however, point out those queries in which Mr. Caley or Mr. Morgan are equally interested, and shall subjoin a few separate and plain questions to those two Gentlemen in particular; though Mr. Caley's moderation and truly catholic spirit makes me wish to have as little difference with him as possible. But from so ingenuous a temper, I expect to find an openness to conviction, and every thing else that is amiable and good.

In these *Queries* I avoid, as much as possible, a minute discussion of the meaning of particular texts, because I reserve that for a separate publication; [Vol. II. pp. 430—480,] which will contain *A new translation; or familiar illustration of all the texts that have been much controverted on these subjects.**

* All that is meant by these *small publications* is, to prepare the way for one *larger treatise*, addressed to the understandings of the common people. In order to excite a more general attention to these important subjects, and to throw the materials of which the treatise will consist into more hands, it was thought advisable to publish them in small and cheap pamphlets. That these ends have been, in a great measure, answered, appears both by the rapid and extensive *sale* of the pamphlets, and the three *Answers* which have been already written to the *Appeal*. And though, if I could have had the choice of my antagonists, they should have been persons who had differed from me in more points, and who would have undertaken the defence of the whole system that I have opposed, those that have appeared have, notwithstanding, been of considerable use to me, in collecting the *objections and difficulties* which have the greatest weight with the common people, and will enable me to address them with more advantage and effect.

The things that are chiefly wanted are, I. To set in a clear and strong light those great principles of *natural religion*, concerning the proper *unity*, the perfect *rectitude*, and the essential *placability* of the Divine Being, with which *revealed religion* can never be at variance. II. To shew that the general and plain tenor of the Scriptures strongly enforces the same principles, and, III. That those particular texts which seem to have a different aspect, are yet perfectly consistent with them, when justly translated and judiciously explained.

The two former of these ends, it is presumed, have been already, in a great measure, gained; and, God willing, the last also shall be accomplished very soon. In the mean time I invite my opponents to return to the charge, and I sincerely wish they may do it with greater coolness. (*P.*) *Advertisement, 1771.*

LETTERS AND QUERIES,

&c.

To the Author of the *Anonymous Answer to the "Appeal to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity,"* &c.

SIR,

As you have declared that you thought it your *duty* to take notice of the *Appeal*, and that it would even be *wrong* in you to sit in silence upon the occasion, I take it for granted you will think it to be as much your duty to vindicate what you have advanced against it; and therefore I take the liberty to request your attention to some observations that have occurred to me in reading your performance. In order to be as concise as possible, and to bring the controversy between us to a short issue, I shall reduce every thing that I would wish to say to you, and to the public, upon these subjects, into the form of *Queries*, and I shall keep clear of every thing that has not an immediate relation to the questions in debate.

As to the *abuse* which you have so plentifully heaped upon me, the "hypocrisy,"* the "subtilty,"† the "jesuitry,"‡ the "low, pitiful cunning,"§ the "artifice and fraud,"|| the "falsehood and impiety,"¶ the "infidelity,"** and the "blasphemy,"†† &c. &c. &c., with which you charge me; together with your saying, that I "scatter ambiguous words among the people, to puzzle and disturb their minds,"‡‡ that I "boldly and manifestly pervert the Scriptures,"§§ that I am "an advocate for infidelity,"||| that I, "in an open manner, blaspheme the Son of God,"¶¶ and your intimating, that I even "hardly know when I have blasphemed him enough,"*** I shall only answer, that, though I shall never *court* abuse, or *persecution* of any kind; yet when it falls to my share, in consequence of my

* *Answer*, p. 7. (P.)§ *Ibid.* (P.)** *Ibid.* p. 23. (P.)§§ *Ibid.* p. 21. (P.)¶¶ *Ibid.* p. 27. (P.)† *Ibid.* p. 8. (P.)|| *Ibid.* (P.)†† *Ibid.* pp. 23, 25. (P.)||| *Ibid.* p. 23. (P.)*** *Ibid.* p. 25. (P.)‡ *Ibid.* p. 36. (P.)¶ *Ibid.* p. 18. (P.)‡‡ *Ibid.* p. 11. (P.)

earnestly contending for what I take to be the great truths of the gospel, I shall value it more than all the riches of the world; considering myself as “reproached for the sake of Christ;” and comforting myself with his declaration, who says, (*Matt. v. 11, 12.*) “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you,—and say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.” Our Lord himself met with similar treatment; and as he forewarned all his disciples, that they should meet with the same, I shall consider this situation as an additional mark of my relation to him, and of my interest in the precious promises of his gospel. You may imagine that, in the part you are acting, *you do God good service*; but you should have remembered, that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

In return for the rash censures and opprobrious language above recited, I sincerely pray that *the God of truth* would lead you into those important truths, of which, at present, you seem to be grossly ignorant; and give you a greater share of the spirit of *meekness, humility, and candour*, than you have yet imbibed from the religion you profess; though these are the virtues which, when rightly understood, it seems particularly calculated to inspire. As to your injurious representation of the nature of God, in dividing his being, giving his peculiar glory to another, and robbing him of the most amiable of all his attributes, I hope you will be forgiven, since *you know not what you do*.

The Christian people of this neighbourhood, whose attention has been excited to this controversy, * will expect a distinct and explicit answer to *all* the following Queries; and I beg that, for the sake of decency, the honour of our common religion, and even the reputation of your own cause, you would endeavour to write with more temper, and with less anger and acrimony; and let us both shew the world, that it is possible for *Christian controversy* to be written with a *Christian spirit*.

I am, Sir, your friend and servant.

* Still farther to excite this attention, Dr. Priestley annexed to *Ed. 5* of the Appeal, in 1775, the following *Advertisement*:

“The writer of these small pieces will think himself obliged to any person who will reprint them; especially in such a manner as that they may be sold *very cheap*, or that those persons who think them calculated to do good, may afford to buy a number of copies to distribute *gratis*.”

Dr. Priestley says, in 1787, “By this time more than thirty thousand copies of the *Appeal* have been dispersed.” Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 98. See Vol. XVIII. p. 241, XIX. p. 325.

QUERIES

PROPOSED TO THE ANONYMOUS AUTHOR OF AN ANSWER
TO THE APPEAL, &c.

I. Concerning “*Original Sin,*” and “*the Power of Man to do the Will of God.*”

1. You say that, “in some respects, it depends upon men themselves, whether they will repent or not.”* Please to say, clearly and fully, *in what respects*. This is a business of too much consequence to be passed over in a superficial manner. I maintain, that to repent, or to do any thing else that God absolutely *requires* of us, and for which he *blames* us if we neglect to do it, must depend *entirely* upon ourselves, if there be any truth in the divine declarations, or equity in his moral government.

2. What is your idea of *nature*? For, from the manner in which you speak of it, one would imagine that you did not conceive of it as of any thing that is the gift of God, or subject to his controul, but rather as some *evil and malignant principle*, independent of God, and thwarting his designs; for you say, that “the supposition of a power in man to do the will of God is verily a foundation for pride, if man have such a power *by nature*, as it makes him attribute to *his own native power* that which is due only to that power which Christ has purchased for, and bestows upon us. It robs him of the glory of our salvation, and sets up *man’s ability* in opposition to the Redeemer’s grace.”† One would almost imagine, from this paragraph, that you considered man as a being self-existent, and independent of God; or, at least, that we derive our existence and powers from some other being than he that made our forefather *Adam*. But since God made *us* as well as *Adam*, and our nature, as his workmanship, can be no other than what he is pleased to make it, whatever advantages we derive from nature we derive from the God of nature, and whatever imperfections, either of body or mind, we derive from nature, they are such as God, for wise reasons, has thought proper to subject us to.

3. You say, that “all have sinned, all are ungodly by nature, all have in them that carnal mind which is enmity against God.”‡ But is a mere liableness to commit sin, or

* *Answer*, p. 4. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 6. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 13. (P.)

even a proneness to comply with temptation, sufficient to render us *polluted, impure, ungodly, and guilty* before God? If so, Adam himself, as he came out of the hands of his Creator, was in this condition. He was not naturally exempt from this *carnal mind*, as appeared by the subsequent event, yet he was not a *sinner* till he had actually sinned. No more are we. That doctrine which supposes that even young children and infants are possessed of a *sinful nature*, so as to be considered by God as actually *sinner, ungodly, and liable to punishment*, is certainly dreadful and absurd. The mind, without attending to any arguments by which it is pretended to be proved, starts back from such a conclusion with horror, and feels that it is something which cannot be admitted, what no reason can prove, and what even a miracle could not make credible.

If we consider the end of our present state of being, we shall not look upon our *nature* in so hateful a light as it is sometimes represented in. It is true that the Author of our being has subjected us to various imperfections and infirmities, both of soul and body, but it is for our *exercise and trial*. The moral infirmities of our constitution are the proper objects of our watchfulness and correction. If, through negligence, our infirmities betray us into *sin*, that is the proper object of *repentance*. If, through repeated acts of sin, our infirmities are increased and cherished, that also is a proper subject of *repentance and lamentation*; but the mere *infirmities* of that constitution which our Maker has given us, are not the proper objects of *lamentation*, and much less of *repentance*; because it would be lamenting that we are placed in a state of *trial*, and have such natures given us as a state of trial absolutely requires. It would even be impeaching the wisdom and goodness of our Maker, as much as if we were to fret and repine at the *bodily infirmities* to which he has thought proper to subject us, instead of employing our care to obviate or remedy their bad effects.

If the moral depravity of human nature was the consequence of the sin of Adam, why was it not particularly mentioned in the original history of the fall of man, in the book of *Genesis*? All that Moses mentions are things of much less consequence, viz, merely *natural evils*, (*Gen. iii. 16—19.*) the pains of *child-bearing*, the *curse upon the ground*, and *natural death*. Afterwards, indeed, *Moses* mentions the *corruption of mankind*, but as a thing that was caused by themselves, and not by their ancestor. *Gen. vi. 12*: "And

God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."

Besides, in all the expostulations that God makes with a sinful world, from the time of the fall to the present, they are evidently considered as being *as much to blame* as Adam was in his transgression; and if so, it must have been *as much in their power* not to have offended as it was in his. We may safely conclude, therefore, that, in a moral respect, we are created as perfect as he was, but that, like him, *we corrupt ourselves*. If men were born into the world with an *invincible propensity* to sin, a righteous God would certainly make some allowance for us on that account; but where do you find any hint of this in the Scriptures?

4. You say, that "God gives to all that will accept it a power to yield obedience to his commands, and deny that we have any such power naturally; for that whatever power man has to do the will of God, he has it by grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and not by nature, through Adam."* If this be true, I ask, how can the Heathen world be "without excuse," as St. Paul says expressly that they were, *Rom. i. 20*? He also says, (*ii. 14.*) that they "are a law unto themselves," and supposes that they shall be *judged by that law*, without any regard to revelation. But can they be "without excuse," who have a *law* given to them, and not a *power* to comply with it? You will hardly say, that they can be said to *accept* of that power through Christ, who never *heard* of him, and to whom the offer of this power was never made.

5. What is the material difference, with respect to *pride*, between our having a power to do the will of God by *nature*, or by *grace*, through Jesus Christ, † if *nature* is as much the gift of God as *grace*? If all that you contend for be the *time* and *manner* in which a *free gift* is communicated, what can justify the acrimony with which you write upon the subject? If we both allow that all mankind, without distinction, are possessed of it; or provided "all may have it who will accept of it," as you express yourself, and the tender be properly made to them, I do not see any difference between us, upon this subject, worth disputing about. I should think, at least, that so very small a difference might be discussed by any man, who is not of a very irascible disposition indeed, with perfect calmness.

6. You seem to take it for granted, that it is in the power of sinners to "come to Christ." ‡ I ask, what disposition

* *Answer*, p. 5. (P.)

† *Ibid.* (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 7. (P.)

of mind is necessary in order to their coming to Christ, your own sense of the phrase? It certainly implies *faith*, a dissatisfaction with a man's former sinful state, or *repentance*, and willingness to be instructed and directed by Christ, which is the principle of *obedience*. Are these things in a man's power? And if a man do come thus disposed, doth he come as he was *before* he thought of coming to Christ? What, then, is the precise meaning of exhorting abandoned sinners to come to Christ "as they are"? Explain also what a man wants of being a good Christian after you say that he has come to Christ.

7. When you say that sinners must come to Christ "as they are, that he may give them repentance,"* do you suppose that men have naturally a power of coming to Christ; and that the necessary consequence of their coming to him, is their everlasting salvation? If so, is not this as much foundation for pride as any thing that I have ascribed to man? At most, it is only removing the ground of it a single step farther, and the ultimate consequence of both our schemes is the same, viz. that it is in the power of every man to secure his own salvation.

8. You say, that "it had most certainly been just in God to have made us all suffer the most exquisite and endless torments in hell, on account of the sin of Adam only, even though we had never sinned in our own persons."† Upon this I only ask, whether, if it could have been in your choice, you would have chosen to live under the government of a God, one of whose attributes was *such justice* as this?

9. You admit, that we cannot repent of the *particular* sin of Adam, and yet you say we may repent of the *effects* of it,‡ which effects, you, no doubt, suppose to be necessary. I therefore ask, in what sense you use the word *repentance*, when you apply it to a thing that is *not voluntary*, to which the subjects of it were not in the least *accessary*, and to which they never *gave their consent*? Please, also, to explain, a little more particularly, how there can be *sin* where there is no *guilt*, as you assert? §

10. Where is your authority for asserting, that Christ has redeemed all mankind from the guilt of *original* sin, as distinct from their *actual* transgressions? || This appears to me to be quite a new and curious doctrine.

* *Answer*, p. 7. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 12. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 16. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 15. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 14. (P.)

II. QUERIES

Relating to the Divinity of Christ.

1. You say, that “because the proper title of Christ is the Son of God, he is, consequently, very and eternal God.”* But are not all Christians styled *the sons of God*? 1 *John* iii. 2: “Now are we the sons of God.” We are also called, (*Rom.* viii. 17,) not only the “children,” but also the “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” Adam is more especially called, (*Luke* iii. 18,) “the son of God,” and *Ephraim* is called, (*Jer.* xxxi. 20,) his “dear son.” Will you now assert that all these persons, being called sons of God, are consequently, each of them, “very and eternal God”? If not, what becomes of this argument of yours to prove the proper divinity of Christ?

2. You say, that “if Christ was superior to angels, he was certainly more than mere man, and that the Scripture speaks of no order of beings between God and angels.” Pray, Sir, is it not possible for God to exalt *a mere man*, so as to make him “superior to angels”? In a common way, we are said (*Psalms* viii. 5) to be only “a little lower” than they are.

3. You say, that “Christ could not, strictly speaking, be the image of the invisible God, unless he were God.”† Will you say that the image of a man must be a real man; and that, in all cases, the image and the thing whose image it is are the same? To me it appears that the very contrary conclusion directly follows from your premises; and that it would be manifestly absurd to say that God is the image of himself. Have you not read, (*Gen.* i. 26, 27,) that God made man “in his own image” and “after *his* likeness”? And is not the gospel designed to make all Christians “partakers of a divine nature”? 2 *Peter* i. 4. Also, if all the fulness of the Godhead dwell in Christ, (*Col.* ii. 9,) the apostle prays, (*Eph.* iii. 19,) that his fellow-disciples may “be filled with all the fulness of God,” and surely it is the best to interpret one passage of Scripture by another.

4. If, as you acknowledge, ‡ the term God be applied, “in an inferior sense,” to “angels, magistrates, idols,” and even “the devil,” where can be the great improbability, that it may sometimes be applied, in that sense, to Christ; and what then becomes of the admirable dilemma to which you imagine you have reduced me, viz. that he must either be *the supreme God, or the devil*?

* *Answer*, p. 18. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 20. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 25. (P.)

5. You endeavour to prove, that Christ must be God, because *worship* is said to have been paid to him.* But I ask whether you suppose that *Cornelius* considered *Peter* as God, and the proper object of *supreme worship*, when he “fell down at his feet and worshipped him,” (*Acts* x. 25,) though he shewed him more respect than *Peter* approved of? Did the servant, in our Saviour’s parable, [*Matt.* xviii. 26,] consider his master in that light, when he “fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all”? Did *Abraham* intend supreme worship to the angels, when he entertained them, and took them to be men (*Gen.* xviii. 2); or to “the children of Heth,” (xxiii. 7,) when he was making a bargain for a piece of ground to bury his dead? In all which cases the very same word is made use of, as in those which you appeal to. As you quote *Latin*, *Greek*, and *Hebrew*, I presume that you understand those languages, and therefore I say you cannot but know that the word, of which you have endeavoured to avail yourself so much, is frequently used to signify nothing more than *common homage and respect*, especially in the *Seventy*, the style of which is the nearest to that of the *Greek Testament*, and, on many accounts, the best authority for interpreting it.

6. You say, that you “maintain that Christ is very God upon the experience of every real Christian.”† I ask, how can the truth of any proposition of this kind be ascertained by experience, or what do you mean by *experience* in this case?

7. When I said that “Christ was far from thinking of such an impious robbery as that of being equal to God;”‡ you pronounce it to be “a most false and impious assertion,” and say that “such a bold and manifest perversion of scripture is enough to make every one of my readers to be ever on their guard against every thing I write, when they see me daring enough to alter the Scriptures in order to make them speak agreeably to my mind.”§ In answer to this arrogance, I now challenge you, upon your knowledge of the *Greek* language, whether, notwithstanding your violent exclamation and virulent abuse, it be possible to render *Phil.* ii. 6, more exactly than thus: “He did not think the being equal to God a thing to be seized by robbery”? Which is equivalent to my rendering it, by an easier expression, “He

* *Answer*, p. 19. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 25. (P.)

‡ I cannot find this passage in the *Appeal*.

§ *Answer*, p. 20. (P.)

did not think of the robbery of being equal to God."* I, in my turn, will venture to *pronounce* that you have no knowledge of Greek, if you will pretend to controvert this interpretation. I do not imitate you in quoting the *Greek words*, because the people for whose use the *Appeal*, and this defence of it, 'are calculated, are not capable of reading them. With them this business must rest on your authority, or mine. I do not say that the original Greek will not admit of our common translation ; but I maintain, that that construction is contrary to the meaning of the writer, in that and other places, and even very unnatural in this place ; for the word *but*, which begins the next verse, should imply some contrast between what goes before and after, which is beautiful and striking in my sense of the passage: "He did not attempt to be equal to God, *but* humbled himself."† Whereas this opposition is quite lost in your sense of the passage, as any common reader may judge. According to you, it is thus: "He made himself equal to God, *BUT* humbled himself," where the word *but* has no proper meaning at all.

Besides, it ought not to be unknown to you, that the Christian fathers of the three first centuries quote the passage in my sense of it, viz. *Origen, Novatian, Clemens Romanus, Justin Martyr, Lactantius*, and others, as is clearly proved by Dr. Clarke,‡ who you will, perhaps, condescend to allow, understood *Greek* as well as yourself. This text, therefore, instead of proving the *divinity of Christ*, proves the very contrary doctrine.

8. In answer to my observation, that "men cannot conceive that three distinct persons should, each of them, be God, and yet that there should be no more Gods than one,"§ you say, "No more can they conceive how the mortal body, the rational soul, and the immortal spirit, can constitute one human nature."|| Upon this, I ask, whether you think that either the mortal body, the rational soul, or the immortal spirit, is justly entitled to the name of *man*? It appears to me that there would be a manifest impropriety in calling any of them by that name; since not any one of them, but only the *three together* make the man. Indeed you avow this conclusion, with respect to the three persons

* See Vol. II. p. 465 ; XIV. pp. 310, 311. † See Vol. II. pp. 465, 466.

‡ *Scripture Doctrine*, (934.) ed. 3, 1732, pp. 177—186.

§ I cannot find these words. For the substance of this passage, see Vol. II. p. 395.

|| *Answer*, p. 34. (P.)

in the Godhead, and even express your surprise that I should suppose that the contrary was ever meant; for you say, (if I can read English words, though I can but barely believe my own eyes with respect to so strange an assertion,) "Pray whom did you ever hear affirm, that those three persons, separately, each of them, are possessed of all divine perfections? What we affirm is, that those three persons are one whole and undivided Trinity." * And again, "We believe there is but one God, but we believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are that one Jehovah." But this is clearly contrary to the doctrine of the *Athanasian Creed*, which says, that "we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person, by himself, to be God and Lord." This, therefore, I conclude to be the genuine faith of all the true members of the churches of *Rome* and *England*, which receive that horrid creed. † Nay, you yourself, though very inconsistently, say something like it, when you assert, that "to each of them, by name, in the Scriptures, are ascribed the attributes of the one eternal God." ‡

9. If, as you acknowledge, none of the persons in the Trinity are, separately taken, possessed of all divine perfections, how can any of them be God? Can a *God* want any divine perfections? Upon your scheme, they are only the *three persons, taken together*, that constitute God, as the three parts of a man constitute a man. If you had avowed that each of the three persons, separately considered, was possessed of all divine perfections; you were aware, I presume, of the necessary consequence, viz. that they would then be each of them, in all respects, *the very same beings*, since absolute *perfection* admits of no *variety*; and therefore, there being no difference between any two of them, they could be *one* in no other sense, than the same in which they were *three*.

10. You say, that "the three persons in the Godhead are not three one and one three, in the same sense; but three in one sense and one in another." § Please, therefore, to inform us in what sense they are *three*, and in what sense they are *one*; or, since they are only possessed of all divine perfections *jointly*, give us to understand which of them belong to one and which to another.

11. As you maintain that there is no one person who is, *separately*, possessed of all divine perfections, but that three persons are *jointly* possessed of them, wherein does your

* Answer, p. 26. (P.)

‡ Answer, p. 26. (P.)

† See Vol. XIX. pp. 21, 22, 108.

§ Ibid. (P.)

system differ materially from that of *Spinoza*, who also said, that no *one being* is God, but that the *whole universe* is so? You differ only in the number of persons, or things, which you suppose to constitute divinity; but, if I can affix any ideas to words, you both of you maintain, either a *multiplicity of Gods*, or *no God at all*.

Upon this most important subject I expect your answer to be very full and explicit; for to me it is a very awful thing to suppose that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," that great Being whom he calls (*John xvii. 3*) "the only true God," and whom he affirms (*Matt. v. 48*) to be "perfect," is not possessed of all divine perfections, being only *one of three*, who are *jointly* possessed of them.

12. As to your quotations from *Philo*, and the *Cabbalists*, I shall only ask you, whether you are willing to maintain their orthodoxy, with respect to the Trinity, against the learned *Basnage*, who studied the history and opinions of the Jews, perhaps more than any other man; who has written very largely upon the subject; and yet, though a Trinitarian himself, has fully exploded all the pretences of *Cudworth*, and others, to find the doctrine of the Trinity either among the ancient or modern Jews? This doctrine he calls "the gulph which entirely separates the Jews from the Christians. A Jew," he says, "considers three persons as three Gods, and this tritheism shocks him."* He also informs us, that "the Jews consider themselves as bearing their testimony to the unity of God among all the nations of the world."† Deny these facts if you can. What *ought* or *ought not* to offend a Jew is not the question. The doctrine of the Trinity doth *in fact*, and, from the time that it was started, *always did* offend the whole body of the Jews, and may truly be said to be one of the greatest obstacles to their conversion.

I shall, moreover, take it as a favour, if you will inform me from whom you quoted your *Hebrew sentence*, relating to this subject, that I may have an opportunity of examining your authority more particularly. I once had a tolerable knowledge of that difficult language, the *Rabbinical Hebrew*,‡ and I am possessed of the writings of some of the more celebrated Jewish Doctors; but they seem to be a very different kind of writers from the author of that curious sentence. If you quoted it at second hand, (for which I shall not blame

* "Lui fait horreur." *Hist. des Juifs*, Tome III. p. 10. (P.)

† *Ibid.* Tome V. (P.)

‡ See Vol. XIX. p. 309.

you,) be so ingenuous as to direct me to the Christian writer from whom you really had it.

III. *Miscellaneous Queries.*

1. As you admit with me, that "true religion consists in a change of heart, affections, and habits,"* can you say that this change can be effected in a moment, except it be out of the course of nature, and by the *miraculous* interposition of God? It is certainly of the nature of *habits*, at least, to be changed by degrees. But if by *instantaneous justification*, you only mean that there is some moment at which, in the gradual or speedy change of a man's temper and conduct, good resolutions and dispositions *begin* to prevail over bad ones, and at which he, consequently, begins to be approved of God, I agree with you.

2. I take it for granted, from what you say on the subject, † that you are no believer in the doctrines of *absolute election* and *reprobation*. But I ask you whether there be not *particular texts of scripture* as strongly in favour of those doctrines as of any other that are controverted in the *Appeal*? Indeed, *single texts*, quoted without regard to their proper connexion and meaning, may be produced in favour of any sentiments; and there are some which are no less explicit in favour of the doctrine of *transubstantiation* than any that you avail yourself of in the defence of *original sin*, or *the divinity of Christ*.

3. With respect to the doctrine of election, you say, "Whoever, on either side of the question, are men fearing God, and working righteousness, notwithstanding their difference of opinion in *this* point, I make no doubt but both are accepted of him." ‡ Pray, Sir, why may not persons who *fear God and work righteousness* be accepted of him, though they differ in *other* points also; for instance with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, and satisfaction for sin by the death of Christ? There are persons who are as decisive in their condemnation of you, for your disbelief of the seventeenth article of the thirty-nine, as you can be in your censures upon me, for avowing my disbelief of any other of them, and with equal justice. With such persons *Arminianism* and *Socinianism* are not considered, as they are by you, as

* *Answer*, p. 9. (P.)

† *Ibid.* pp. 17, 36. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 17. (P.)

“different as light and darkness.”* This mutual excommunication and exclusion from heaven, has been the disgrace of Christianity. Let us, for God’s sake, *forbear one another in love*, till “we all *come* before the judgment-seat of Christ.”

4. In answer to my question, whether any satisfaction at all besides repentance and reformation, on the part of a sinner, be required by God, you say, with an affectation of extreme surprise, “Repentance and reformation! Is that satisfaction to the law of God? Is it possible that repentance and reformation could be an equivalent to their threatened death?”† In return, I ask you where does God require an equivalent, or, if he have received an equivalent, in what does his free mercy and forgiveness consist?

5. You say, that “Christ did not bear the infinite weight of divine wrath, but only such a degree of wrath as was equivalent to that infinite wrath that was due to the sins of mankind.”‡ Pray, Sir, what can be an equivalent to *infinite*, but *infinite*? In this respect you appear not to have perfectly learned your own system, or to be consistent with yourself.

6. You ask me, “If I will coolly affirm that, till a thing be explained, it can no more be believed than a proposition in an unknown tongue?”§ I do very coolly reaffirm it; and to exemplify my meaning, I desire you would pronounce the *Latin, Greek, or Hebrew* in your pamphlet to any of your unlearned neighbours, and, without giving him the *English*, ask him whether they express a truth. He can only reply, that he has no ideas to your terms. In like manner, though I believe many things on the authority of revelation, which could never have been discovered by human reason; yet still I can believe no farther concerning them than the inspired writers explain them, by giving me ideas of them. If they speak to me in an unknown tongue, I may have no doubt but that they speak the truth; but it is not *revealed* to me, so long as it is not *explained*, to the level of my capacity. Thus, I believe the *fact* of the resurrection, which is a doctrine of revealed religion; but I could not be said to *believe it*, if I did not know that the resurrection means the recovery of life after a state of death; but as to the *manner* in which it will be accomplished, *I believe nothing*, because *I know nothing* about it; the sacred writers not having

* *Answer*, p. 36. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 28. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 29. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 35. (P.)

explained, that is, not having *revealed*, or *made it known* to me.*

7. As several additional observations on the subject of the divinity of Christ, and atonement for sin by the death of Christ, were subjoined to the *Triumph of Truth*; † in which several of the objections mentioned in your pamphlet were fully obviated, particularly that very trite and insignificant one, concerning the *manhood* of Christ being only intended whenever he is said to be inferior to the Father; why did you not take notice of them? I now call upon you to answer those observations.

I shall conclude these Queries with advising you, and if you have a sensible friend, he will join with me in the advice, that you would write with more decency and modesty the next time you engage in controversy. For my part, I am by no means desirous of any such advantage as your unguarded heat would give me; wishing for nothing but *the prevalence of truth*, which is soonest come at, when arguments on both sides of a question are represented in a *cool* and *dispassionate* manner.

I particularly beg that you would no more offend me, and other lovers of the Scriptures, by the manner in which you, and too many persons of your stamp, express your abhorrence and detestation of them; on the supposition of what I firmly believe is the truth, viz. that they do not contain your sentiments. Mr. Venn, ‡ without more ado, was for *burning his Bible* when his opinions were confuted; and you hesitate not, in the same case, to give that sacred volume *a character* which, I dare say, you would think, made it deserving of that fate, when you say, that it would be “almost one great lie.” § This kind of language, respecting the Scriptures, I think betrays a want of decency.

Wishing that both you and I may study these *oracles of divine truth* more, and to better purpose; that we may thereby be *led into all truth*, and, what is of the greatest consequence, that the purity of Christian doctrine may have a happy influence on our tempers and conduct, I am, Sir, your servant, and that of all the world, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

* It is well recommended as “more honest and prudent to own our ignorance concerning certain abstruse speculations, than to form propositions about them, pretend to define and explain them;—and call out Heresy and Atheism, when we are desired to speak intelligibly, and tell what we mean.” *Independent Whig*, 1721, (liv.) ed. 7, 1743, II. p. 223.

† Vol. II. pp. 417—429.

‡ See *infra*.

§ Answer, p. 30. (P.)

TO THE REV. MR. MORGAN.

SIR,

As you have thought proper to interfere in the controversy occasioned by the *Appeal*, you might be displeased if I took no notice of your performance. You say, indeed, (blaming me for my intention to address Queries to you as well as the other answerers of the *Appeal*,) that you did "not refer to any of my writings;" but the *common name** is some mark of relationship; and the *subject* of the work, with the *time* and *manner* of the publication, give me the clearest right to rank your performance among those that were intended to defeat the purpose of mine; † and therefore it had such a reference to it, as makes it as properly entitled to a reply as a *direct answer*.

You say, also, that your Address was to *your own people*; but the sale was not *confined* to your own people; and in what you call an *Apology*, prefixed to your work, you have this very remarkable expression, "Be it known to the world;" ‡ so that, in fact, your Address was to all the persons into whose hands my own *Appeal* could come.

I cannot say that I have much to animadvert upon in *your Appeal*, except that want of explicitness and precision,

* "An Appeal." See *supra*, p. 3, Note*.

† Mr. Morgan appears to have written on this subject several letters in the newspapers, which called forth the animadversions of his and Dr. Priestley's friend, Mr. Graham, of Halifax. I am indebted to the kind attentions of a valued correspondent, for the copy of a letter to Mr. Morgan from Mr. Graham, dated Nov. 22, 1771. After some strictures on a 1st and 2d Letter, he thus proceeds: "Your last letter has given me still more pain.—You never can persuade even your best friends to believe that your pamphlet has no reference to a former Appeal. I do not see that it has any meaning without such a reference; and why should you go out of your way to deny or dissemble it?—If you think you have concealed any principles that are of importance; or advanced any that you cannot defend, candidly acknowledge it, and give them up, in the name of God. You have to do with an adversary of all men the most candid and dispassionate, at least in his commerce with you; one too that gave you no provocation, unless a mere difference in sentiment shall be thought such; but for the same reason you will think yourself obliged to attack the best writers and best divines of the age."

At the close of the MS. is an extract from a letter to Dr. Priestley, whose correspondent (probably Mr. Graham) says, "Your Appeal, and these newspaper dissertations, are much read in Craven, upon which Mr. Carr, Vicar of Bolton Abbey, one day expressed his concern, saying, *he wished they had never existed; for they have set people a thinking, and opened their eyes too much*. He has a very great opinion of you, and wondered you would have any thing to do with such," &c.

‡ See *supra*, p. 3, Note*.

which leaves little room for particular animadversion. What I have most to complain of are some things that look like *unfairness* in your performance, and availing yourself of such representations as are unworthy of the cause which, I believe, we both mean to support. These I shall freely mention, in order to give you an opportunity to exculpate yourself; and I sincerely wish it may be in your power to do it.

1. Why should you brand the writer of the *Appeal* with the name of *infidel*, by defining that term, so as to make it applicable to "those who reject the gospel of Christ," (that is, what you take to be the gospel,) "either wholly or in part,"* if it was not to avail yourself of the odium which is inseparable from that epithet?† Also in the title of your book you say, it is "intended as a preservative against the principles and practices of the Infidels—of the present age;"‡ though there is not one opinion that you combat in it, which is not maintained by myself, by other Christian writers, and by some of the most eminent defenders of Christianity, particularly the great and excellent Dr. Lardner; who, notwithstanding his whole life devoted to the service of the Gospel, is by you ranked in the class of *infidels*.

This extreme of *infidelity*, as well as the other, which you term *enthusiasm*, you also call a *fatal* one; and say that the way "between these" is the only one that "leadeth unto life," though "few find it;" for that "the *many have missed* their road, both as to matters of *faith* and *practice*; sins and errors" being "a bottomless pit where thousands perish."§ This severity of censure agrees with your saying that some of "the unhappy differences" among Dissenting Ministers relate "to subjects of the last importance in religion."|| What you really meant by this language I will not pretend to say, but I cannot help thinking that our readers will imagine that, in your opinion, my *Appeal* is the production not of a *Christian*, but of an *Infidel*, who is going himself and leading others to everlasting destruction.

2. It has very much the appearance of an unfair and unworthy artifice in you to quote all your objections to the

* *An Appeal*, p. 4. (P.)

† "The term infidel," says Mr. Graham, "you have used with too great latitude, and with too little precision. It puts me in mind of Solomon's arrows, firebrands, and death; and, for aught I see, all those whose faith is not of the same size and dimensions with your own, must pass under that denomination, and be content to be thought no Christians."

‡ See *supra*, p. 3, Note *.

§ *An Appeal*, p. 4. (P.)

|| *Apology*. See *supra*, p. 3, Note *.

doctrine of atonement, from the works of *Deists*,* when some of them are to be found in the *Appeal*, and other serious Christian writings. You could not take a more effectual method to insinuate, that none but *Deists* make such objections to that doctrine; and therefore that I, and others, who do make them, deserve no better name.

3. It looks like an artifice of the same kind, viz. availing yourself of the odium conveyed by words and phrases, that you represent the doctrine of the *Trinity* as opposed by such persons only as *St. Paul* calls “the disputers of this world,”† and by “the *profane and vain babblings* of weak or wicked men who oppose the truth,”‡ as if it were impossible that any serious and candid person could believe otherwise than you do, on that subject. You also speak of my sentiments in general, opposed to yours in general, as having no support but *the powers of wit and corrupt reason*; for you say, that “the doctrines which I have encountered are established upon a rock, and all the powers of wit and corrupt reason cannot prevail against them.”§

4. Your reminding me that the sentiments I have avowed are “contrary to those of the Established Church,” looks like artifice to gain to your side the friends of the Establishment; and this conduct is truly very curious in a Dissenter. But your reminding me, at the same time, that my sentiments are also contrary to those of “the legal Dissenters,”|| seems to imply a *threatening*, which, I am not afraid to say, I most sincerely despise. Far from boasting that my sentiments have the sanction of the *powers of this world*, I should rather glory in a religion which had no countenance but in *the kingdom of God and of Christ*.

You do not fail, indeed, to intimate that your cause, besides being supported by the powers of this world, is “established upon the rock of the everlasting Gospel,” so “that all the powers of wit and corrupt reason cannot prevail against it.” To this I would observe, that the whole system of Popery is likewise built upon the same everlasting

* *An Appeal*, pp. 19—21. (P.) The writers quoted are *Morgan* and *Chubb*.

† *An Appeal*, p. 9. (P.) ‡ *Ibid.* p. 11. (P.)

§ This passage, which is not in Mr. Morgan's *Appeal*, was, no doubt, quoted from his *Letters*.

|| Mr. Graham says to Mr. Morgan, in the MS. before quoted, “What unpropitious planet was you under when you threw out that ill-judged and unmanly insinuation of your opponent's not being a *legal Dissenter*? Can you say that this had no meaning or reference? I hope you are not one yourself, and sorry should I be to be informed that any of my friends satisfied themselves with the humble reputation of *legal Dissenters* or *parliamentary Christians*. I wonder how such language could drop from your pen.” See Vol. II. p. xvii.

rock; for without that, as a foundation for it, it could have had no existence. But, notwithstanding this, both that system and yours may be, and I believe are, such "wood, hay, and stubble" as have been "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," and which will be utterly consumed; while the foundation itself, and whatever has been built upon it, of better and more suitable materials, will stand till time shall be no more.

QUERIES

Proposed to the Rev. Mr. Morgan.

REV. SIR,

THE questions I shall now propose to you are such as you and your readers ought to thank me for, being designed to give you an opportunity of delivering your sentiments on subjects which you represent as "of the last importance in religion."* and yet concerning which it is not easy to say what your sentiments really are. In these questions I am far from intending to act the part of an *inquisitor*, or to indulge an *impertinent curiosity*; since I only ask an explanation of what you have publicly advanced. In return, I shall think myself obliged to you for pointing out to me any thing that seems to be *obscure* or *ambiguous* in my *Appeal*, and shall very frankly both tell you what I really meant, and give you my reasons for it.

1. As you have thought proper to bestow the epithet of *infidels* upon those of your fellow-christians who do not believe quite so much as yourself; since also I find myself represented by you, notwithstanding "the integrity and sincerity" that you allow me, in what you call "a fatal extreme," and am not in "that narrow but safe way which leadeth unto life;" since I am one of "the many" who "have missed their road as to matters of faith," and am plunged in "a bottomless pit" of error, "where thousands perish;"† I beg that, for my satisfaction, and that of others, you would inform us distinctly what errors are fatal, and what are not; and give some plain reason for the distinction.

* *Apology.* See *supra*, p. 3, Note *.

† *An Appeal*, p. 4.

If a *Socinian* have no chance for salvation, has an *Arian* any? If an *Arian* have none, has an *Arminian* any? If an *Arminian* have none, has a *Baxterian* any? &c. &c. &c. It really behoves you, Sir, to be very explicit upon this head. To this question, therefore, I and all your readers shall expect a plain and clear answer.

2. "By enthusiasts" you say, that you "mean those who pretend that they are guided by the *spirit of God*; when they do not use the *means of grace*; and that say they can understand scripture by *inspiration*, without other helps."* Upon this I cannot help asking some farther information concerning the sect, or body of men, to whom this description answers. Neither my knowledge of church-history, or of the world, has yet brought me acquainted with any such persons; and yet you call this species of enthusiasm one of the dangerous and fatal extremes of the *present day*. If there be such persons (which I am very much disposed to question), explain to us also the reason why such poor, deluded creatures must be consigned to the *bottomless pit*.

3. I observe that you advance nothing upon the subject of the *divinity of Christ*, but what I could say myself, † believing God to be intimately united to the man Christ Jesus, and acting by him. For, certainly, the *power* by which he worked miracles, and knew the hearts of men, was properly *divine*; and this I know to be all that is really meant by many persons who talk as you do. But do you believe that Christ has any divinity that is *not derived from the Father*, but *essentially in himself*?

4. Upon the doctrine of *original sin* your expressions are peculiarly vague and indeterminate. You say, indeed, that "all men who are *subject to death* are, in some sense, accounted *sinner*s before God, even *children*, who have not sinned by actual transgression." ‡ But unless you will say *in what sense* they are sinners, you say nothing at all to the purpose. Is the sin of Adam imputed to them, so that they are justly *punishable* for it here and hereafter? Also, when you say, under the same head, that "we are under the curse of the law, and liable to be condemned to *everlasting torments* in a future state," § do you mean that we are liable to this

* *An Appeal*, p. 4. (P.)

† Thus Mr. Graham having sent Mr. Morgan his "Synodical Discourse," says, "I have not been so shy in declaring my sentiments as to leave room for further explanations. I wish you had been equally explicit in your Appeal, concerning which I must needs say, that it is written in terms so vague and general, that there is hardly any thing in it to which I could not subscribe." MS.

‡ *An Appeal*, p. 12. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 14. (P.)

punishment for our own transgressions only, or for the sin of Adam? What you have said is altogether ambiguous.

5. Upon that most important subject, "the power of man to do the will of God," and also on the doctrines of "election and reprobation," you are absolutely silent; but as these are necessary parts of the system which I have attacked, and which you partially maintain, it behoved you to have been very explicit on all these heads. I rather imagine that you think with me upon these subjects; both from this emphatical silence, and also from what you say, that "the more *valuable blessings*" of redemption are "held forth, and freely offered to sinners; yet that not one of *these blessings* is to be obtained, but in the *way* and upon the *terms* of *faith* and *repentance*.* If there be any meaning in a *free offer*, it certainly implies a *power of acceptance and refusal* in all those to whom it is made. Those who believe that men have *no power* in this case, either to accept or refuse, and who, consequently, admit the doctrines of election and reprobation in their just extent, are, in general, not only forward to avow their belief, but also lay great stress upon it; and accordingly, the true *Calvinist* justly regards *Arminianism*, and even *Baxterianism*, with as much horror as *Socinianism* itself.† Indeed, there is more reason to be apprehensive of them, as they undermine the old system by degrees, and seldom fail to lead men farther.

I am, Rev. Sir,

Your very humble servant,

* *An Appeal*, p. 21. (P.)

† Such appears to have been the judgment of a very popular *Calvinist*, concerning the most celebrated *Arminian* of his age. The Rev. Rowland Hill, in a juvenile and very scurrilous pamphlet, of which he soon confessed that "the style" was "far too ludicrous and severe," quotes the following opinion of *John Wesley* against the *Calvinistic* notion of *imputed righteousness*: "It can never consist with God's unerring wisdom, to think that *I* am innocent, to judge that *I* am righteous, because *another* is so. He can no more, in this manner, confound *me* with *Christ*, than with *David*, or *Abraham*." Mr. Hill thus proceeds: "This truly *Socinian*, truly *Heathen*, and truly *infernal* passage, occurs in a printed sermon of Mr. Wesley's on *Justification*; which the reader will find in one of the three first volumes of that heretic's sermons, published many years ago. I challenge Mr. Wesley, and all or any of his myrmidons, to deny the authenticity and exactness of the quotation." See "Imposture Detected, and the Dead Vindicated: in a Letter to a Friend. Containing some gentle Strictures on the false and libellous Harangue, lately delivered by Mr. John Wesley, upon his laying the first stone of his new Dissenting Meeting-House, near the City Road. By Rowland Hill, M.A." 1777, p. 23, *Note*. See also, *Toplady's* "Historic Proofs of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England," 1774, *passim*.

TO MR. CORNELIUS CALEY. *

SIR,

I choose to conclude these papers with an address to you, because I am sure to do it in perfect good humour. You and I differ in some of our sentiments, but we agree in things of much more consequence than *any sentiments*, viz. Christian moderation, candour, and benevolence. I only take the liberty to propose to you the following questions, which you will very much misinterpret, if you imagine to be captious ones :

1. Allowing that “sincerity of intention and moderation of spirit are apparent throughout my performance,” you say, that “I am mistaken in the very fundamentals of the Christian religion.” † I therefore desire to know what it is that you mean by *fundamental*, and in what sense a doctrine is so?

2. You say, that you “agree with me touching many exhortations found in the Scriptures, calling sinners to turn and repent;” ‡ and yet you say, that “to imagine a man, by any power of his own, can raise himself from a death of tresspasses and sins, is just as absurd, as to suppose that he can raise his own dead body, when the breath is departed from it.” § If this be literally the case, what can exhortation to sinners mean? You may *pray* over a dead body, that God would give it life; but you would never think of talking to it, except by way of figure, as when we address the heavens and the earth, &c.

3. As you compare the three persons in the Trinity to the three constituent parts of man, || consider what I have said to the anonymous answerer on that subject, ¶ and say whether that hypothesis does not imply, that each of the three persons is only one *third part* of Deity, and whether this be not a strange and dangerous doctrine.

4. As a proof of the divinity of Christ you allege our Saviour’s saying to *Philip*, [*John* xiv. 9,] “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” ** But if this be at all to your purpose, will it not prove too much, viz. that Christ is not the *Son*, or the *second* person in the Trinity, but the *Father*, or the *first*?

5. When you say, that “the death of Christ is a real

* A preacher among the *Wesleian* Methodists.

† *Caley*, p. 3. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 7. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 12. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 15. (P.)

¶ *Supra*, p. 14.

** *Caley*, p. 16. (P.)

sacrifice,"* meaning that it is so in the same sense in which *praise* is called a sacrifice, I agree with you; for it appears to me that praise cannot be called a sacrifice any otherwise than by way of comparison, as it is my opinion that Christ, in his death, is represented in the Scriptures.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN I look back upon this controversy, and consider that all my antagonists are either declared, or justly suspected *Arminians*, I cannot help expressing my wonder at what is become of the *rigid Predestinarians*: for they are properly those against whom (as any person may perceive) the writer of the *Appeal* has ventured to throw down his gauntlet; or rather against whom (to reverse the comparison of Mr. Morgan) he has advanced, like the stripling David, with a sling and a stone, confiding in the goodness of his cause, and committing himself to the protection of Divine Providence.

Time was, and I am not so young but that I well remember the time, when such antagonists as I have had would have been reckoned no better than myself, by those who were reputed the *orthodox* of their day; and yet with what rage has one of these *heterodox writers*, attacked a *brother heretic!* How would the manes of those old champions smile to see us *fall out by the way*, when they were confident that we must all come to the same place of torment at last! And the furious zeal of those veterans was far more plausible and respectable than that which it has been my fate to meet with.

There is something *striking* and *consistent* in the genuine *Supralapsarian system*, of the eternally destined fall of man, an infinite penalty incurred by one, and, by the imputation of his sin, affecting all, and an infinite atonement adequate to it, made by an infinite Being; by which means a small remnant of the human race are necessarily saved; while all the rest of mankind, including new-born children, unbelieving *Jews*, *Mahometans* and *Heathens*, *Arminians* and *Baxterians*, *Arians* and *Socinians*, without distinction, (as destitute either of faith, or the right faith,) are consigned to everlasting torments, with the Devil and his angels; from whence results *glory* to a God, who, in all this dreadful scheme, sought nothing else.

* *Caley*, p. 18. (P.)

These are the *tremendous doctrines* which have overawed mankind for so many centuries ; and, compared with this, all the modern *qualified, intermediate systems*, are crude, incoherent, and contemptible things. My antagonists may cavil at *election and reprobation*, or any other single article in the well-compacted system ; but every part is necessary to the whole ; and if one stone be pushed out of its place, the whole building tumbles to the ground. And when, in consequence of their ill-judged attempts to alter, patch, and repair, they have brought things to this catastrophe, there will be nothing left but the simple belief, that the merciful Parent of the universe, who never meant any thing but the happiness of his creatures, sent his well-beloved Son, *the man Christ Jesus*, to reclaim men from their wickedness, and to teach them the way of righteousness ; assuring them, for their encouragement, of the free and unbought pardon of their sins, and promising a life of endless happiness to all that receive and obey the Gospel, by repenting of their sins, and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.

This is the essence of what is called *Socinianism* ; and though this simple doctrine may, on account of its excellence and simplicity, be a stumbling-block to some, and foolishness to others, I believe it to be the sum and substance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the wisdom and power of God.

Having, in the *Appeal*, undertaken to encounter that enormous system of opinions, which has so long tyrannized over the reason and conscience of the Christian world, my opponents may depend upon it that I shall pursue my purpose, and that I shall least of all be dismayed by such a system as theirs ; which, at best, is but the mere *shadow* of what I have ventured to attack ; for though it may assume the same air and menacing tone, it is far from being the same thing. It is no more than the ass in the lion's skin.

Formidable as this lion itself, this great adversary of the truth, may be, I make no doubt but that, by the help of reason, and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," it will be finally overcome. And whenever the *holy apostles and prophets shall rejoice* at the fall of this last part of *mystical Babylon*, (*Rev.* xviii. 20,) happy will they be who may join the chorus, as having employed their efforts, however feeble, with those who, in this great cause, fight under *the banners of the Lamb*, and who "are called, and chosen, and faithful." *Rev.* xvii. 14. *

* To this *Conclusion* was added in 1771, a *Prayer*, for which, see Vol. II. pp. 480—484.

A
LETTER TO A LAYMAN,
 ON
 THE SUBJECT OF THE REV. MR. LINDSEY'S PROPOSAL
 FOR
A Reformed English Church,
 UPON
 THE PLAN OF THE LATE DR. SAMUEL CLARKE.*

 [London, 1774.]
 =====

DEAR SIR,

As I find that, notwithstanding the frequent conversations we have had together upon the subject, you still entertain some objections to Mr. Lindsey's proposal for a *reformed English Church*, I take the liberty to send you the result of my deliberate thoughts with respect to it, and other things nearly connected with it. I am persuaded you will attend with candour to the considerations I shall offer, because it is a disposition that is natural to you; neither do I need to tell you, that the subject is interesting.

You will agree with me in thinking, that Christianity is the greatest and best gift which the compassionate Father of mankind has ever bestowed on his degenerate and perishing offspring. It is the balm for all our wounds, our support under all our troubles, and the source of all our hope and joy.

Being excellently adapted, as you know and feel that Christianity is, to these great purposes, you will agree with me in considering it as a *sacred deposit*, which is to be kept with the greatest fidelity and attention; lest it be perverted from its natural and proper use; and, like perverted reason and perverted passions, which are likewise the gift of God, be a source of evil, instead of good, to us.

* See Vol. V. p. 85, Note †; Lindsay's *Hist. View*, 1783, pp. 233, 235, 236.

We have but too many instances of the actual and gross abuse of Christianity, to make us extremely upon our guard with respect to it. So unlike to what it was originally, as it came from the hands of its divine Author, is this religion, as it is now professed in the Church of *Rome*, (which, however, has arrogated to itself the title of the Catholic Christian Church,) as to make it questionable, whether many species of *Paganism*,* or even downright *Atheism*, be not more eligible. Thus debased, it has been, on the one hand, the fruitful parent of the most low, abject, and despicable superstition that ever disgraced human nature, and on the other, of such bigotry and rage, as can hardly be characterized, by calling it any thing less than infernal and diabolical.

Revelation was certainly intended to inspire men with just ideas of that God "with whom we have to do," to represent him as the object of filial reverence, love, and confidence; and also to give us just and engaging views of our duty here, and of our expectations after death. Both these things have a strict and inseparable connexion. And yet, though *Judaism* was evidently designed to be the great barrier against *Polytheism*, which threatened to overspread the world, having for its fundamental principle the doctrine of the *unity of God*; and though Christianity was as certainly intended to confirm this great principle of the Jewish religion, and to extend the knowledge and influence of it, for the benefit of all mankind, it presently became itself the occasion of a *new kind of Polytheism*, as mischievous as almost any system of Heathenism. For what effect has the worship of the *Virgin Mary*, † and of innumerable saints and angels, but the very same that the worship of *Apollo*, *Minerva*, and the whole train of *Greek and Roman* divinities; and has not the true knowledge and pure worship of the one living and true God, been equally lost in both systems?

You will agree with me, that this dreadful corruption of Christianity was distinctly foreseen and expressly foretold by the Founder of it, and by his apostles. This you believe was the *Antichrist*, which *John* says began to exist in his time, but which has since attained to its full growth, and is now, happily, upon the decline.

I know you also believe with me, that the present Church of England is the most imperfect of all those that separated

* See Vol. V. pp. 199, 205, 297, 298, 309, 310, *Notes*.

† See *ibid.* pp. 204—208.

from it, and that call themselves *reformed*; retaining many of the same superstitious rites, * claiming the same authority over the faith and consciences of men, holding a plurality of objects of divine worship, and enforcing a conformity to her creeds and worship, by the penalties of confiscation of goods, and imprisonment for life, and many other civil disabilities and sufferings, with this additional absurdity, not known abroad, that this Christian Church has a *temporal head*; † so that its articles of faith and constitution, as they were first made, are liable to be changed, at the pleasure of the King, or the English Lords and Commons; ‡ and you do not suppose that many of them have much knowledge of the subject, or concern for it.

I know, my friend, you are a serious Christian yourself. Give me leave then to be very serious with you. By what arguments, or on what principles, can you satisfy yourself in continuing in communion with a church which you believe to be, in so great a degree, corrupt and antichristian; and how is it that you avoid applying to yourself that awful warning from God himself, with respect to this very subject, *Rev. xviii. 4*, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”?

I agree with you, that in things of small consequence, an enlightened, generous, and candid mind will bear with the imperfections of human institutions, because he may think that more good than evil may be derived from the whole system, and especially that the advantage of a separation would not counterbalance the disadvantages of a schism. But, my friend, this reasoning will not avail you in the present case. You will not deny, that the corruptions of the Church of England affect the very *fundamentals* of the Christian religion. The proper *object*, which depends upon the strict *unity* of divine worship, is not preserved in it; and, in consequence of it, the Divine *character* and *government* are grossly misrepresented in it. He is, in the Thirty-nine Articles, exhibited as a Being who condemns men for involuntary errors, who has irreversibly doomed a great part of the human race to everlasting destruction, and who saves the rest only on account of the cruel death and sufferings of his innocent Son.

How can you say, that the worship of such a Being as

* See Vol. V. pp. 288, 289.

† See *ibid.* p. 427.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 428—433.

this, or the countenance of such worship, by continuing in her communion, is innocent, tolerable, or safe? And will not God, who has been pleased to enlighten your mind with the better knowledge of his divine truth, expect from you a conduct more corresponding to it?

I know you think the separation of the Church of *England* from the Church of *Rome* to have been justifiable; otherwise you certainly do wrong in not going back to it; but, on the very same principles, do not your present convictions require a separation from the present Church of England? Would not *Cranmer*, and the other English Reformers, have thought themselves exceedingly blame-worthy, if, with your sentiments, they had not made a much more effectual reformation than they did; and, with the same conscientious regard to truth and integrity, would they not, were they now living, and with their minds enlightened as yours is, abandon a church, whose creeds to them would be blasphemous, and whose worship sinful?

They would be sensible that the errors and abuses which they had left in the church, were unspeakably greater than any of those which they had thrown out of it. *Transubstantiation* would appear a mere *conundrum*, a trifle, in comparison with the worship of created beings; and what could they think was really gained by rejecting the worship of *saints* and *angels*, when the great *principle*, on which they ought to have rejected it, viz. a proper unity in the object of worship, was not admitted? Seeing things in the light in which you see them, what would they think they had gained by rejecting a *spiritual head* of the church, and assuming a *temporal one* in his place? Things *indifferent* to morality may be borne with, for the sake of peace, but certainly things *sinful*, and expressly inconsistent with our allegiance to God and Christ, ought not. But I will not give you, or myself, the pain to pursue this disagreeable comparison any farther.

You say you are endeavouring to promote a reformation, and take what you think to be the most proper methods for that purpose. But I wish, my friend, you would not deceive yourself both with respect to the real *motives* which secretly influence your determinations, and also the *hopes* you fondly entertain of a reformation. At the best, your pleas for continuing in the Church of England, can be no better than such as retained *Erasmus*, *Father Paul*, and *Fenelon*, in the Church of Rome; men who, to every other virtue, did not add that *pure and simple regard to truth*,

which the God of truth requires of us; and with whom worldly considerations, or at least considerations foreign to that of truth and conscience, such as *peace* and *quiet*, had too much weight.*

With such principles and views as those of these men, no reformation would ever have been made in the church. If you adopt their sentiments, you must condemn the conduct of the glorious *Wickliffe*, *Luther*, and *Socinus*: not to mention the English *Puritans*; for in their circumstances you would not have acted as they did.

Christianity and conscience, my friend, are *personal things*, and therefore what we do with respect to them, should not be made to depend upon a regard to what is done by *others*, be they *who* or *how many* they will. We may deceive ourselves in our notions of the advantages to be derived from the same form of worship, and the proper time for reformation, &c.; but we are in no danger of deceiving ourselves with respect to what is *of itself*, and independent on all foreign considerations whatever, true or false, morally right, or morally wrong. The God of nature has not left mankind under an obligation to embarrass themselves with such considerations as seem to influence your conduct. The path of our duty is plainly marked out for us, and we are fully and distinctly apprized of the infinite hazard at which we depart from it. It is our business, poor, short-sighted creatures, to abandon *speculation*, and keep close to

* Thus *Erasmus* and his friend *Colet*, "being joint spectators of some superstitious relics of *Thomas à Becket*, *Colet* was out of patience to see those silly fopperies, whereas *Erasmus* was more easy, waiting till a proper time should come of reforming such abuses." *Knight's Life of Colet*, 1724, p. 209; *Jortin's Life of Erasmus*, 1758, pp. 170, 171.

Erasmus's words are, after describing the exhibition of relics: "Ista Joanni *Colet*o (nam is mecum aderat) videbantur indigna; mihi ferenda videbantur, donec se daret opportunitas ea citra tumultum corrigendi." *Erasmi Modus Orandi*, Op. Tom. V. p. 933." *Ibid.*

As to *Father Paul*, *Burnet* (*Life of Bp. Bedell*) says, when the Father, on "the reconciliation with Rome," despaired of a reformation at Venice, "he made a shift to comply, as far as he could, with the established way of their worship; but he had in many things, particular methods by which he rather quieted than satisfied his conscience." *Life of F. Paul*, prefixed to his *Hist. of Eccl. Benef.* "translated by T. Jenkins, Esq. late M. P. and Lord Mayor of York," ed. 3, 1736, p. xcv., *Note*.

Fenelon, however, appears to have been actuated by no consideration but a conscientious deference to the supposed infallibility of the Holy See. Thus when *Innocent XII.*, in 1699, condemned the Archbishop's "Explication des Maximes des Saints sur la Vie Intérieure," he immediately published a *Mandate* declaring his submission to that condemnation, and adding, "Nous défendons à tous les Fidèles de le Diocèse, de lire et de garder ce Livre."

The ground of this unqualified submission he thus expresses: "Ma conscience est déchargée dans celle de mon Supérieur.—Je ne vois que Dieu, et je suis content de ce qu' il, fait." See *La Vie de M. de Fenelon*, annexed to his "Examen de Conscience pour un Roi," 1747, pp. 134, 135, 138, *Note*.

our *duty*. It is enough for us to do what God has expressly commanded us; and, doing this, we need give ourselves no concern about his church, and the reformation of the world at large. Of these interests he, who is as perfect in wisdom as in power, will take sufficient care. One sure step towards the reformation of the world, is to begin the reformation in ourselves, and as far as respects our own conduct: and who can tell what the influence of his own example only may do?

Let us dread, therefore, the sacrificing of truth to agreement in the forms of worship, or to any other foreign consideration whatever. Has God commanded us, in the *first*, and what our Lord himself calls the *greatest of all the commandments*, to worship *no God but one*;* and can I hesitate about abandoning all connexion with a church that professes to worship *more Gods than one*? Are we expressly commanded [Matt. xxiii. 9, 10] to *call no man Father upon earth*, but God, and *no man master, but Christ*; and can I hold communion with a church which, in direct and flat contradiction to this prohibition, impudently claims an authority over my faith, and acknowledges a temporal head? This case is surely too plain to be argued any farther, and certainly nothing but some very foreign, improper, and unworthy considerations and prejudices can prevent men, of ingenuous minds in other respects, from seeing what every Christian, who professes obedience to God and Christ, ought to do, and from immediately acting according to it.

I own that I am afraid of speculating in a case of this nature. However, I will venture to speculate a little with you, observing, that whatever becomes of my speculative arguments, my duty and conduct are not to depend upon them.

1. I know you entertain a flattering idea of the advantage of agreement in Christian worship, and think that Christianity suffers, in the esteem of *Heathens* and *Unbelievers*, on account of the great number of sects and divisions there are in it. But this is a hackneyed argument, adopted by all the enemies of reformation, and had just as much weight in the mouth of Cardinal *Cajetan* against *Luther*, † as in the mouth of a member of the Church of England against a Dissenter.

Every reasonable man must see that Christianity, like every thing else that is submitted to the reason of man, will be differently understood by different persons; and that the

* See *Matt.* xxii. 36—38; *Mark* xii. 28—32.

† See *Vol. X.* p. 98.

only method of attaining to a truly valuable agreement, is to promote the most perfect freedom of thinking and acting with respect to it, in order that every point of difference may have an opportunity of being fully canvassed; not doubting but that, in due time, truth will prevail, and that then a rational, firm, and truly valuable union will take place; but that to attempt to accelerate this union in the present imperfect state of Christian knowledge, is likely to establish nothing but error, along with a spiritual tyranny and imposition.

Besides, your objection to Mr. Lindsey's reformed church as a *multiplication of sects*, has no place, because he advances no new doctrine. Not only are his sentiments the same with those which you believe to have been taught by Christ and his apostles, but the only principle on which he divides from the Church of England, is that great and well-known *Unitarian principle*, which formerly divided others from the churches both of *Rome* and of *England*.

If you say that Mr. Lindsey sets up a new sect, because he proposes to conduct public worship in something of a *new manner*, you must say, that, for many centuries after the promulgation of Christianity, there was no such thing as any unity in the Christian church; for no two churches of note conducted public worship in the very same manner. They soon got their separate formularies, but they never imagined that the proper unity of the Christian church was broken, or at all endangered by this circumstance.

Had Mr. Lindsey, instead of using a liturgy, adopted the method of extemporary prayer, he would have been exactly upon the plan of other Dissenters from the Church of England, who are known to maintain the *Unitarian principle*; but such a trifling difference as that of praying with or without a book, cannot be deemed very material. It is merely a difference in *form*, while the *substance* remains the same. Union in affection may very well consist with a great diversity of forms, and even of opinions; and an union of affection well established, is most likely to prepare the way for every other kind of union.

2. You will perhaps say, that though you continue to communicate with the Church of England, you do not adopt her faith: and though you are constantly present at the celebration of her worship, and never attend any other, you only join in those parts of the service which you approve. But might not *Luther* and *Calvin*, and all the other reformers, have as innocently adopted the same con-

duct? Nay, they might with a better conscience have even received the mass, than you can kneel at the recitation of the Litany, or stand up at the repetition of the *Athanasian* Creed.

Perhaps you will say, that you communicate with the Church of England, because you approve of it upon the whole; and think that, notwithstanding its imperfections, it is preferable to any other community of Christians. But this, permit me to say, cannot, with any face of truth, be alleged by any *Arian* or *Socinian*, because there are many places of worship infinitely nearer to the true Christian plan, according to your own ideas of it, than the Church of England; and surely its having *more adherents* can be no sufficient recommendation of it, in preference to others which are confessedly much *nearer the truth*. Upon this principle, the Church of *Rome* will have the advantage of the Church of *England*.

Besides, how is it to be authentically known what are our Christian principles, and in what manner are we to bear our testimony to the truth, and to confess Christ and his genuine doctrine before men, which we are absolutely required to do, but by openly separating ourselves from all impure churches, and openly joining ourselves to those which we think to be more pure?

In the mouths of most, but I hope, my friend, not with you, this excuse for joining in communion with a corrupt church is a mere cover for motives of interest or fashion; against the influence of which it is one great object and use of Christianity to preserve us. In proportion as we are, directly or indirectly, known or unknown to ourselves, biassed by such considerations as these, we cease to feel and act like Christians.

If, therefore, I mean to follow Christ, I must be more especially upon my guard against adopting that mode of faith or practice which it is my interest, or which it is fashionable, for me to adopt; it being *à priori*, probable, that what "is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." The true Christian must obey God, and not man; he must not "follow a multitude to do evil," and must be content to "take up his cross," suffer persecution, and follow Christ here, if he would reign with him hereafter.

Admitting that your conduct might be excused, on the supposition that, being a *layman*, you do not actually join in any thing that is criminal during your attendance upon public worship, still your concurrence is giving counten-

ance and support to that system by which the *clergy* are ensnared. Many of them, you know, not only subscribe what they do not believe, but utter every day what they must consider as nothing less than impious falsehoods, in the form of a solemn address to Almighty God. And can it be easy to you to be accessory to other men's sins; and thus to be, in some measure, the cause why some "perish for whom Christ died"?

Had every serious, enlightened Christian the courage to withdraw from the communion of a church in which he sees such sinful prevarication encouraged, the attention of the most supine statesmen would be excited to it; and, notwithstanding the opposition that is always to be expected from the heads of corrupt establishments, and all who are gainers by them, a reformation would immediately take place.

There cannot be a plainer rule of life than this, that every man should do what he would wish others to do, and as he is convinced would be the best if all others would do. As was remarked before, no man can tell what influence his own example may have to produce that effect. Whatever comes of it, he, by this means, discharges his conscience, and *saves his own soul*.

As to those of the clergy who persist in doing what they know to be greatly wrong, and endeavour to make themselves easy by pleading, that in other respects they do what is right and good, and are enabled to do the good by means of the evil, I would ask them, whether they can really imagine, that God stands in any need of their insincerity, wickedness, and ruin, in order to accomplish his designs? To "do evil that good may come," is a maxim that St. *Paul* disclaims with abhorrence; [*Rom.* iii. 8;] and St. *James* says, [ii. 10,] that if a man "offend," that is, knowingly and wilfully "offend, in one point, he is guilty of all."

3. You may be pleasing yourself with the thought that in due time the *bishops* will be induced to reform the church themselves, so that every thing that you think is wrong may be rectified without your going out of your way, or making yourself the talk of your acquaintance and of the world, upon the subject. But I think you know mankind and the world too well, to have, in reality, much expectation from this quarter. You know that *reformation* is that which no bishops, in short, no *men* in their situation, with their rank, wealth, and power in the church, ever promoted, or wished; but what they have always opposed to the utmost of their influence,

Not that the bishops, if they give themselves the trouble to think upon the subject at all, may not *wish* the reformation of many things, in so old and complex a system as that of the church; but they have discernment enough to foresee, that if a reformation should once begin, it will not stop where they would choose to have it; and it is but too plain, that they are absolutely bent upon retaining, at the hazard of perpetuating whatever themselves think wrong, many things which they are sensible cannot escape an inquiry, if any inquiry be encouraged. Like spiders in the centre of an immense web, they feel at every extremity of it; knowing that if what seem to be only the outworks be demolished, the whole fabric will come to the ground.

It is our Saviour's rule to *judge of a tree by its fruit*, and of men by their actions. You have seen what kind of a reception the proposal of the Petitioning Clergy, and even that of the Dissenters, has met with from them. What could be more reasonable in themselves, or more modest in their form, and yet what could be more peremptory, rude, and insulting, than the episcopal rejection of them both?

Lay these things together, my friend, and ask yourself, whether any good is reasonably to be expected from the bishops; and, in the mean time, do not you be doing evil, in hopes that this very uncertain good may come.

There is nothing more diametrically opposite to every thing Christian, than the great maxim of the Heathen philosophers in former times, and of *unbelievers* * in these, viz. *to think with the wise, and act with the vulgar*. The true Christian is a character that is all of a piece. What he believes, he openly professes, and acts upon. He is studious to avoid even the appearance of evil, and therefore dreads giving the least countenance to any system, or mode of worship, which in his own judgment he condemns. † He

* To these, impartial justice will join such accommodating *believers* as "act with the vulgar," while they acquire or retain lucrative preferments, on the ground of subscribing, or having subscribed, *ex animo*, their "assent and consent" to "all and every thing" in the Creeds, Articles and Liturgy, of a "Church by Law Established," whose distinguishing doctrines they reject as unscriptural and absurd.

† How will this character of "the true Christian" agree with the conduct of such *churchmen* as Dr. Samuel Clarke, Bishop Edmund Law, &c., whose "godly sincerity" we are not accustomed to call in question? Yet if we must not describe such *accommodaters* as under the influence of "fleshy wisdom," it is scarcely possible not to ascribe the self-denial of such men as *Wakefield*, *Robertson*, and *Jebb*, to a pitiable weakness. Dr. Clarke, however, though, probably from unfavourable early associations, incapable of such *self-denial*, is credibly reported to have sacrificed to principle very fair prospects of the highest preferment in his church. See *Voltaire's* testimony, Vol. XVII. p. 50, *Note*, also "a great champion for natural

fears God, and fears nothing else ; and provided *his own heart does not condemn him*, he cares not what *men* may say of him, or do to him.

The great stumbling-block in the way of Christianity is the same now that it was from the beginning, being what was called by the apostle *Paul*, [*Gal. v. 11,*] “the offence of the cross,” and which he seems to intimate is never to cease. The pride of man was shocked at the mean appearance of their divine instructor, and especially at the ignominious circumstances attending his death ; and men are still as much as ever captivated with external splendour, and what the world will think reputable, even in religion. They are still apt to be disgusted at every thing that is reckoned *mean*, and consequently are ashamed to be seen to connect themselves with a cause that has not the countenance of the *great*, the *wise*, and the *many*. In short, they are deficient in true greatness and enlargedness of mind ; they are, in the scripture sense of the words, “fools and blind,” not being able to overlook temporary losses, temporary sufferings, and temporary disgrace, by connecting them steadily in their minds with future glory, recompence, and bliss.

No other reason than this can be assigned for many persons continuing in established churches, when they are sufficiently convinced of their abominable errors and corruptions. In their real judgment they give a clear preference to those who dissent from them, and at the same time are even ashamed of being seen in one of their places of worship, because their acquaintance in the fashionable world never come there.

From the same principle, numbers who have read Mr. Lindsey's apology, who greatly admire both it and the writer, and who thoroughly approve of his proposal for a reformed *English* church, will yet not be determined by their conviction of the propriety and excellence of his proposal, but inquire who countenances him, who have engaged to attend his new mode of worship ; and an answer to such questions as these will probably determine the conduct of nine in ten, who, like *Nicodemus*, with respect to Jesus, secretly wish him well, and would be glad to join him, provided that such and such persons would shew them the way. In the mean time, while they see no prospect of his meeting with much

and revealed religion,” described by *Gordon*, in 1719, as having “missed the mitre by deserving it.” *Independent Whig*, 1744, p. 216; *Tracts* by *Trenchard* and *Gordon*, 1751, pp. 200, 201.

encouragement, they will wish, and perhaps endeavour to dissuade him from making the attempt, as this would free the more feeling and conscientious of them from a disagreeable embarrassment.

Prejudices of this kind have more weight with the rich and the great, than with the middle and lower ranks of mankind; and hence the many earnest warnings and exhortations of the Scriptures on the subject. Hence the observation of the apostle *Paul*, (1 *Cor.* i. 26,) "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called," &c.; and that of *James*, (ii. 5,) "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" Hence that very alarming assertion of our Saviour himself, (*Matt.* xix. 23,) "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and again, (*ver.* 24,) "It is easier for a camel," or, as it ought to have been rendered, a *camel*, "to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

On this account, however, the few who are eminent for their birth, rank, and fortune, and who yet resist this great temptation, and have the courage to act according to the dictates of their consciences, have uncommon merit. And whatever a short-sighted world may think of them, their names will be had in everlasting remembrance. Having had a severer trial, and having improved more talents than others have been entrusted with, they will be advanced to more distinguished honour in the future kingdom of our Lord and Saviour; when those who have been dazzled with the vain splendour of this transitory world, and have been ashamed of the cause of truth, on account of the meanness of its external appearance, will find themselves the just objects of disgrace, shame, and self-abhorrence.

It was said, [*Luke* ii. 35,] by the spirit of prophecy, of the gospel in general, before the promulgation of it in the world, that by means of it "the thoughts of many hearts *would* be revealed," that is, it would be the test by which their dispositions would be tried; and that though it was "a savour of life" to some, it was "a savour of death" * to others. In the same light we may consider every scheme of reformation in general, and this of Mr. Lindsey in particular.

Many persons, it is well known, are extremely dissatisfied, or pretend to be dissatisfied, with the Church of England in

* 2 *Cor.* ii. 16. See Vol. XIV. p. 159, *Note* †.

its present form ; but neither can they reconcile themselves to the method of conducting public worship among the Dissenters. Here now is the very thing they have pretended to want, a *reformed Church of England*, a *liturgy*, but without any thing shocking to their understandings. It is an example set to the governors of the Church of what they themselves ought to have done *long ago*. * Let us see then who of those who have been calling for this reformation, are really the friends of it, by heartily espousing it, and shewing themselves superior to all low motives of interest, shame, or fear, in the support of it ; and also who they are that have had reformation in their *mouths* only, but not in their *hearts*, and who, though they see the truth, have not the courage to follow where it leads them.

This *discriminating crisis* is now at hand. Great and honourable, in the sight of God, and of wise and good men, will those be who shall boldly stand forth on this occasion, take this modest apologist by the hand, † encourage and support him in his difficulties, and at the same time form themselves, under a Christian ministry which they can entirely approve, for a state of more distinguished honour and happiness hereafter ; 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,” *Dan.* xii. 3. If the age can produce such a character, let him, I say, now stand forth, let him be to Mr. Lindsey what *Firmin* was to the excellent *Biddle*, ‡ share his triumphs, and, if occasion require, partake of his sufferings, in hope of sharing his reward.

Many persons pretend to be so dissatisfied with the public forms of the Church of England, and at the same time so averse to other sects, that they never attend any public worship. Here is a scheme which, if they be Christians at all, they will not pretend materially to disap-

* See Vol. XXII. p. 5, Note †.

† Mr. Belsham has not failed to do justice to Dr. Priestley's solicitude on this subject, in his gratifying relation of the prompt and liberal support, by which the “modest apologist,” was enabled to accomplish the truly honourable purpose of his excellent heart. It appears that “many persons both of the Establishment and among the Dissenters, perfect strangers to Mr. Lindsey, deeply impressed with veneration for his character, and admiration of the noble sacrifice which he had made for the sake of truth and conscience—expressed their warm approbation and their active, hearty concurrence in the execution of the design.”

Mr. Belsham has also justly distinguished “Samuel Shore, Esq., of Meersbrook,” (see Vol. VIII. p. 3,) and “Robert Newton, Esq., of Norton-House, whose delight was to spend the income of a large estate in doing good, in the most private manner possible, and from the shade of retirement to scatter blessings upon his fellow-creatures.” *Mem. of Lindsey*, 1812. pp. 98—101.

‡ See Vol. V. p. 84, X. p. 360.

prove. Let it be seen then, whether they will conscientiously do what they cannot but approve, or whether their dislike to the public worship of the Church of England, be not, in reality, a dislike of public worship, and of religion in general. If no form of Christianity now existing satisfy them, we may apply to them the Jewish proverb quoted by our Saviour, *Matt.* xi. 16, 17, "Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented."

I know, my friend, that you are a Christian. Be so *consistently*, and in this respect. To this end nothing is wanting but your considering the thing coolly, and in its true light.* Enter into your own heart, and have the courage to act as your own judgment, uninfluenced by any foreign consideration, shall dispose you.

I am,

Dear Sir, &c. †

* "An Address to Conforming *Arians*, both among the Clergy and Laity, first printed in 1735," is ascribed by Mr. Baron to "Mr. Joseph Hallet, of Exeter, Dissenting Teacher." The author, who assumes the character of a *bonâ fide* Churchman, says, "Having finished my address to the *Arian clergy*, I now turn to those of the *laity* of the Church of England, who continue in her communion, and yet have renounced her orthodox doctrines, particularly that of the holy and blessed Trinity.

"You, Gentlemen, I own, have one plea, which the *Arian clergy* have not; and that is, that you can pass over, and avoid repeating any thing in the *liturgy*, which you disapprove, while the clergy must read all that comes in their way, whether they believe it or not. I am sensible, many gentlemen take this method of stopping their mouths, and withholding their assent, when the priest reads, or the clerk and people devoutly repeat such passages of the *liturgy*, as are utterly subversive of the *Arian* scheme: but this salvo is not sufficient; for at this rate you may join in worship with a *popish* church, and that whether you understand the *Latin* prayers or not.

"Nay, I cannot see why the principle you act upon will not as well permit you to be stated members of a *Mahometan* assembly;—and yet, your being so, especially in a place where Christian churches were within your reach, would be an evidence, in the apprehension of all mankind, that you were really *Mahometans*. Thus being constant members of an *orthodox* church, especially in a place where *Arian* conventicles are within your reach, is, in the apprehension of all mankind, an evidence that you are really *orthodox* too.

"If you really look upon certain passages of our liturgy to be contrary to truth, and to the Holy Scripture, and to contain in them contradictions and idolatry, is there not much reason that you should leave the communion of the church?—The church cannot look upon you as sound members: she disowns you, and renounces all relation to you. Act a consistent part; either leave her worship, which you disapprove, or else fulfil her earnest wishes, viz. learn to believe her most sacred doctrines, and to adore the awful mysteries that she teaches.

"Leave your hypocrisy," this writer solemnly concludes, "dare not any longer to trifle with men, and with a heart-searching God: be not ashamed of the truth in an unbelieving and scoffing age: *be faithful to the death, and you shall inherit the crown of life.*" See "A Cordial for Low Spirits," 1763, pp. 400, 401, 404.

† This *Letter* was *Anonymous*.

LETTERS

TO THE

Members of the New Jerusalem Church,

FORMED BY BARON SWEDENBORG.

[*Birmingham*, 1791.]

PREFACE.

MANY of my readers, to whom Baron Swedenborg and his religion are but little known, will perhaps wonder what it was that drew my attention to them. It was the forming of a church, and the building of a very elegant place of worship, for persons of this persuasion at Birmingham, and my acquaintance with the ministers and leading members of the church. To a Christian every thing relating to Christianity will be more or less interesting; and so striking a variety in the modes of Christian faith and practice as this, together with the evident good sense and good conduct of all that I was acquainted with of this persuasion, drew my attention in a particular manner.

They were so obliging as to supply me with as many of the writings of Mr. Swedenborg as I wished to see. I read them with care, and the consequence was these *Letters*, addressed "to the Members of the *New Jerusalem Church*," as they call themselves. Living in friendship with them, I had made an appointment to read the Letters in manuscript to the minister and the heads of the society, on Friday the 15th of July; but the night before this, the zealots of the Church of England, when I had no suspicion of any outrage of the kind, demolished my house, library, apparatus, and every thing that they could lay hold of belonging to me, and would, I now believe, have destroyed myself if they had got me in their power.

The fair copy of these Letters, which was to have been delivered to the printer on the Monday following, was destroyed, together with my other manuscripts, But I happened to have taken a copy of them in their first and more

imperfect state, by Messrs. Boulton and Watt's machine, and that copy was in the hands of a friend.

Being in London presently after this, and having nothing else to do, having no laboratory to work in, and incapable of being wholly idle; besides writing "An Appeal to the Public on the Subject of the Riots in Birmingham," which will appear in due time,* I employed myself in transcribing these *Letters*, and recomposing, as well as I could, the parts of which I had no copy; Mr. Hindmarsh, the printer of Baron Swedenborg's writings, obligingly supplying me with books for that purpose. I had desired my friends in Birmingham, who collected the remains of my Library, to send me every book they could find relating to the *Swedenborgians*. But of a great number of volumes, nothing of any consequence was found, except what was torn in a shocking manner, so that no use could be made of them. Such has been the triumph of bigotry and party spirit. †

To return to the proper subject of this *Preface*, for my departure from which, my peculiar circumstances must be my apology. To many persons it will appear not a little extraordinary, that a scheme of religion so visionary, and so destitute of all rational *evidence*, as that of Baron Swedenborg, should be so firmly believed by such numbers of persons of unquestionable good sense, and the most upright intentions; and some may be disposed to say that Christianity itself might have had no better an origin.

There is nothing, however, so improbable in itself, but what persons of a certain turn of mind may not be predisposed to believe. And they who already believe the inspiration of some persons, will easily admit that of others, who, in their idea, carry on the same scheme, or one similar to it. Thus the miracles of the Popish saints were received without much difficulty, after those of the apostles and primitive Christians.

Any person of reputable character, and not apparently insane, gravely and repeatedly asserting his inspiration, and his intercourse with God or angels, and advancing nothing contrary, or supposed to be contrary, to what other acknowledged prophets had advanced before him, will be believed by some; and the credit of these may in time be the means

* See Vol. XIX. pp. 547—508.

† Here followed in 1791, several paragraphs on this subject so distressing to the author and so disgraceful to his age and country. They now form Sect. I. Vol. XIX. pp. 384—386, and are therefore omitted in this Preface. See *ibid.* p. 383, Note †.

of procuring him credit with others. And thus it appears to me, that credit was acquired to the pretensions of *Mahomet*, and has been to those of Baron Swedenborg; while the military exploits of the former, who appealed to God on all occasions, and admitted the inspiration of Moses and of Christ, would lead numbers to conclude that God was really with him, and consequently that his pretensions were well founded. Also, in the shockingly corrupted state of Christianity in the seventh century, * *Mahometanism* would appear a more rational religion than it.

But when there is no appeal to *facts*, which any person may examine, such as miracles obvious to the senses, men of less imagination and more judgment will hesitate, and converts will be made very slowly. This was the case at first with *Mahomet*, and much more so with *Swedenborg*, whose inspiration, as he pretended, commenced in the year 1743, and who died in 1772.

I own that I rather wonder at the strength of faith in Baron Swedenborg's followers, when I find that they do not pretend that any other person has had similar communications with God and the invisible world, in confirmation of his. We read, [*Matt.* xviii. 16,] "that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word *shall* be established." But with these persons *one* witness is deemed sufficient, and this in a business of infinitely more moment than those in which at least *two* were required. Prophets, and workers of miracles, in confirmation of the *Jewish* and *Christian* dispensations, were exceedingly numerous.

One of the oldest things that I distinctly remember, (for I was then only ten or twelve years of age,) was a *Quaker* going about the country, and giving an account of a trance he was thrown into, in which he had a sight of heaven and hell. I do not remember much of the vision at present, though it made a great impression on my mind at the time; but it was entirely unlike any of the MEMORABLE RELATIONS † of Baron Swedenborg. The *Quaker*, however, was as serious and as good a man as the Baron could be, and as incapable of fraud.

Now, here is vision against vision, or rather dream against dream, and which of these are we to believe? I seriously believed the *Quaker* at the time, and so did many others. But he is now forgotten. There was a want of *concurrent*

* See Vol. IX. pp. 135—139.

† By this term Baron Swedenborg distinguishes his accounts of the intercourses he had with spirits, &c. in the spiritual world, in all his writings. (P.)

evidence, the consideration of which will in time affect the credibility of any single testimony, in things of much consequence. *Reasoning* requires no support from testimony, but, with persons of reflection, facts always do.

Baron Swedenborg, whose system of religion is discussed in these *Letters*, was the son of a bishop of *West Gothia*, in Sweden, and was born in 1689. He had a liberal education, and by Charles XII. was made *Assessor* of the metallic college, * and being ennobled in 1719, he took his seat in the triennial assembly of the states. †

As a philosopher and metallurgist he distinguished himself by several learned works. But of these he made little account after the year 1743, when he assumed a higher character, of which he speaks as follows: "Whatever of worldly honour and advantage may appear to be in the things above-mentioned, I hold them but as matters of low estimation, when compared to the honour of that holy office to which the Lord himself hath called me, who was graciously pleased to manifest himself to me his unworthy servant, in a personal appearance, in the year 1743, to open in me a sight of the Spiritual World, and to enable me to converse with Spirits and Angels, and this privilege has continued with me to this day. From that time I began to print and publish various unknown Arcana, which have been either seen by me or revealed to me, concerning Heaven and Hell, the state of men after death, the true worship of God, the spiritual sense of the Scriptures, and many other important truths tending to salvation and true wisdom." ‡

From this time he devoted himself wholly to *theology*, and the establishment of his new church, spending much of his time abroad, especially in London and Amsterdam, where, at a great expense, all his theological works were printed. He died in London, March 29, 1772.

Though Baron Swedenborg was much esteemed at the court of *Sweden*, and by many persons of considerable distinction in his time, it does not appear that his books were much read, or that his disciples were numerous, till after his death. But it is said that "his theological writings are now much sought after and held in high esteem by many, not

* "A General Court, called the College of the Mines." *Account of Sweden*, annexed to Lord Molesworth's *Denmark*, ed. 4, 1738, p. 219.

† Called by the Queen *Ulrica*, sister of Charles XII., "to reform all innovations, and entirely to abolish absolute and despotic power," as it had been introduced by Charles XI. To these states "the Queen declared that she for ever renounced any claim to absolute sovereignty, and pretended to the crown on no other foot than by right of election." *Ibid.* pp. 288, 289.

‡ *Short Account of his Life*, p. 6. (P.)

only in England, Scotland, and Ireland, but also in France, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Turkey, and even in the East and West Indies, and North and South America; that in most of these places societies are already formed for propagating the heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church; and that in several kingdoms of Europe men of talents and repute have associated together for the purpose of translating and publishing the author's works in various languages, for the benefit of mankind in general.*

* *Short Account of his Life*, p. 42. In order to give my readers a clear idea of the writings of Baron Swedenborg, I shall close this Preface with a list of them, and some others relating to them, as printed by Mr. Hindmarsh, No. 32, Clerkenwell Close, London, with the prices annexed.

	<i>£. s. d.</i>
1. Arcana Cœlestia, ["or Heavenly Mysteries contained in the Sacred Scriptures or Word of the Lord, manifested and laid open, in an Explanation of the Books of Genesis and Exodus, interspersed with Relations of wonderful Things seen in the World of Spirits, and the Heaven of Angels, from 1747 to 1758, in eight volumes, 4to.] Vols. I. II. III. IV.	1 5 0
2. A Summary Exposition of the Doctrines of the New Church [1769]; or a Contrast between the Faith of the Old, and the Faith of the New Church	0 3 0
3. True Christian Religion, containing the Universal Theosophic Theology of the New Church, ["which was foretold by the Lord in <i>Daniel</i> vii. 13, 14; and in the <i>Apocalypse</i> xxi. 1, 2, 1771,"]	0 15 0
4. A Treatise on the Nature of Influx, as it respects the Communication and Operation of Soul and Body	0 1 6
5. A Treatise concerning Heaven and Hell, ["and of the Wonderful Things therein seen and heard, 1758,"]	0 6 0
6. Of the New Jerusalem and its heavenly Doctrine [1758]	0 4 0
7. The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning the Lord [1763]	0 2 0
8. The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning the Holy Scripture, ["or Word of the Lord, 1763,"]	0 2 0
9. The Doctrine of Life for the New Jerusalem [1763]	0 1 6
10. Of the Earths in the Universe, ["or of the Planets in our Solar System, and the Earths in the Starry Heavens,"] and of their Inhabitants [1758]	0 2 6
11. Of the White Horse which is spoken of in the Revelations, (Chap. xix.,) with curious Remarks on the Souls of Beasts, and the Life of Vegetables [1758]	0 1 0
12. The Psalms of David, with a Summary Exposition of the Internal Sense	0 3 0
13. Of the Last Judgment, and of the Destruction of Babylon, which took place in the Spiritual World in the year 1757 [1758]	0 2 6
14. Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom [1763]	0 6 0
15. Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Providence [1764]	0 7 6
16. The Liturgy of the New Church	0 1 0
17. Minutes of a General Conference of the Members of the New Church, held in Great Eastcheap, London, in April, 1789	0 0 6
18. A Sketch of the chaste Delights of Conjugal Love, and the impure Pleasures of Adulterous Love [1768]	0 1 0
19. Wisdom's Dictates	0 1 9
20. The New Magazine of Knowledge, concerning Heaven and Hell, and the Universal World of Nature, continued Monthly, each Number	0 0 6
21. An Eulogium delivered on the Death of the Author, &c.	0 0 6
22. Jehovah's Mercy, a Poem, recommending the Writings of the Hon. E. Swedenborg, by J. Proud	0 0 3

To the Members
OF
THE NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH.

LETTER I.

Concerning the Tenets of the New Jerusalem Church.

MY FELLOW-CHRISTIANS,

IT is with peculiar pleasure that I address any class of persons by this appellation, and I am happy to observe that you value Christianity as much as I do; having given an incontestible proof of your attachment to it, by the expense you are at in supporting your mode of worship. This zeal does you the greatest honour, as does the frankness with which you avow your principles, opposite as they are to those which generally prevail in the Christian world. You are as sensible as I myself am of the many corruptions which have been introduced into Christianity, which have so much disfigured it, that it can hardly be known; so that the world requires to be in a manner re-christianized. We also assign the same source to these corruptions, viz. false philosophy, and the interference of the civil powers in matters of religion. We are even agreed with respect to many of the most important particulars of the corruptions of Christian doctrine.

We view with equal horror the doctrine of the *Trinity*, consisting of *three persons in one God*, as equally absurd and

	<i>£.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
23. Nine Queries concerning the Trinity, &c., with their Answers	-	0	3
24. Extracts from the Manuscripts of E. S	-	0	2
<i>LATIN.</i>			
25. De Cælo et Inferno [1758]	-	0	6
26. De Nova Hierosolyma et ejus Doctrina Cœlesti [1758]	-	0	4
27. De Ultimo Judicio et Babylonia Destructa [1758]	-	0	2
28. De Equo Albo, de quo in Apocalypsi [1758]	-	0	1
29. De Telluribus in Universo [1758]	-	0	2
30. Apocalypsis Revelata [1764]	-	0	14
31. Clavis Hieroglyphica, [Arcanorum Naturalium et Spiritualium,]"	-	0	1
32. Summaria Expositio Sensû Interni Librorum Propheticoꝝ Verbi Veteris Testamenti, necnon et Psalmorum Davidis	-	0	2
33. Apocalypsis Explicata, 4 vol.	-	4	4
34. Questiones Novem de Trinitate, &c.	-	0	0

(P.)

The additions and a few corrections in this *List* are made from "A Catalogue of Books written by the Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg," annexed to "A Summary View of the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church," 1785, pp. 141—150.

blasphemous; constituting, in fact, *three gods*. For such you agree with me in thinking that three persons, each possessed of every attribute of divinity, must necessarily be,* and that this doctrine is as contrary to the uniform sense of scripture, as it is repugnant to reason and the plainest common sense, though sanctioned by the most solemn decrees of councils from that of *Nice* to that of *Trent*, and by the united force of all the civil powers, in most unnatural alliance with the church of Christ.

We also agree in reprobating the whole system which has now obtained the name of *Calvinism*,† though it originated with *Austin*, and has been introduced into all the established creeds; a system which represents the whole human race as so fatally injured by the sin of Adam, that they retain no natural power of doing the will of God; so that had none of them been exempted from the sentence of condemnation by an arbitrary decree, they must all have been doomed to the pains of hell for ever; a system which teaches us that, in order to effect the redemption of a few, God was under a necessity of reversing the known maxims of his conduct, in punishing the innocent instead of the guilty; changing his character of *gracious* and *merciful*, into that of an inexorable tyrant; granting nothing to the most unfeigned repentance, but exacting the uttermost that was due to his justice, and that from a Divine Person fully equal to himself; nothing less than this being deemed equivalent to the magnitude of the offence:‡ whereas it is justly observed by Mr. Swe-

* "A Trinity of Divine Persons existing from eternity, or before the creation of the world, when conceived in idea, is a Trinity of Gods, which cannot be expelled by the oral confession of one God." *Summary View*, p. 47.

† See *ibid.* pp. 88, 89.

‡ "As none could make a suitable satisfaction but the Son of God, therefore this *second person* in the blessed *Trinity* (as he is commonly called) offered himself as a propitiatory sacrifice, submitted to be crucified and slain, and thus appeased wrath, satisfied judgment, and redeemed men. This is the general idea which at this day prevails throughout all Christendom, concerning the nature of redemption by the death of Christ. The simple receive it as a mystery which they are forbid to look into, and piety pardons their credulity, whilst she accepts their innocence.

"Unbelievers of all ranks and denominations have taken advantage of this idea, to confirm themselves in their prejudices against the Gospel dispensation; whilst men of sense and reason have been offended at a God represented thus as requiring the death of an innocent person to assuage his anger. They see an irreconcilable absurdity in supposing, that one God, or one Person in the blessed Trinity, (as he is called,) should suffer and die, merely to satisfy the justice of another God. They cannot conceive how sin should be a thing of such a nature, as to admit of cleansing and propitiation by the mere arbitrary interference of an innocent victim laying down his life for the sinner." *Ibid.* pp. 32, 33.

"To believe redemption to have consisted in the passion of the cross, is a fundamental error of the church, and this error, together with that relating to three Divine Persons existing from eternity, hath perverted the whole church, so that nothing spiritual is left remaining in it." *Ibid.* p. 35.

denborg,* “that there is nothing of vindictive justice in God.”

We agree, then, in the important belief of *one God*, and of *one person* in the Godhead, in the moral excellence of his character, and in the mild and equitable maxims of his government. We equally consider him as the gracious father of all mankind, having compassion upon men in that state of sin and misery, in which, by the abuse of their natural liberty, they had involved themselves, † and excepting none but the voluntary and incorrigibly wicked, from the offers of his mercy.

Holding these rational sentiments, I cannot help expressing some surprise that you should be so uncharitable as you are, admitting into heaven none but those who think as you do with respect to the person of Christ. “No one,” says Mr. Swedenborg, “can be admitted into heaven who thinks of there being *three* Gods, howsoever he may say with his lips there is but *one*. For the life of the whole heaven, and all the wisdom of angels, is founded on the acknowledgment, and consequent confession, of *one God*, and on the faith that this one God is also man, and that he is the Lord who is at once both God and man.” ‡ He expressly says concerning the *Socinians*, § that “they are cast down into hell, since they approach God the Father alone.” The same he asserts of the *Arians*, for “denying the divinity of the Lord’s humanity.”

As you admit the divine illumination of Mr. Swedenborg, there is, I fear, no prospect of your becoming more charitable. For if you suppose him to have been in an error in some things, especially those which he saw and learned in the spiritual world, you may think him liable to mistake in any thing; and then the whole foundation of your new church fails. I wish, therefore, to reason with you on this foundation of your faith. But I must first describe what appears to me to be the general outline of it, that we may consider the scheme in its whole extent, and thereby form some judgment of the evidence it requires.

Holding the doctrine of *one God*, you maintain that this one God is no other than Jesus Christ, and that he always

* In his *Doctrine concerning the Lord*, p. 95. (P.)

† “Redemption is a work originating purely in the inexpressible mercy and tender love of God to his creatures. There was no wrath hereby intended to be appeased, but what sin had begotten in the spirits of the disobedient. God wished only to recover his kingdom in the souls of men, to expel thence the powers of sin and darkness, and to restore holiness, order, and peace.” *Summary View*, p. 35.

‡ *Doctrine concerning the Lord*, p. 230. (P.)

§ In his *Universal Theology*, II. p. 424. (P.)

existed in a human form ; that for the sake of redeeming the world, he took upon himself a proper human or material body, but not a human soul ; that this “ redemption consisted in bringing the hells,” (or evil spirits,) “ into subjection, and the heavens into order and regulation, and thereby preparing the way for a new spiritual church ; that without such redemption no man could have been saved, nor could the angels have remained in a state of integrity ;” * that their redemption was effected by means of trials, temptations, or conflicts with evil spirits ; and that the last of them, by which Christ glorified his humanity, perfecting the union of his divine with his human nature, was the passion of the cross. †

Though you maintain that there is but one God, and one divine person, you hold that in this person there is a real *Trinity*; consisting of the *divinity*, the *humanity*, and the *operation* of them both in the Lord Jesus ; a Trinity which did not exist from all eternity, but commenced at the incarnation. ‡

You believe that the Scriptures are to be interpreted not only in a literal but in a spiritual sense, § not known to the world till it was revealed to Mr. Swedenborg, and that this spiritual sense extends to every part of scripture. ||

You believe that there are angels attending upon men, residing, as Mr. Swedenborg says, in their affections ; that temptation consists in a struggle between good and bad angels within men, and that by this means God assists men in these temptations, since of themselves they could do nothing. Indeed, Mr. Swedenborg maintains that there is an universal influx from God into the souls of men, inspiring them especially with the belief of the Divine unity. This efflux of divine light on the spiritual world, he compares to the efflux of the light from the sun in the natural world.

* *Summary View*, pp. 34, 35.

† *Ibid.* p. 35.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 47. “ There is a Divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or in other words, of the *all-begetting Divinity*, the *Divine-Humanity*, and the *Divine-Proceeding*, or *Operation* ; and this Trinity consisteth not therefore of three distinct persons, but is united as soul, body, and operation in man, in the one person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who therefore is the God of heaven, and alone to be worshipped, being creator from eternity, redeemer in time, and regenerator to eternity.” *Ibid.* p. 49.

§ “ Unfolded—by the messenger of the New Jerusalem Doctrine, according to the rule of degrees and correspondencies.” *Ibid.* p. 51.

|| Mr. Swedenborg, however, excepts the “ Acts of the Apostles,” and the *Apostolic Epistles*, though for reasons that do not appear satisfactory to me, since, to all appearance, they are as capable of *secondary senses* as the books of *Kings* and *Chronicles* in the *Old Testament*. See this discussed in the “ New Magazine of Knowledge concerning Heaven and Hell,” I. p. 254. (P.)

There are, says Mr. Swedenborg, two worlds, the *natural* and the *spiritual*, entirely distinct, though perfectly corresponding to each other; at death a man enters into the spiritual world, when his soul is clothed with a body, which he terms *substantial*, in opposition to the present *material* body, which he says is never to rise out of the grave. "After death," he says, that "a man is so little changed, that he even does not know but he is living in the present world, that he eats and drinks, and even enjoys conjugal delight as in this world; that the resemblance between the two worlds is so great, that in the spiritual world there are cities, with palaces, and houses, and also writings and books, employments and merchandizes; that there is gold, silver, and precious stones there. In a word," he says, "there is in the spiritual world, all and every thing that there is in the natural world, but that in heaven such things are in an infinitely more perfect state." * Into this spiritual world, Mr. Swedenborg says, that he, though living in this, was admitted, so that he conversed with *Luther*, *Melancthon*, and many other persons, as well as with angels.

You believe that the coming of Christ to judge the world, and to enter upon his kingdom, is not to be understood of a personal descent from heaven into this material world, but that they relate to the spiritual world only. That the last judgment took place in the year 1757, and that the spiritual kingdom of Christ, by which you understand the rise and spread of your new doctrine, commenced on the 19th day of June, 1770. This kingdom of Christ, and consequently your doctrine, you believe is speedily to prevail over the whole world, and to continue for ever,

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the Inspiration of Mr. Swedenborg.

MY FELLOW-CHRISTIANS,

THE system exhibited in the preceding Letter must be acknowledged to be new, and very extraordinary, differing materially from the faith of every other denomination of Christians, and therefore the evidence of its truth ought to be proportionably strong. For, in all cases, the more extra-

* *Universal Theology*, No. 734. (P.)

ordinary any relation appears, the stronger is the evidence that we require for it. I shall therefore take the liberty to ask, on what authority you receive Mr. Swedenborg as a prophet, or one who had communication with God in the invisible world?

You cannot be ignorant that the only proper evidence of a divine commission is doing something that God alone could enable a man to do. When *Moses* was appointed by God to carry a message to his nation, and to the king of Egypt, he naturally said, (*Exod. iv. 1.*) "But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." In answer to this, God bade him throw down the rod that was in his hand, when it was instantly changed into a serpent, and he was ordered to shew the same sign to his countrymen and to *Pharaoh*, (ver. 5,) "that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee." Accordingly he did exhibit that sign, and by this means satisfied them that God had sent him. Also when *Moses* informs the people, (*Deut. xviii. 18.*) that God would send them prophets like unto himself, he tells them that they might distinguish the true prophets from pretended ones by their *foretelling things to come*, which was another thing that was above the power of man.

Our Saviour did not expect to be believed upon his own word, when he declared that God had sent him; but said, (*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;"* and we find that this was the circumstance that convinced the Jews that he was a real prophet. "Rabbi," says *Nicodemus* to him, (*John iii. 2.*) "we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles which thou doest except God be with him." Also the two disciples walking to *Emmaus* said of Jesus, (*Luke xxiv. 19.*) that he "was a prophet mighty in deed," as well as in "word, before God and all the people." Had he done nothing more than another man could have done, he might have been a good man, but he would have given no evidence of his being a prophet.

Do we not object to the divine mission of *Mahomet*, that he worked no miracles, that all that he pretended to of this kind was the composition of the *Koran*, which he said was

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 166, 167.

dictated to him by the angel Gabriel? But as he gave no proof of this; as no person even saw the angel Gabriel dictating to him, or in conference with him, and we do not think the composition of the Koran to be above the ordinary capacity of man, we give him no credit for his mere assertion. Besides, neither the truth of the divine mission of *Moses*, nor that of *Christ*, depended on the miracles of one man, but on those of many, in conjunction and succession. In the *Old Testament* we read of numbers of prophets from *Moses* to *Malachi*, most of whom either worked what we usually call miracles, or foretold future events, which is exactly of the same nature, being equally within the province of God alone. As to the truth of the Christian dispensation, it was confirmed not only by the numerous miracles and resurrection of *Christ*, but by the miracles of the apostles, and many others, after him, so that the age of Christian miracles did not cease but with that generation.

We should naturally expect, therefore, that another entirely new dispensation, so different from all the former as that of Mr. Swedenborg must be considered, and yet so strictly, as you believe, corresponding to them, should be confirmed by miracles, as the preceding dispensations were, and by miracles equally numerous and striking; and that one divine messenger alone would not be sufficient for the purpose. To say that though the former dispensations of religion required to be established by miracles, this new one, the last and most magnificent of them all, and which is to continue for ever, requires none, is no better than saying, that though a cottage may require to stand upon a rock, a palace, or a temple, like that of *Solomon*, may be built upon the sand, or stand without any foundation at all.

To come from God with a message to man is a very serious and important thing, for which no man, however excellent, hath any right to expect that his own word only should be taken. This is more than was claimed either by *Moses*, or by *Christ*; and why should so great a privilege be allowed to any other person? It is very possible a pious and good man, of a warm imagination, may fancy that he has communications with God; but he may deceive himself, especially if his supposed intercourse with God and the invisible world was by night. In this case such a person *seeing an angel in a dream* is nothing more than his *dreaming he saw an angel*; and it is well known that some persons are subject to *reveries* by day, exactly similar to dreams by night. Now I do not find that your pretended prophet, an excellent and

good man as I willingly allow him to have been, ever wrought a miracle, or foretold any future event, as a proof of his extraordinary pretensions, and his writings appear to me to be nothing more than such as an ingenious and laborious man, of a fertile imagination, was very well capable of.

Mr. Swedenborg himself, I find, was very well aware of this objection to his pretensions. In one of the conversations he had in the spiritual world, he says that it was made to him. "Do miracles, say those with whom he was conversing, and we will believe." The reply that he makes to these objectors is, that very probably they would not be convinced by miracles, but resemble the *Israelites*, who worshipped the golden calf, presently after they had been witnesses to the extraordinary scene from *Mount Sinai*; and at that instant he says he heard a voice from heaven saying to the objectors, "If ye believe not Moses and the prophets, that is the word of the Lord, neither will ye be convinced by miracles, any more than the posterity of Jacob were in the wilderness, or when they saw with their eyes the miracles which the Lord did during his abode on earth."*

Another reason which at the same time he gave for his not being empowered to work miracles, was, that "they carry compulsion with them, and take away a man's free will in spiritual matters." But the same objection might have been made to the miracles of *Moses* and of *Christ*. It is the nature of all evidence to compel the assent; for no man can refuse his assent to what appears to him to be sufficient evidence. Whatever be the case of the *will* with respect to motives, the *judgment* is universally allowed to be necessarily determined by the force of arguments; and had Mr. Swedenborg been possessed of the power of working miracles, I cannot believe that he would have thought it an improper, or an inconvenient thing.

As this is a subject of particular importance, I shall subjoin what your author alleges with respect to it in another part of the same work: "Since the time of the Lord's coming into the world, every one that is born in a Christian country has a capacity to become spiritual, which spirituality of nature is effected solely by the Lord, through the word. But this capacity would be destroyed in case man's faith was influenced by miracles; inasmuch as miracles, it was observed, carry compulsion with them, and take away man's free will in spiritual things; and whatever

* *Universal Theology*, II. p. 463. (P.)

is received by compulsion, entereth no farther than the natural man, when it closeth up the spiritual, or true internal man, and depriveth him of all capacity of seeing any truth in its proper light; the consequence whereof is, that the man afterwards frameth all his reasonings on spiritual things from a mere natural ground, and thereby seeth all spiritual things according to an inverted view. Miracles, indeed, were wrought previous to the Lord's coming into the world; and the reason was, because the members of the church at that time were mere natural men, incapable of seeing the spiritual or internal things of the church, or who would have profaned such things, had they been permitted to see them." *

But that any change was made in the nature of men at the first coming of Christ, or that any farther change has been made in man since what you call his second coming, is an arbitrary supposition of Mr. Swedenborg's, for which he produces no evidence whatever. And since, in all other respects, men appear to act in the same manner, we must conclude that they are internally constituted in the same manner, and therefore that they have been equally affected by evidence of all kinds since the beginning of the world. We shall see, however, in the progress of your doctrine, whether mankind do not now require the evidence of miracles for the belief of things of which no other evidence can be given, as much as they did in the times of *Moses* or of *Christ*. If other methods fail to produce a general conviction of the truth of your doctrine, which you say is to fill the whole earth, recourse must be had to the old, but effectual, method of miracles, after all; and should each of your temples be filled with "the glory of the Lord," at the time of their consecration, as was the tabernacle and the temple of *Solomon*, you would, I dare say, exult not a little. As a similar glory invested our Saviour at his transfiguration, all the three great dispensations of religion, you might then say, were distinguished by a similar divine attestation.

But though Mr. Swedenborg did not pretend to work any proper miracles, and did not, as far as appears from his writings, foretell any future event, he pretends to give us more information concerning things at a distance from us than we had any natural means of knowing. After reporting a conversation which he had with the *Africans* and the

Gentiles in the spiritual world, (of which a farther account will be given in its proper place,) which is highly favourable to them, he gives the following narrative of the state of Africa in *this* world, which I find that you who are his followers, believe to be true, and are very willing to consider, notwithstanding your affecting not to want the evidence of miracles, as a proof that he was really inspired. As this account is truly curious, and a society of gentlemen is now exploring the interior parts of Africa, I shall recite the whole of it.

“Such being the character of the Africans even in this world, there is therefore at this day a revelation begun among them, which is communicated from the centre round about, but does not extend to the sea coasts. They acknowledge our Lord as the Lord of heaven and earth, and laugh at the monks who visit them, and at Christians who talk of a *threefold divinity*, and of salvation by mere *thought*, asserting, that there is no man who worships at all, that does not *live* according to his religion; and that unless a man so lives, he must needs become stupid and wicked, because in such a case he receives nothing from heaven. They likewise give to ingenious wickedness the name of *stupidity*, because there is no life, but death, in it. I have heard the angels rejoice at this revelation, because thereby a communication is opened with the rational principle in man, which has heretofore been closed up by a general blindness with respect to matters of faith. I was informed from heaven that the things contained in the doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning the Lord, concerning the word, and in the doctrine of life for the New Jerusalem, lately published, are now revealed by word of mouth, by angelic spirits, to the inhabitants of that country.”*

Here I am happy to find a virtual appeal to an existing fact, which it is possible to ascertain by proper inquiry. Though, having less communication with the interior part of *Africa* than with any other part of the known world, the inquiry will be attended with some difficulty and expense. In the mean time I must observe, that neither Mr. Bruce's late Travels into *Abyssinia*, nor the proceedings of the *Association* for promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, give us as yet any reason to think that what Mr. Swedenborg describes as existing in his time, is to be found

* “Continuation concerning the Last Judgment and the Spiritual World,” p. 66. (P.)

at present. But we expect soon to have farther accounts from that hitherto unexplored part of the world; and if it should appear, which I strongly suspect, that there neither is, nor ever was any thing like a *New Jerusalem Church* in the centre of Africa, your faith in Mr. Swedenborg's inspiration must be very strong indeed if it be not well shaken.

The evidence of proper miracles being withheld from us for the present, evidence of some other kind, which can only be the conformity of your doctrines to the natural reason of things and the plain sense of scripture, ought to be peculiarly strong. To these tests I shall therefore bring the principal of your doctrines, that we may see whether they bear any internal marks of superior excellence.

As you appeal to the Scriptures, you, no doubt, think us capable of judging of your arguments from them. The books of scripture are before us, and the language in which they are written pretty well known. I shall therefore consider whether your opinion be agreeable to the Scriptures fairly and rationally interpreted. As to any spiritual sense of the Scriptures, it cannot be attended to till there be some evidence of the reality of such a sense of them. If you say that I am incapable of perceiving this sense of the Scriptures, you must allow that you have no means of convincing me, or any others who are in the same situation with me, how well soever you, who have the illumination that I want, may be satisfied with respect to all your doctrines. Besides, Mr. Swedenborg admits that the plain and literal sense of the Scriptures is the foundation of every other sense, and is never contradicted by them. The doctrine of the church, he says, ought to be drawn "from the literal sense of the word, and be confirmed thereby."* He also says, "The literal sense of the word is the basis, continent, and firmament, of its spiritual and celestial sense." †

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Concerning the Person of Christ.

MY FELLOW-CHRISTIANS,

I OWN that when I first heard of this tenet of yours, that Jesus Christ was the same person with God the Father, and

* "Doctrine concerning the Sacred Scriptures," p. 101. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 65. (P.)

that there is no other God than he, I was exceedingly surprised. It sounded to me as if it had been asserted that *Jesus* and *Peter*, *Moses* and *Joshua*, *David* and *Solomon*, or any other two persons of whom we read in history, had been the same; and that if the sacred writers could express themselves as they uniformly do concerning *God* and *Christ*, as different persons, and they should after all be one and the same person, there is no use in language; the most definite expressions being no guard against misconception. This I know you will say is the effect of prejudice, from early and long-continued impressions; and I am willing to allow as much as I possibly can to this influence, and therefore shall re-examine what I own I have hitherto taken for granted. And as Mr. Proud says,* that "truth will carry its own evidence with it to the impartial inquirer and upright mind," I hope that whether you or I be at present in an error, in this respect, a clear stating of the case, and an appeal to facts, will be the means of setting us right.

Now it is certainly no uncommon thing for the same thing, or the same person, to be signified by two different names; *Jesus*, for example, and *Christ*, *Simon* and *Peter*; but then we always find that the same character and description will apply to both, and except the literal significations of the term be referred to, we may, in any sentence, substitute the one in the place of the other; every thing that can be asserted of the one being equally true of the other. Nothing is ever asserted concerning either of them, that is incompatible with the other; nor will any speaker or writer, knowing the use of language, ever connect two names which denote only the same person by the conjunctive particle *and*. We say, for example, that *Peter* and *John* did this or that, but we never say, that *Simon* and *Peter*, *Jesus* and *Christ* did this, using the plural number; because *Peter* and *John* are different persons; but *Simon* and *Peter*, *Jesus* and *Christ*, are the same persons; and therefore we naturally say, *Simon* or *Peter*, *Jesus* or *Christ*, or else, joining the two names, we say, *Simon Peter*, or *Jesus Christ*, did this or that, using the singular number only.

Now look through the whole *New Testament*, where *God* and *Christ* are spoken of, and you will find by these plain rules concerning the use of words, which every body understands, and in speaking or writing strictly conforms to, that *God* and *Christ*, in the ideas of the persons who wrote those

* In his *Sermons*, p. 41. (P.)

books, were as different persons as Christ and Peter, James and John.

Christ uniformly speaks of himself as having been sent from God, just as much as *John the Baptist* was ; so that if the person *sending* can be the same with the person *sent*, John the Baptist may be God as well as Jesus Christ. I may say that I *go* from one place to another, but it is manifestly improper to say that I *send* myself from one place to another. On your principles, Christ and his apostles might be the same persons : for Christ, addressing himself to his Father, says, (*John xvii. 18.*) “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” It is evident, therefore, that Christ was a person as different from him whom he addressed as his *Father*, as his disciples were different from himself.

Christ constantly prayed to the person whom he called his *Father*, and he directed his disciples to pray to the same person. “Father,” says he, (*John xvii. 1.*) “the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee.”* Was Jesus then only speaking to himself? Sometimes, no doubt, persons do so ; but not in this manner. When Christ directed his disciples [*Matt. vi. 6*] to pray to their “Father *who seeth in secret*,” he surely did not mean that they should pray to himself. If he did, he certainly did not speak very intelligibly. Besides, he plainly distinguishes between praying to the *Father*, and asking any thing of himself, when he says, (*John xvi. 23.*) “In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.”† Was such language as this, which he constantly uses, calculated to lead the disciples to consider the Father and himself as the same person?

Farther, Jesus frequently ascribed to his *Father* what he expressly denied of himself. He more than once says, that “of himself” he could “do nothing,” *John v. 19, ‡ viii. 28*; and that *the Father within him did the works*, § meaning the miracles that he performed. Here every thing denoted by the expression *himself*, is evidently distinguished from the Father, who he says, was *within him*, as he might be said to be in any other man, if, as was the case with our Saviour, he suggested to him what he should say, and empowered him to do what he otherwise could not have done. Agreeably

* See Vol. XIII. p. 332.

† See *ibid.* p. 165.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 328.

§ *John xiv. 10.* See Vol. XIII. pp. 314. 315.

to this, he says, (*Matt. xxviii. 18.*) that *all power was given unto him*, * and (*Luke x. 29*) “all things are delivered to me of my Father.” Can the *giver* and *receiver* be the same person, any more than the person *sending*, and the person *sent*?

Speaking of the day of judgment, Jesus says, (*Mark xiii. 32.*) that the time of it was not known either to the angels or to himself, † but *to the Father only*. If the *Son* was the same with the *Father*, surely every thing that was known to the one must have been known to the other also; especially as you suppose there was no principle of intelligence in Christ besides that of the Father, he having no human soul. Nay, in addressing his Father, he calls him “the only true God,” at the same time that he speaks of himself as the prophet or messenger of God; *John xvii. 3*: “that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” ‡ And when he was risen from the dead, he bade Mary tell his disciples, (*John xx. 17.*) “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” § Here, surely, are two different persons indicated. Can any person be said to ascend to himself?

Lastly, our Saviour says, (*John xiv. 28.*) that *his Father was greater than he*. || Can any person be greater than himself? The same person may, no doubt, be greater at one time than he was at another; but here he speaks of the same time. Also, a man in one capacity may be greater than he is in another; as a general at the head of his army may be said to be greater than he is by his fireside. But here our Saviour speaks absolutely. He is telling his disciples that he should leave them, and go to his Father, in which he says they ought to rejoice, intimating that they would be under the protection of the greatest of all beings. Agreeably to this he had said not long before, that they who were his sheep should never perish, since no person was able to pluck them out of his Father’s hand, adding, (*John x. 29, 30.*) “My Father, *who* gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one;” ¶ that is, no person can overpower me, but he must overpower the Father also. Such is our Saviour’s constant language, which must certainly have misled his hearers, if he was the same person with the Father, of whose superior power he was speaking, ascribing no extraordinary power to himself, but every thing to God.

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 384, 385.

† See *ibid.* pp. 332, 333.

|| See *ibid.* pp. 316, 317.

† See *ibid.* p. 298.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 371, 372.

¶ See *ibid.* p. 255.

Let us now see in what manner the apostles speak of him. Does not their constant language demonstrate that they considered him as being a person different from God? *Peter* speaking of him, *Acts* ii. 22, says, that he was “a man approved of God—by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him,”* and whom God raised from the dead. iii. 13: “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus,” &c. When they were persecuted, they prayed to God, (*Acts* iv. 24,) as he who “made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is,” and the object of their prayer was, (ver. 30,) “that signs and wonders *might* be done by the name of *his* holy child Jesus.” Certainly, this was not praying to *Jesus*, but to quite another person, who alone could work miracles, in order to confirm the mission of Jesus from God, and their own mission from him.

Look into *Paul's* epistles, and you will always find that he speaks of God and of Christ as of different persons. In the beginning of the *first* epistle to the *Corinthians*, where he says, “Paul—an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God,—grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” The same is his language through all his epistles, without the least variation. When he gives the Father the appellation of *God*, it is always exclusively of *the Son*. 1 *Cor.* viii. 6: “To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him.” † 1 *Tim.* ii. 5: “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” ‡ Could he speak of God and *Moses* as more different from one another, than he does of God and *Christ*?

What, then, is it that you can advance in support of your favourite doctrine, that Jesus Christ and God the Father are the same person, in opposition to the constant and uniform language of the Scriptures? According to which, they must be different persons, as different as God and man, the Creator and the creature. I have considered all that you allege, and find them only to be a few passages, which, literally interpreted, might, indeed, imply as much, but which very easily admit of a very different interpretation; and in all cases we interpret what is figurative and obscure, by what is clear and express; and nothing can be more so than the passages which I have cited above. This, therefore, is most evident from the constant language of scripture, that Christ and

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 393, 394.

† See Vol. XIV. p. 80.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 126.

God are different persons, and whatever particular passage may seem to intimate the contrary must have some other meaning; and even if we could not explain it otherwise, we ought to content ourselves with acknowledging the difficulty, or suppose some error to have crept into the text, rather than charge the writers with manifest inconsistency and contradiction. But when we examine the passages, we shall find that there is far from being any occasion to have recourse to this supposition. The language sufficiently explains itself.

When Philip said to Jesus, (*John* xiv. 8,) "Shew us the Father," Jesus said, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;" and from this you infer that *he* and *his Father* were the very same person. But Jesus, you cannot deny, was used to speak in figurative language; and where is there a more common figure of speech than to say, *we see a person in his works*, and especially in those persons who are commissioned to say or do any thing in his name? We even say that God, who is invisible, is to be seen in his works. Now the power and wisdom of God were manifest in Christ, who spake and acted by immediate commission from him; and seeing the manifestations of Divine wisdom and power either in the works of nature, or in the sayings and miracles of the prophets, is all that we can see of God, who is himself invisible.

You also urge, *Col.* ii. 9, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." But this might be the case without Jesus Christ himself being God, when the Divine power was manifested by him.* Nay, the very phraseology of this passage is unfavourable to your hypothesis; for that which dwells in a person cannot be the same thing with himself, but must be different from him.

You urge Christ's saying, (*John* x. 30,) that *he and the Father were one*; that is, the same God. But by the same argument all the disciples of Christ may be proved to be united with them in the Godhead; for he prays, *John* xvii. 11, *that they might be one, as they two were one*; ver. 21, "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us."† Christ also says, (*Matt.* x. 40,) "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." But will you infer from this, that Christ, the person that sent him, and they who were afterwards sent by him, were all one?

There is another set of texts upon which I perceive that you lay much stress, though I do not conceive that any of

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 350, 331.

† See Vol. XIII. p. 255.

them are at all to your purpose. They are those in which the same titles are given to God and to Christ. But beings the most different in their natures, may, in several respects, resemble one another, and act a similar part, so as to be entitled to the same appellations, without being the same persons. You particularly urge those passages in the prophets in which Jehovah is called *the only Saviour*, as *Isaiah* xliii. 11, "I am *Jehovah*, and besides me there is no Saviour." But both he who saves by another, and that other who saves by his orders and directions, may be equally called a saviour. The word *saviour* signifies nothing more than *deliverer*, and therefore Moses, who under God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, and the Judges, who delivered them from their various enemies, are properly styled *deliverers*, or *saviours*, as well as God, by whose orders and power they acted.* Our Saviour says, (*Matt.* xxiii. 9,) "One is your Father," even God; but does it therefore follow that we have no other father besides God? And yet, according to your argument, if every person who is called *a saviour* be God, every one who is called *a father* must be so too.

You lay great stress on Christ being called "Alpha and Omega." † But this is no more a proper name of God than *saviour* or *father*. It may signify the *chief*, or *founder*, of any thing; as Christ is, under God, of the Christian dispensation, and therefore may be applied to God in *Rev.* i. 8, and to Christ, *Rev.* xxii. 13.

A person being occasionally denominated by the name of God, is no proof that he is God. You urge Christ being called, (*Jer.* xxiii. 6,) "*Jehovah* our Righteousness;" but if our translation be admitted, ‡ *Jerusalem* is called the very same name, *Jer.* xxxiii. 16, and other names of God make part of the names of men and places. Though, therefore, it should be Christ, and not the prophet's son, that was called *Immanuel*, § which signifies "God with us," || it will not follow that he was God. Princes are sometimes called gods to denote their power, and men are called devils to express their bad dispositions. When Jesus said to *Peter*, "Get thee behind me, Satan;" ¶ and of *Judas*, that he was *the devil*, (for so it ought to be rendered, **) nothing

* See *Judges* iii. 9; *2 Kings* xiii. 5; *Acts* vii. 35. (P.)

† *Rev.* i. 8, 11, xxi. 6, xxii. 13. See Vol. XIV. p. 446.

‡ See Vol. XII. p. 230, Note ¶.

§ *Isaiah* vii. 14. See, on *ver.* 16, Vol. XII. pp. 159, 160.

|| *Matt.* xvi. 23. See Vol. XIII. p. 185.

¶ *Matt.* xvi. 23. See Vol. XIII. p. 185.

** See, on *John* vi. 70, *ibid.* p. 162.

more was meant than what they said or did was *evil*, or such as was usually ascribed to the devil, not that either of those persons was the devil himself incarnate.

It is something extraordinary that, though you strenuously assert the Unity of God in *one person*, and maintain that *three Divine persons* must be *three Gods*, you still contend for a *Trinity*. But it is such a Trinity as was never known before. Originally, you say, there was no Trinity, but that it commenced at the incarnation, when God took upon him human nature; the intelligent principle in Jesus being called *the Father*; the humanity, or rather the human body, *the Son*; and the operation of this divine humanity, *the Holy Spirit*. But why should you make this new, arbitrary, and unnatural use of words? The word *trinity* is not to be found in the Scriptures, and I do not see why you should embarrass your scheme with it, but as a sacrifice to popular prejudice, and that this was the case is pretty evident from the Preface to the "Summary View of the heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church," in which it is said, that "had he," that is, Mr. Swedenborg, "denied the divinity of our *Lord Jesus Christ*—there might have been some plea for fixing on his character opprobrious epithets, which might serve to invalidate his testimony. But when we see that nothing of all this is chargeable upon him, and that his writings have a direct contrary tendency, viz. to assert the divinity of the Redeemer, and to establish this fundamental article of the Christian faith on the clearest and fullest evidence of holy writ—how is it possible that any person of a serious character can think it *safe* to endeavour to lessen the testimony of such a writer?"* We who are properly *Unitarians*, acknowledging the sole divinity of God the Father, and the simple humanity of Christ, make no such apologies as these. We hesitate not to meet the full force of popular prejudice, by admitting the imputations of our adversaries in their most obnoxious forms; confident that truth stands in no need of such a shelter as that to which you have recourse.

On your principles, as indeed you acknowledge, every man being made in the image of God, is a *trinity*, consisting of a thinking principle, and a body, acting by the influence of the thinking principle. But here the three terms are not correlative, and have no proper correspondence. The two first indeed denote *substances*, the one a *spiritual* and the other a *corporeal* one; but the third denotes no substance at

* Preface, pp. viii. ix. (P.)

all, expressing a mere *action*, or operation. To be consistent with yourselves, you should say that Christ is the one God, consisting of *two parts*, viz. the divine intellect, and the corporeal frame; but since there is no third substance, there is no proper Trinity, and, that your system admits of none.

With a change of your phraseology, and very little in your ideas, you are as proper *Unitarians* as we who are usually called *Socinians*. For we say that the *word*, by which all things were created, and which dwelt in Christ, was the one true God, besides whom there is no other, and that without this divine principle, Christ was a mere man, as other men are.

What is the difference, excepting in words, between saying that Jesus was a man *united to God*, and a man *inspired by God*, when in this case you cannot pretend to have any proper idea of the word *united*, or can say wherein it differs from *inspired*? *Man* and *God* being more different in their natures than the iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image, are no more capable of forming a *proper* union than those substances. Say, then, in intelligible language, that Jesus was a man, but that God was with him, and acted by him, and we shall be agreed in words as well as in reality, and every desirable consequence will flow from it. You will then, as now, disclaim all *plurality of Gods*, together with different *persons in the Trinity*, and you will effectually secure the truth of all the declarations of Christ, as proceeding from God, just as much as if he himself had been God.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of some further Particulars concerning the Person of Christ, and the general Plan of Redemption by him.

MY FELLOW-CHRISTIANS,

BESIDES your general doctrines of Christ and God being the same person, for which I think I have shewn there is no foundation in reason or the Scriptures, you have other ideas concerning the union of these two natures, and the use of the incarnation, which deserve some notice, as they are quite singular. But as they are difficult to conceive, I think you will find them no less difficult to prove.

Not content with supposing that the supreme Deity was

united to a human body, so as to occupy the place of a soul in that body, you say that this union was not completed all at once, but that it grew more perfect during the whole of our Saviour's continuance upon earth, by means of his trials, or temptations, *conflicts* (as you call them) with the hells, or infernal spirits. In this more complete union of the two natures consists, as you say, *the glorification of his humanity*, so that at length it became entirely *divine*, which no other human body ever will be. This is expressed, though not with the greatest clearness, in the following passage:

“ This human nature from the mother was not transmuted into the divine essence, neither commixed with it, as the doctrine of faith, which is called the Athanasian Creed, teaches: for the human nature cannot be transmuted into the divine essence, neither commixed therewith. Nevertheless, by our doctrine we maintain, that the divinity assumed an humanity, that is, united to itself just as a soul is united to its body, so that they were not two but one person, from which circumstance it follows that he put off the humanity taken from the mother, which in itself was like the humanity of another man, and consequently material, and put on the humanity from the Father, which in itself was like unto its divinity, and consequently substantial, by virtue whereof the humanity was also made divine.”*

If we ask by what means this humanity became divine, Mr. Swedenborg answers, that it was by *temptations*. “ It is as yet unknown,” says Mr. Swedenborg, “ that the Lord conquered death, or hell, by spiritual combats, which are temptations, and thereby glorified his humanity at the same time, and that the passion of the cross was the final combat or temptation, by which he wholly conquered the one, and glorified the other.”†

In consequence of the different degrees of this glorification of the humanity, which is sometimes explained (if that can be said to explain which gives us no clearer ideas of a subject) by a less or a more perfect union between the divine and human nature of Christ, you suppose that Jesus, in the course of his life, as this glorification or union was gradually advancing, adopted a different mode of speaking with respect to the Father. “ In the state of humiliation,”

* “ The Doctrine concerning the Lord,” p. 153. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 60. (P.)

says Mr. Swedenborg, " he prayed unto the Father as to one different from himself; but in the state of glorification, he spake of the Father as one with himself. In this latter state he said that the Father was in him, and he in the Father, and that the Father and he were one; but in the state of humiliation he underwent temptations, and suffered the cross, and prayed to the Father not to forsake him. For the divinity could not be tempted, much less could it suffer the cross."*

On this I shall take the liberty to remark, that, of what kind soever was the union that was to be formed between the divine essence and the human body, and whatever purpose it was intended to answer, it is extraordinary that he who is omnipotent, and who made all things by a word speaking, should not have effected this union but in a course of time: and Mr. Swedenborg gives us no assistance whatever in forming any idea of the manner in which trials or temptations promoted this union, or why one degree of union (if there be such degrees) might not have answered the purpose as well as another. But, admitting all this, why different modes of speaking should be adopted by our Saviour in the different stages of this union, is particularly incomprehensible, since, in all the cases, both the person speaking and the person spoken to, must have been the very same, viz. the *divine mind*.

It is a fundamental article of your faith, that Christ, or God, is but one person, one thinking, intelligent mind, and that there was no other principle of intelligence belonging to Jesus; and certainly the mere body, glorified or not glorified, was incapable of thinking, or dictating any language at all. Consequently, in all the stages of our Saviour's life, it must have been his divinity alone that dictated every word that he uttered; and when he prayed, it must have been to the same divinity, that is, to himself; and therefore there could not have been any occasion for his adopting different modes of speaking in the different periods of his life. Besides, it happens unfortunately for your hypothesis, that when Christ spake of the Father as being *one with himself*, it was at a period prior to his last sufferings, by which you say this union was completed. Also, after his resurrection, and consequently all his sufferings, he still spake of his Father as being different from himself; saying to Mary, (*John xx. 17.*) " I am not yet ascended to my

* " The Doctrine concerning the Lord," p. 155. (P.)

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.”*

One of your writers, however, supposes that all the temptations of Christ were not finished till after the forty days of his continuance on earth, between his resurrection and ascension, and for a purpose that is something curious. “The Lord,” says he, “at his crucifixion, but more particularly at his burial and resurrection, rejected, or put off, the whole of his maternal humanity, insomuch that he was no longer the son of Mary. In this sense, and so far as relates to the natural world in general, he was fully glorified, having put off all the hereditary impurities of matter, in which the church on earth is involved. But he could not yet ascend until he had also put off and rejected the impurities of spirits and angels. For the Lord was not only pleased to bear in his own person the iniquities and infirmities of men, but also of angels, and thereby he redeemed and delivered both. While he was in the act of thus purifying and redeeming angels, he underwent something analogous to temptations ; their redemption being effected like that of men, by an admission of their *proscium*, as it were, assaulting his humanity. *But in his love and in his pity he redeemed them.* This process took up forty days, because the number forty corresponds to temptations, and signifies complete deliverance therefrom, and victory over all enemies. This is the reason why the Lord’s ascension was protracted till forty days after his resurrection, at which time he ascended above all the heavens into the sun of the spiritual world, in the midst whereof he eternally resides, as Jehovah God, in glorious human form.”†

What authority this writer had for this ingenious speculation ; does not appear. But a much more obvious use of Jesus continuing on earth these forty days, and one that is plainly indicated in the Scriptures, was, that time might be given for a sufficient number of successive appearances to the disciples, in order to give them the most complete satisfaction concerning the resurrection of their Master.

One curious consequence of this supposed glorification of Christ’s humanity relates to its effects upon the body, concerning which Mr. Swedenborg says, “Inasmuch as the humanity of the Lord was glorified, that is, was made divine, therefore after his death he rose on the third day, with his

* See *supra*, p. 61.

† *New Magazine of Knowledge*, I. p. 277. (P.)

whole body, which never happens to any man. For man is raised only as to the spirit, and not as to the body.*

Now, according to the Scriptures, the resurrection of Christ is a pattern of our own resurrection, and therefore he is called "the first-fruits of them that slept." † What were the first-fruits under the law, but a sample of the general harvest? Whatever, therefore, Christ now is, we shall be also, "when" with us, as with him, "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality." [1 Cor. xv. 54.]

I shall conclude this Letter with noticing some other particulars concerning the Trinity.

"The Holy Spirit," Mr. Swedenborg well observes, "is not a person separate from the Lord;" and, that *to go forth*, and *proceed*, has no other meaning than to *enlighten*, and *teach*, &c. ‡ But his illustration of this, from the nature of angels, does not satisfy me. "That there is a threefold nature or trinity in the Lord may be well illustrated," he says, "by a comparison with an angel, who has a soul and body, and also a spiritual sphere proceeding from thence, which is, as it were, another self without him. Concerning this proceeding sphere, it has been given me to know many extraordinary particulars." § Of this, however, we, who have not seen angels, can be no judges.

The reason why this new doctrine concerning Christ and the Trinity was not revealed to mankind in any earlier period of the world, is given by our author in the same treatise, and I shall quote it at length. "The reason why this doctrine

* "Doctrine concerning the Lord," p. 161. (P.)

† 1 Cor. xv. 20. See Vol. XIV. p. 112.

‡ "Doctrine concerning the Lord," p. 197. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 196. (P.) In a manner somewhat similar the Danish Missionary, Bartholomew Ziegenbalgen, in 1707, would have silenced the objections of "a learned Malabarian Physician." Speaking of God the Father, the Missionary says, "He begat his Son from eternity, by generation not to be paralleled in time; and from Father and Son proceeds the Holy Spirit, the third person in the blessed Trinity; which though to us mortals incomprehensible, yet the possibility thereof may be shadowed forth by an easy, familiar comparison: Out of the immaterial soul of man proceeds and is born the *understanding*; and from the essence of the soul and the understanding, emanates or proceeds the *will*; and yet the soul, (as to its essence,) the understanding, and the will, are really but *one* and the same thing."

On "the application" of this theory "to the doctrine of the Trinity," the physician not unfairly rejoins: "If your explication is absolutely necessary to make others understand what you mean, pray, allow us the same advantage of explaining the doctrine of our religion, and putting it in the favourablest light we can, for the excluding of the absurdities imputed to us." See "Conferences between the Danish Missionaries and the Malabarian Bramans (or Heathen Priests) in the East Indies, concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion: together with some Letters written by the Heathens to the said Missionaries. Translated out of High Dutch," 1719, pp. 129, 130.

concerning the Lord was not before discovered from the word, is because, had it been before discovered and seen, still it would not have been received. For heretofore the final judgment was not accomplished, and previous to that judgment the power of hell prevailed over the power of heaven, and man is in the midst between heaven and hell. Wherefore had this doctrine been understood before, the devil, that is, hell, would have taken it out of his heart, and he would moreover have profaned it. This state of the power of hell was altogether destroyed by the last judgment, which is now accomplished, since which time it is in every one's power who desires it to be enlightened and gifted with genuine wisdom."* Some evidence, however, should be given of the power of hell being destroyed since the year 1757, when you say the last judgment took place. To all appearance no difference whatever then took place in the power of man to contend with vice or prejudice.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of the Second Coming of Christ, and a future Judgment.

MY FELLOW-CHRISTIANS,

ANOTHER of the conspicuous doctrines of your new church relates to the second coming of Christ and a future judgment. This you say, has already taken place in the spiritual world, to which alone it belongs, and that it was accomplished in the year 1757, which you therefore make use of as a new epoch from which to date all future events, as Christians in general do from the supposed birth of Christ. From this time you suppose your new church, denoted in the Scriptures by *the kingdom of Christ*, commences, that it is to spread and fill the whole earth, to continue for ever, there being no termination of the present state of things, or any future judgment to look for. Such are your ideas. Let us now see what the Scriptures say on these subjects.

When the disciples were viewing Jesus ascending to heaven, the angels who stood by said to them, (*Acts. i. 11.*) "Ye men of Galilee, why *look ye up to 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." What

* "Doctrine concerning the Lord," p. 247. (P.)

can be more evident from this, than that as the ascent of Jesus was personal and visible, his return will be the same, personal and visible, not figurative or emblematical only, meaning not *himself*, but his *doctrines*?

Our Saviour himself, speaking of his second coming, says, (*Matt. xxiv. 30.*) "And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." He says unto his disciples, (*John xiv. 3.*) "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The apostle Paul gives the following more particular account of this great event, 1 Thess. iv. 13—17: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them *who* 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 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 have no 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 the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." He also says, 1 Cor. xv. 51—53, "Behold, I shew you a mystery: we shall not all 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."

Is this account all figurative? If so, what is literal? And if there be any truth in the representation, all who have died are now in a state of death, and are to remain so till the coming of Christ, and this coming will be personal and visible, in the clouds of heaven. At his appearance the dead will be raised first, and then the living will be changed and made immortal, like their deceased brethren. Every particular of this account is wholly inconsistent with your idea of nothing but a *spiritual* coming of Christ, and of there being no resurrection of the dead at all, but each person appearing in his new and substantial body immediately on his quitting this.

Paul compares the resurrection of the dead, (1 Cor. xv. 36.) to the revival of seed that has been put into the ground, and

we read, (*Rev. xx. 13.*) of the sea giving up its dead. But, according to you, nothing that is ever committed to the ground, or to the sea, will appear again, or any thing else in the place of it. All that the scripture says on this subject evidently goes upon the idea that men are to continue some time in a state of death, and that they are to be raised to life at some distant period, and is by no means consistent with your idea of life once given being never discontinued, or suspended, the mode of it only being changed.

According to Mr. Swedenborg, the last judgment took place in the spiritual world only, and of course none could be judged besides those who had been dead. But according to the preceding account of the last judgment, confirmed by other express declarations of scripture, those who shall be found alive at the coming of Christ, and who will not die at all, are to be judged, as well as those who have been dead; and whatever spiritual sense you put upon the Scriptures, it must at least be consistent with the literal sense of them. Indeed, if we are not to depend on the literal sense of scripture, we cannot depend upon the truth of historical facts recorded in them: for then *Moses* may mean something else than a man; the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea may be nothing but an emblem of something in the mind; and the whole history of Christ and the apostles may be a mere parable.

Now, besides what the apostle *Paul* says of the living as well as the dead appearing before our Saviour, in the passage quoted above, he says, (*2 Tim. iv. 1.*) "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom." *Peter* also says, (*Acts x. 42.*) "He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he *who is* ordained of God to be judge of the quick and the dead;" and again, (*1 Pet. iv. 5.*) "Who shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." If this representation, repeated so expressly, be not true in the literal sense of the words, I do not know what to expect. If the living are not to be judged as well as the dead, and this at some future period, when Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven, there may be no judgment, or future state at all; since the whole rests on the same authority.

Your account of *marriages in heaven*, in whatever sense it be understood, is no less contrary to the plain sense of scripture. Our Saviour says, *Luke xx. 34, 35.* "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage; but they

who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage." What is the end of marriage, but the propagation of the species : and since you allow this to have no place in the spiritual world, for what purpose is the difference of sexes, and what can you mean by conjugal delights in that state? The human frame will, no doubt, be considerably altered in a state the purposes of which will be so essentially different from those of the present ; so that the same structure cannot, in all its parts, be adapted to it ; though concerning the particulars we can only form conjectures. In this case, however, our Saviour's information is clear and express, so that you set up the authority of *Emanuel Swedenborg* against that of *Jesus Christ*.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of Mr. Swedenborg's Ideas concerning God, Divine Influences, and Angels.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHERN,

MUCH of the confusion that is apparent in Mr. Swedenborg's conceptions has arisen from his inattention to the first principles of metaphysics, particularly in not distinguishing *substance* from *property*. All that we know of any thing is its properties, such as *hardness* and *colour* in bodies, and *understanding* and *affection* in mind. But these properties, we say, belong to something that is not property, but to which we give the name of *substance*, without, however, having any idea of its nature ; so that, in fact, it is a mere convenience in discourse. But Mr. Swedenborg makes that to be substance which all other writers call property.

"God," says he, "is *love* itself, and *wisdom* itself, and these constitute his essence ; and this love and wisdom are one." He also says, that "God is *life* itself." * Now that God is a Being possessed of love, and wisdom, and life, is intelligible language ; but that he is love, and wisdom, and life, is not so, except in a figurative sense. Hence, however, must have been derived his peculiar ideas of *divine influx* from God into the minds of men, resembling the influx of heat and light into natural bodies from the sun,

* *Universal Theology*, p. 61. (P.)

which he says bears the same relation to the natural world, that God does to the spiritual. For since love, wisdom, and life, are of the essence of God, all who receive them must derive them from immediate communication with God, and from no other source whatever.

Mr. Swedenborg expresses himself more unintelligibly still on this subject, when he says, "The spiritual world did exist, and does subsist, proximately from its own spiritual sun, and the natural world, in like manner, from its own natural, or material sun; that the *light* from the sun of the spiritual world is *wisdom*, and the *heat, love*, and that we receive these by emanation into our souls."* For the natural world, or the earth, does not, in any proper sense, exist, or subsist, from the material sun. They are two independent bodies, which mutually gravitate towards each other.

The doctrine of divine influx is equally unphilosophical. Man is formed with various senses, by means of which he receives all his primary ideas; and these ideas are the elements of all our knowledge; those which Mr. Locke calls *ideas of reflexion*, according to Dr. Hartley, whose observations on this subject are the latest, and by far the most accurate of any, (though this is not a place to enter upon the discussion,) being nothing more than combinations of simple ideas, originally derived from impressions made by sensible objects.

No persons have immediate communications with God except prophets, to whom he has been pleased to reveal his will, in order that they might make it known to others. And the great truths of religion, as taught by the prophets, by Moses, by Christ, and by the apostles, are sufficient of themselves, without any such supernatural influx as Mr. Swedenborg describes, to give us all the knowledge that is necessary to purify the heart and regulate the life, which is the great end of all religion.

If such beings as men, that is, beings capable of reflection, and of a reasonable regard to their own happiness, be only informed that there is a God who governs the world in righteousness, that he takes an account of our conduct here, and that, though we die, he will some time hence raise us to life again, and reward or punish us according as we shall have deserved, we shall have all the knowledge that is necessary for the business of religion; because we shall have

* *Theosophic Treatise*, p. 5. (P.)

sufficient motives for the right government of our passions, and of our conduct in life. And when ordinary means are sufficient, it is not in the usual plan of Providence to have recourse to extraordinary ones. If men will not hear Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, neither will they regard the visions of Mr. Swedenborg, especially as we have no intimation given us in their writings, that any such prophet was to succeed them.

Mr. Swedenborg's notion of *angels residing in men's affections* is of a nature similar to his doctrine of divine influx; since, according to him, our passions and affections are very much influenced from this foreign source. He says, "That angels and spirits are with man, and in his affections, has been given me to see a thousand times, from their presence and abode in me. But angels and spirits do not know what men they are with, any more than men know what angels and spirits they cohabit with: for this the Lord alone knows, and regulates."* He adds, "They who are unacquainted with the mysteries of heaven, may suppose that angels subsist without men, and men without angels: but I can positively assert, from all my experience relative to heaven, and from all my discourse with the angels, that no angel or spirit whatever, subsists independent of man, or any man independent of spirits and angels; but that they are mutually and reciprocally conjoined. Mankind and the angelic heaven form one, and subsist mutually and reciprocally from each other; and consequently, if either were removed, the other would cease to exist."†

Now, according to Mr. Swedenborg himself, angels are real beings, in the form of men, and have all of them been men, who, when they die, throw off the material body, and appear in what he calls their *substantial*, or *celestial* body. They must, therefore, as it should seem, occupy a portion of real space as they did before, and consequently cannot reside except in real place. But what space, or place, is there in the *affections*, which are only properties of the mind? What room is there for a good angel in the affection of *love*, or for a bad one in that of *anger*? Angels are *substances*, corporeal or spiritual, and according to any system of metaphysics, it is absurd to speak of any substance subsisting in a mere property. You may as well look for angels in the colour of a man's skin, or in the sound of his voice, as in his affections.

* "Of the last Judgment," p. 12. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 11. (P.)

Besides, if angels be necessary to the affections of men, must not some beings of a similar nature be necessary to the affections of angels? Also, what was there to reside in the affections of the first men, who on their deaths only became the first angels?

It is another consequence of Mr. Swedenborg's supposing that the Divine Being consists of mere properties, that he bears no relation to space, or time, which, indeed, has been the idea of other metaphysicians of great refinement. "God," says he, "is in space without space, and in time without time;"* supposing space and time to have commenced at the creation. But though we can, in imagination, suppose the Divine Being himself not to have existed, it is impossible for us to exclude the ideas of *space*, or *duration*. Infinite space, and infinite duration, must ever have existed, and if God be omnipresent, as Mr. Swedenborg allows, and likewise self-existent, he must necessarily bear some relation to space, and also to duration, or time.

Again, though the mere properties of *wisdom* and *love* constitute the *essence* of God, Mr. Swedenborg assigns him two other principles, different, as they should seem, from properties; viz. the *esse* and the *essence*, the former, as his translator and expositor says, being "his inmost ground, and most hidden principle of being; whereas the *essence* is the particular quality, or determination, originating in the *esse*; and *existence* is the external manifestation, or operation, of both."† Of this I own I am incapable of forming any ideas at all.

But what is the greatest puzzle of all is, that, though the Divine Being consists of nothing but the properties of *wisdom*, *love*, and *life*, he has a *form*, and this form is that of man. "Both substance and form," says Mr. Swedenborg, "may be predicated of God; with this distinction, that he is a substance and form self-existent, sole-existent, and primary; and this form is truly and virtually human, that is, God is true and very man, in whom all things are infinite."‡ Accordingly, it appears from the writings of Mr. Swedenborg, that he considered God as having existed in a human form even before his incarnation.

But this opinion, besides being highly degrading to the Divine Being, has no countenance from the Scriptures, or from reason. When a voice was heard from Mount Sinai, Moses repeatedly observed to the people, that they saw no *form* whatever; apprehensive, no doubt, that their enter-

* *Universal Theology*, p. 40. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 27. Note. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 29. (P.)

taining an idea of God having any particular form might be attended with inconvenient consequences. According to the uniform language of scripture, God is equally and every where present ; and if so, what form can he possibly have ? It can be nothing but that of infinite space.

To give to God the form of man, is to assign him all the functions of man, and a mode of life similar to that of man. The form of any particular animal, beast, fowl, or fish, is adapted to its own occasions, and to nothing else. If the form be changed, as from a caterpillar to a butterfly, the whole mode of life is changed in proportion. In fact, therefore, to give to the Divine Being the form of a man, is to make him a man, and nothing more. In like manner, should the form of a horse be given to a man, it would be nothing less than changing the man into a horse.

Farther, since every thing that has *form* is *substance*, what became of that which belonged to God prior to the incarnation ? Was the whole of the spiritual substance enveloped in a human body ; and if he had arms and legs, &c. in his original state, did he make use of them in removing from one place to another ; and if not, of what use were they ? Also, was the divine form male or female ? Since the two sexes correspond to each other, he ought to be both, or neither. Indeed, Gentlemen, it is impossible to consider your opinions on serious subjects with perfect seriousness.

Lastly, I do not perceive the consistency of your own ideas with respect to God. You say, he consists of nothing but the properties of *wisdom*, *love*, and *life*. But what relation have any of these to *form* ? It resembles *Addison's* apparition, which was "in the shape of the sound of a drum." *

Hoping that amusement will not be wholly inconsistent with instruction,

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

Of the Spiritual World, and of the Interpretation of the Scriptures.

MY FELLOW-CHRISTIANS,

Mr. Swedenborg's account of his conversations in the world of spirits, which is the grand source of all his revela-

* "The Drummer, or the Haunted House," Act 1, Scene 1.

tions, appears to me very much to resemble that of dreams, * or reveries, to which some persons awake are subject. His idea of there being no *space* in the spiritual world, but only the appearance of it, was suggested to him by what was represented to his mind in those visions: for, continuing in the same place, he fancied himself to be transported to a great distance, and after conversing with the inhabitants of one world, he sometimes instantly found himself in another. All this passing in his own mind, he naturally concluded, that the objects which seemed to occupy real space, in what he calls *the Spiritual World*, such as mountains and valleys, seas and rivers, &c., had no real bulk, but only the appearance of it. In this ideal space, however, Mr. Swedenborg places the Divine Being in a human form, all human beings that have ever lived, or that ever will live on the earth, (in which, according to him, men will continue to be produced for ever,) and likewise all the men produced in millions of other worlds, which are continually pouring into it, and will never be able to fill it; all existing, as he says, in their substantial bodies and forms.

That there is no real space in the spiritual world, Mr. Swedenborg says, "was made plain to me from this consideration, that there I could see Africans and Indians very near me, although they are so many miles distant here on earth; nay, that I could be made present with the inhabitants of other planets in our system, and also with the inhabitants of planets that are in other worlds, and revolve about other suns. By virtue of such presence, (that is, without real space,) not of *place*, I have conversed with apostles, departed popes, emperors, and kings; with the late reformers of the church, Luther, Calvin, and Melancthon, and with others from distant countries." † This has certainly very much the appearance of *dreams*, and they must have been very pleasant ones.

Having conceived this idea, of there being no real space in the spiritual world, he farther concluded, as appears in his Treatise "Of the Earths in the Universe," that though much time was sometimes spent in his passage from one of these earths to another, especially when they were situated beyond the bounds of the solar system, this time was employed, not in any actual removal from place to place, but

* Among "the posthumous works of Eman. Swedenborg," in the *Catalogue*, is "Collectio Somnium Autoris, or a Collection of the Author's Dreams, from 1736 to 1746." *Summary View*, p. 150.

† *Universal Theology*, I. p. 87. (P.)

in producing a change in the state of his mind, necessary to his having intercourse with beings whose states were different from his. "A spirit," he says, "is conducted from place to place no otherwise than by changes of the states of his interiors; which changes appear to him, in all respects, like advancements from place to place, or like journeyings." Speaking there of his visiting a fourth earth in the starry heavens, he says, "These changes continued without interruption for about ten hours, before I came from the state of my own life to the state of life peculiar to the spirits of that earth; consequently before I arrived there as to my spirit."*

This *spiritual* world of Mr. Swedenborg bears some resemblance to the *ideal* world of *Plato*. Both, however, are equally the work of imagination; and it is remarkable that, as in dreams, Mr. Swedenborg had no real new ideas communicated to him in the different worlds that he visited, but only such combinations of old ideas as commonly occur in dreams. Wherever he went, he found beings in the form of men, and the same animals that we have here, hills and valleys, seas and rivers, as with us; and though he visited not only the moon, and the planets of our system, but also various planets belonging to other suns, he says nothing of that which has lately been discovered by Dr. Herschell. Had that planet, which, being the remotest that we are yet acquainted with in our system, is sufficiently entitled to distinction, no existence at that time? This does not look like inspiration.

There is something striking in Mr. Swedenborg's notion of the universal heaven resembling one man, therefore called by him *the grand man*, and that all things appertaining to man, both his exteriors and interiors, correspond to that man, or heaven. But there is no more foundation for it, than for his account of the spiritual world in general. To constitute this grand man, he says, "there is need of spirits from several earths, those who come from our earth into heaven not being sufficient for this purpose. †

In this grand man he finds the inhabitants of all the different worlds that he visited; and to some of them he assigns one station and to others another. The spirits in Mercury, he says, have relation to the *memory*, but to "the memory of things abstracted from terrestrial and merely material objects." Those in *Mars* have relation to "thought grounded in affection;" ‡ those in *Saturn*, to "the middle sense

* "Of the Earths," p. 175. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 9. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 101. (P.)

between the spiritual and the material man ;” * and those in *Venus*, to “ the memory of things material agreeing with the memory of things immaterial.” † The spirits of one of his earths relate to the *spleen*, and those of others to different parts of the body. But what makes this subject more curious, is, that in this way he finds reasons why the Lord was willing to be born on our earth, and not on another. It was that the word might be written on our earth, and by this means be published and preserved to all posterity, in consequence of the art of writing having existed here from the most ancient time. ‡ “ In every other earth,” he says, “ divine truth is manifested by word of mouth, and not conveyed far beyond the limits of families ; so that unless a new revelation constantly succeeds, truth is either perverted, or perishes.” § To these reasons he adds, that the inhabitants and spirits of our earth, in *the grand man*, have a relation to *natural and external sense*. He adds other reasons, concluding with saying, “ But this is an *Arcanum* which will be intelligible only to very few ;” || and in this small number I do not find myself included.

There is certainly no small confusion in the ideas of Mr. Swedenborg when he makes the *heavens* in the spiritual world synonymous to *angels*, and the *hells* to *devils* ; as if these *real beings* and the *place* which they occupy were the same thing. But it is similar to his making angels reside in men’s affections, as if they were necessary parts of them, that is, mere properties, and no substance at all ; which he likewise asserts concerning God.

But in cases in which either reason or the plain sense of scripture fails you, you find abundant resources in secondary and spiritual senses of the sacred writings. The sacred writers, however, are far from saying that they had any other meaning than that which appears on the face of their writings, and which is to be found in the customary sense of their words ; and if other senses be once admitted, there is no end of diversity of opinion. Different persons interpret even the literal sense differently. What, then, will be the case if, besides this literal sense, there be another concealed one, with respect to which every person will, of course, think himself at liberty to form his own conjectures ?

There is nothing that a man may not fancy that he finds in the sacred writings, or any others, when he is not confined by the plain and usual acceptance of the words before

* *Unitarian Theology*, p. 121. (P.) † *Ibid.* p. 126. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 133. (P.) § *Ibid.* p. 136. (P.) || *Ibid.* p. 139. (P.)

him, but gives such a loose to his imagination as your great prophet does. He finds Christ in every passage of the Scriptures, even those in which before him they who made the most of the doctrine of types, never suspected any such reference.

“As the word,” says Mr. Swedenborg, “is the divine truth, it is also the divine proceeding; and this is not only from the Lord, but it is also the Lord himself. As the word is thus the Lord himself, all the word in general, and each part in particular, is written concerning him alone. For, from the prophet Isaiah unto Malachi, there is not a single thing that does not relate to the Lord, or that, being in the opposite sense, is not contrary to the Lord. That this is the case has heretofore been seen by no person, but nevertheless every one has a capacity to see this, provided that he knows it, and thinks thereof while he is reading, and farther knows that there is not only a natural sense of the word, but also a spiritual sense contained in it, and that, in that sense, by the names of persons and of places is signified something of, or belonging to, the Lord, and consequently something from him relating to heaven, and the church, or something opposite thereto.” * He even says, that “in the historical parts the same things are represented by the wars of the children of Israel, with various nations. For whatever is written either in the prophetic or historical parts of the word, hath respect unto the Lord, and hence the word is divine.” †

Now, not to remark on the manifest absurdity of making a real person, whether God or man, to be the same thing with *a writing* concerning him, I would ask, how are we to know when our minds are in a state favourable to the perception of this spiritual sense of scripture which Mr. Swedenborg describes? You will say that yours are in that state, and that mine is not. But you must allow me to ask, what evidence do you give of this being the case, when, as you must acknowledge, there is no visible token of it? Your persuasion must, therefore, remain with yourselves, it being incapable of being communicated to me. For though I have probably given as much attention to the Scriptures as you have done, the construction that Mr. Swedenborg puts upon them appears to me extremely unnatural; and, divesting myself as much as I am able of all prejudice, I cannot help thinking that, if there be any use in language to express men's meaning, he has strangely misrepresented them.

I am, &c.

* “Doctrines concerning the Lord,” p. 12. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 74. (P.)

LETTER VIII.

The Conclusion.

MY FELLOW-CHRISTIANS,

I MUST now, and I can do no more, appeal to your reason, whether the religion which you have adopted on the authority of one man, be either rational or scriptural. You well know that a faith not founded on evidence (of which our own reason is the only judge) is nothing but delusion, whatever be the source of it, whether men impose upon themselves, or be imposed upon by others. When we receive truths on the authority of revelation, we must first judge by our own reason whether the revelation be real or pretended, unless it be revealed to us in particular; that another person *has* had a revelation; and this you will hardly pretend to be your case with respect to Mr. Swedenborg.

It is not easy to account for the conduct of any particular man, and therefore I am not obliged to prove that Mr. Swedenborg was either an enthusiast or an impostor. I know too little of him. But judging by appearances, from his writings, I cannot help saying, that his accounts of what he saw and heard in the spiritual world are so copious and particular, that it is barely possible that the whole should have passed so distinctly in his imagination, either in dreams or reveries; and that they read very much like inventions and fictions. At least, though something may have passed in his imagination, it must have been helped out and improved at his leisure afterwards; and it is no uncommon thing to find this mixture of enthusiasm and imposture.

But I would not be understood to accuse him. "To his own master he standeth or falleth;" and let him have been ever so honest and good a man, so that he should have really thought himself divinely commissioned to write every thing that he has done, there is sufficient evidence that it was not "the spirit of truth" that dictated his writings. Should any being, in the complete form of an angel, tell me that God had the form of a man, that this God was Jesus Christ, that he was not to return to this world to raise the dead and judge all mankind, that there are marriages in heaven, &c. &c. &c., I should tell him that he was a *lying spirit*, and that what he told me could not be true, since both reason and the Scriptures, much better authorities than an angel, told me the contrary.

Be persuaded, then, to re-examine these things, and believe no man in contradiction to your own reason, and the clear sense of scripture ; and then I think that the following plain scheme of religion will approve itself to your minds. There is one God, of whose *essence* we know nothing at all. He is invisible, and not the object of any of our senses, but he is the maker and constant preserver of all things. This great Being has at different times commissioned various men, and especially Jesus Christ, to communicate his will to mankind, and he always sanctioned their missions by the power of working miracles, or doing such things as no man could have done if God had not been with him. By this means we have been informed concerning our duty here, and our expectations hereafter, and especially that Christ, who rose from the dead, and is ascended into heaven, will return with power and great glory, when all the dead will be raised, and all the living so changed, as to be like them, incorruptible and immortal; and when they will all receive according to their works.

This religion is equally simple, rational, and effectual, with respect to all the real uses of religion, which is to teach men virtue, and to train them up for a state of future glory and happiness.

This system is easily comprehended and explained. There is nothing intricate or mysterious in it, and it requires no implicit faith in any man. Let all the facts be examined by the common, well-known rules of estimating the value of human testimony, and you will find the history of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles, as well authenticated as any other histories in the world ; indeed much better. We believe no man's mere assertion, however well-meaning or honest, but consider whether what he advances be rational in itself, and supported by proper evidence. As you are *Unitarians*, I trust you will continue so ; and if you only withdraw your implicit faith in a man who gave no *proof* of his inspiration, and whose peculiar opinions are wholly unsupported by reason or the plain sense of scripture, you will be what other Unitarians are.

I can easily conceive in what manner Mr. Swedenborg was led to form his peculiar idea concerning the person of Christ, strange as it appears to me and others. He had been brought up in the firm belief of the divinity of Christ ; and with this strong prejudice on his mind, he could see nothing in our Saviour that he did not think to be *divine*. But being struck with the absurdity of the common doctrine

of the *Trinity*, and having of course a dread of *polytheism*, he saw no alternative, but that of maintaining the *sole divinity of Jesus Christ*; and his wonderful ingenuity and peculiar metaphysics, enabled him to support his opinion in the manner that he has done.

Let me entreat you, however, to re-consider his peculiar kind of *Unitarianism*, and see whether it have any peculiar advantage. It does not simplify the idea of God more than our opinion; for we equally believe God to be *one Being*, and *one Person*. You have no nearer access to this one God, in consequence of his being in the form of a man, and of his having been incarnate. For we believe that God, who is invisible and omnipresent, sees and hears us wherever we are, and that his power extends to all persons, and all things. The union of a human body to his divine nature (supposing a thing so manifestly unnatural not to be impossible) could only tend to impede, and by no means to facilitate, his operations, of whatever kind they be. You yourselves suppose that when our present material body shall be thrown off, the substantial, or spiritual, man within us will be disencumbered, and act to more advantage than before. And can the Infinite Mind be a gainer by that very circumstance which necessarily fetters and degrades a finite one?

You make the belief of the sole divinity of Christ to be necessary to salvation. But this is an arbitrary position, calculated, like the similar declaration of the Catholics, to frighten people into your system: for unless such a faith has a greater tendency to purify the heart and amend the life, it cannot really make a man more *fit* for heaven. Your system has no superior efficacy of this kind; and ours, as I have shewn, does every thing that can be done for man in this respect.

In charity, at least, we have a manifest advantage over you.* For, lame and imperfect as many systems of Christianity are, we admit that while they teach the doctrine of a future state, and that man's future happiness or misery does in any way depend upon, or correspond to, their moral conduct here, they have so much good in them, as may counteract all the evil; and we believe, that if the temper of the mind be in the main right, no error in judgment will exclude any man from heaven. There I hope to meet Mr.

* Yet we find *Swedenborg* commended, by one of his disciples, for "loving the truth only so far as it is connected with, and conducive to charity and a good life, and pressing upon mankind rather mutual love, and obedience to the laws of God, than contention about opinions and forms of godliness." *Summary View*, p. vii.

Swedenborg and you his followers ; and when you see what you will then be immediately witnesses to, all the notions you cherish so fondly at present will vanish like a dream, and have no fatal consequences. But, in the mean time, it is certainly better to have a sensible and a rational faith, a faith that you can comprehend, and give a reason for, than a faith of which you can neither give a clear account of what it is, or on what it is founded ; and in all cases truth is preferable to error.

Though I do not pretend to any supernatural influx *from the sun of your spiritual world, I am conscious that I write these letters from the *spirit of love*, and I hope you will perceive that they likewise proceed from a *sound mind* ; and with my sincere prayers to the true *Fountain of light*, “ the Giver of every good and every perfect gift,” that we may all lead, and be led, into the real truth,

I am,
Your friend and fellow-christian,
J. PRIESTLEY. †

London, Oct. 1, 1791.

* See *supra*, pp. 74, 75. It appears that the “ Prefaces to the Treatise on *Influx*, to the Treatise on *Heaven and Hell*, and to the work entitled, ‘ True Christian Religion ; or, the Universal Theology of the New Heaven and New Church ;’ were written by a truly pious and learned Clergyman of the Church of England, lately [1785] deceased, who was personally acquainted with Baron Swedenborg.”

There was, “ also, a Preface to a French Translation of the Treatise on *Heaven and Hell*, published at Berlin, by the *Abbé Perueti*, Librarian to the King of Prussia ;” in which “ is contained an *Eulogy* on Baron Swedenborg, composed, and delivered in the Great Hall of the House of Nobles, in the name of the Academy of Sciences at Stockholm, by Monsieur Sandel, Superintendent of the Mines, Knight of the Order of the Polar Star, and Member of the said Academy.” Also, “ many curious Aneédoes and Observations, communicated to the *Abbé Perueti*, by persons of the first character in Sweden.” *Summary View*, p. v.

“ Dr. Beyer, of Gottenburg, published in two volumes, quarto, ‘ Index Initialis in Opera Swedenborgii Theologica.’ The greatest part of *Swedenborg’s* Theological Works have been translated and published in Germany, and several in France.” *Ibid.* p. 150.

At the close of the Summary, are published, “ Proposals for printing, by subscription, a posthumous work of the Honourable and Learned Emanuel Swedenborg, entitled, ‘ APOCALYPSIS EXPLICATA secundum Sensum Spiritualem ; ubi revelantur ARCANa, quæ ibi prædicta, et hactenus ignota fuerunt.’ ” *Ibid.* p. 151.

† As my readers will be able to form but an imperfect idea of Mr. Swedenborg’s writings from the quotations I have had occasion to make from them in these Letters, I shall, for their greater satisfaction, subjoin some larger extracts. (P.) See *Appendix*, No. I.

LETTERS
TO THE
PHILOSOPHERS AND POLITICIANS
OF
FRANCE,
ON THE
Subject of Religion.*

Tantanne rem tam negligentem.

TERENCE.

[London, 1793.]

LETTER I.

GENTLEMEN,

THE representatives of your nation, zealous to distinguish themselves as the patrons of liberty, and the friends of the oppressed and persecuted, in every part of the world, have done me the honour of making me a citizen of France; and many of your departments, conceiving much too highly of me, and mistaking my talents, did me the farther honour of inviting me to take a seat in your Conventional Assembly. Though conscious of my incapacity to discharge the duties of this appointment, and unwilling to abandon a situation of some usefulness in this country, I declined *this* honour, I accepted with gratitude that of *citizenship* for myself,† as well as for my son;‡ and, willing to do every thing in my power for the country that has so generously adopted me, I shall run the risk of being less favourably thought of by

* "To the American edition" of these Letters "were originally prefixed," the "Observations on the Increase of Infidelity." See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 212, XVII. p. 3.

† See Vol. XV. pp. 525, 526.

‡ See Appendix, No. II.

some of you, by addressing you on a subject which I conceive to be of infinite importance to all mankind, though it appears to be too much overlooked, or grossly misunderstood, by the greatest part of the French nation. You to whom I particularly address these *Letters*, viz. the *Philosophers and Politicians*, will smile, and some of you perhaps will proceed no farther, when I say that this subject is that of *religion*.

I am well aware, that the very term *religion* will give many of you disgust. Nor do I wonder at it, when I consider how much the thing has been abused, and how much the interested and artful have availed themselves of the ignorance and credulity of the rest of the world with respect to it, so that the grossest impositions have long passed for serious truth.

Such, however, you well know to have been the case with respect to philosophy, and especially chemistry, though the age of mystery and deception in this business is now over, and rational and useful science has taken place of solemn pretensions, absurd systems, and idle tricks. But because we now hear no more of the art of *transmuting metals*, or of the *elixir vitæ*, which were the great objects of the chemists of the last age, do we abandon every thing that bears the name of *chemistry*? Neither, then, ought we to discard every thing that bears the name of *religion*, because we have exploded superstition and priestcraft.

The objects of religion are unquestionably of infinite magnitude, compared to which, every thing relating to philosophy and chemistry is as nothing. If there be a God, a providence, and a future state, which are the objects of religion, it must be of the greatest consequence to men to be apprized of them. For, besides that they are subjects of the greatest sublimity in themselves, and most deserving of our attention and contemplation as rational beings, our knowledge of them is of the greatest use to direct our practice, and enable us to secure our greatest happiness.

I am far, however, from being willing to dazzle your minds with a display of the magnitude and interesting nature of the objects that I would recommend to your attention. Be as much upon your guard against deception as you possibly can. It behoves you to be so, and the more in proportion to the importance of the subject. But be upon your guard also against deep-rooted prejudices with respect to a subject that you must acknowledge you have not much considered. Take nothing for granted, either

from your nurses, from bold atheistical writers, who abound among you, or from myself. But whatever means you apply to detect error, and investigate truth, in other cases, apply them here; and admit nothing for true but when the reasons in favour of it shall be superior to those against it.

I will even put the matter on this fair issue. I invite you to admit nothing but what shall appear to be least contrary to *natural analogy*, and consequently to *probability*. For I maintain that, as unbelievers in revealed religion, you admit what is more contrary to common experience and daily observation, than I do. I well know you laugh at the idea of *miracles*; but I say, that it will be found, upon inquiry, that you believe in greater miracles than myself. This you must acknowledge to be a fair issue, and upon this I freely put every question between us.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the Being of a God.

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN I say that there is a *God*, I mean, that there is an intelligent Author of nature, and I maintain that it is most agreeable to natural analogy to admit this; because marks of *design*, which we universally consider as indications of *mind*, are as conspicuous in the works of *nature*, as in those of *art*.

Would any person, after considering the structure and obvious use of a *telescope*, maintain that it was made without any design, and not intended to give us a distinct view of remote objects, and therefore that it proves the existence of a mind in which that design was formed, previous to the construction of the instrument? Can the same person, then, consider the structure of the *eye*, and not say that it was a work of design also, its use being exactly similar to that of the telescope, and at least as well adapted to answer its end? Are not also hands, feet, and every other part of the human body, as clearly adapted to answer their several purposes? May not the same observation be made with respect to every part of nature? Is not every thing we see a part of one great whole? Does there not, then, exist a mind capable of comprehending this whole, and a cause that produced the whole? Is it not as absurd to say that the

visible universe had no cause without itself, as that a telescope had none?

Whatever difficulty may attend the farther question, *What was the cause of this cause?* thus far we proceed on the clearest grounds, following the most indubitable analogies; and difficult as it may be to conceive that this Great Cause of all things exists, and has existed *uncaused* from all eternity, it is not so difficult as to believe that any thing could begin to be without any cause; for this you cannot but acknowledge to be an absolute impossibility: for if ever there was a time when nothing had existed, nothing could have existed. The actual existence, therefore, of such a world as this of which we make a part, a world which bears every possible mark of the most exquisite design, is an irrefragable proof that there exists, and has existed from all eternity, a Being possessed of a mind capable of comprehending it, and that must be deemed the proper author of it.

That we do not *see* this great Being, is no evidence of his non-existence. For, as many things do not affect some of our senses, which are the inlets of all our ideas, others may elude them all. Nor is it of any moment whatever in what kind of *substance* the attributes of power and intelligence which we must ascribe to the Author of the visible universe, reside. In fact, we know nothing of any *substance*, having no idea of any thing but what we call *properties*, which, as we say, inhere in, or belong to, the several things or substances that we are acquainted with. It is enough for us that there are evident marks of design in what we see, to infer the existence of a *designing cause*, whatever that cause be, and whether, with respect to its substance, it be visible or invisible, tangible or intangible, &c. &c. &c.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Attributes and Providence of God.

GENTLEMEN,

ADMITTING the being of a God, or a *principle of intelligence* in the universe, we must judge of the *designs* of this Being as we would of those of any other, viz. by the character of his works. And the works of nature, I think you cannot but admit with me, are the works of a *benevolent*

Author; all percipient creatures being formed capable of enjoyments suited to their nature, and furnished with the means of procuring them, and also of avoiding or mitigating the evils to which they are necessarily exposed.

The more we see into the economy of nature, the more sensible we are that all evil is subservient to good, and, as far as we can judge, inseparable from it; so that, for any thing that appears, the most benevolent Being would not have constituted the universe otherwise than it is. That we should not be able to see the uses of all particular evils, and should not be able to comprehend the whole of so immense a system as that of the universe, cannot appear surprising, when one man is not always able, without particular instruction, to comprehend the works of another man.

It is also most agreeable to analogy to ascribe the whole universe to *one Author*, on account of the uniformity that is evident through the whole, and the subserviency of one part to another, immense as this great whole is, and incomprehensible as the great Author of it must be. If it would be unreasonable to suppose that one being formed the head of a man, another the hands, and others the remaining parts of the body, equally unreasonable would it be to suppose that one being formed the earth, another the plants, another the fowls, and others the land and sea animals belonging to it; since they are all intimately related to, and connected with each other, and in fact are only parts of *one whole*. If we carry our views farther, we shall see the reasonableness of concluding that the earth and the moon, the sun and the planetary system, nay, the systems of suns, and every thing comprised in the whole universe, had but one and the same Author; since the same law of gravitation, and probably many other laws, connect them all.

Farther, as no intelligent being does any thing without some view or design, we must conclude that every thing in nature has its specific and proper uses; that nothing was formed in vain; the most inconsiderable article, as it may appear to us, being as essential to the whole as the larger and more prominent parts. And as the laws of nature must be intimately known to the Author of them, he must foresee every thing that can come to pass, and must have planned every thing that comes to pass from the beginning, so that nothing can ever oppose his design. This is what we call the doctrine of an universal and particular Providence, or the adaptation of all things, and of all events, to the desigus

of that great Being who planned and who presides over the whole. This is a truth no less clear and indubitable, than it is sublime and confounding to our understandings.

I frequently read the writings of your atheistical philosophers, that I may clearly understand and enter into your views and feelings. I wish you would do the same with respect to our writings. In your endeavours to exclude the idea of a designing cause from the universe, I perceive much embarrassment and contradiction, when you would substitute the term *nature* for that of *God*. You are struck with the manifest wonders of nature, and look no farther. I see the same wonders, but they lead me to revere the great Author of nature, that *mind* which comprehends the whole. You see nothing in nature but *effects*. I revere the *cause*. What you ascribe to a blind, undesigning principle, something that bears no analogy to what we call *mind*, or *person*, I ascribe to a proper intelligent Being, a Being whom I consider, and am happy in considering, as ever present with me, and attentive to me, and to all things; who brought me into being for the most benevolent purposes, and who will conduct me through all the stages of it. You see nothing around you but something to gaze at. I look beyond all this, to a Being, or a Person, that I can speak to, the object of my gratitude, my attachment, and my confidence.

Acknowledge, then, that whatever else you may think of my sentiments, they make me happier than yours can possibly make you; especially when it is added, that, in my ideas, the present life is by no means the whole, nay, but the very infancy of my existence; and that the great Being who made me, and who has placed me in a school of discipline here, will not leave me in the grave, but produce me again, in circumstances much more favourable than the present.

Here, I am sensible, you will smile again; but attend to what I shall observe on this subject in my next Letters.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of the Evidence of the Miracles performed in Attestation of the Jewish and Christian Religion.

GENTLEMEN,

ADMITTING the being of a God, and his constant *providence*, you ask me what evidence I have of a *future state*?

I answer, (and I beg you will not revolt at my language, but have the patience to hear me out,) the express declaration of God himself, that he will raise men from the dead at a future period, and that he will then render unto them according to their works; and you cannot doubt the power of the Author of nature to do this. *miracles*

If you ask me the evidence of this, which I know you will think a strange assertion, I answer, that this has been declared by men who were commissioned by God for the purpose, and who proved their mission from him by such works as God only, the Author of nature, could perform, viz. real miracles, an evidence of a power that could controul the laws of nature.

Again, the proof that such miracles have been wrought is such *testimony* as cannot be denied without admitting still greater miracles, viz. that numbers of persons, the best qualified to judge of them, and who had no motive to impose upon others, attest their reality. Since, to suppose that all those persons were either deceived themselves, or concurred in a scheme to impose upon others, would be more evidently contrary to the known course of nature respecting mankind, (who we must take for granted have been the same in all ages,) than the reality of the miracles which they attest; this, when all the circumstances of the case are attentively considered, being a more manifest violation of the established laws of nature, than the other, and for no rational end.

For example, that the whole nation of the Jews, consisting at that time of six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, should believe that, after seeing many miracles performed in *Egypt*, they all walked through the *Red Sea*, while the waters divided to make them way; that they all heard the distinct, articulate pronounciation of the Ten Commandments from Mount *Sinai*; that after continuing in the Wilderness forty years, during which they were witnesses of several other miracles, they all went through the river *Jordan* as they had through the *Red Sea*; that they should observe the *Passover*, and other annual customs, in commemoration of those events, and preserve among them to this day books containing a distinct narrative of these events, universally, and at all times, believed to be written at the time while the events were recent, are facts of this nature.

Jews are *men*, and they were by no means previously disposed to believe any thing of the kind above-mentioned, or

to practise the religious rites enjoined upon them in consequence of them. And therefore that their minds should be universally impressed with this belief, without a sufficient cause, in the reality of the events, would be a proper miracle, nay a complication of miracles, of the most extraordinary nature. And what makes the case more extraordinary still, it would be a series of miracles wrought for no end; whereas the miracles recorded in the books of Moses had a great and worthy object, viz. to impress the minds of the Jewish nation, and, through them, those of other nations, with the firm belief of the supremacy of one true God, the maker of all things, and of his providence in conducting the affairs of men.

Also, the miracles performed by Christ, the great object of whose mission was the revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments, are less extraordinary, and less contrary to the common course of nature, than the firm belief of so many thousands of persons, previously disposed as they all were, that such miracles were wrought; when they had every opportunity and every motive that men could have to satisfy themselves concerning their truth, on the supposition that no such miracles were wrought. And the reality of their belief cannot be questioned, since they sacrificed every thing that men hold dear to them in life, and many of them life itself, to their belief.

The miracle, for so I must call it, of so many persons deceiving themselves and others, could not have been calculated for any other purpose than that of *mere delusion*, without any rational object whatever. Whereas the miracles on which the belief of Christianity is established, had the greatest and most glorious object that can be conceived, viz. the giving mankind a just idea of their future destination, shewing them that this life is but the infancy of their being, and that they are to be educated for an immortal life hereafter. The full persuasion of these great truths gives an unspeakable dignity to the human character; it adds greatly to the true enjoyment of this life, and in a manner annihilates all its pains and troubles, as well as tends to prepare them for their future state.

This was an object worthy of the author of the human race, and could not have been accomplished by any other than supernatural means; no appearances in nature giving us any rational ground to expect that we shall survive the grave. Nothing, however, could be better calculated to produce this belief than such miracles as Christ wrought,

and himself, the great preacher of the doctrine, dying in order to exemplify in his own person, that resurrection which he was authorized to promise to all. Had the most incredulous of mankind been asked what evidence of a future life would satisfy them, they could not have demanded any thing more than this; nor, as I have distinctly shewn in my "Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus,"* could they have demanded any stronger evidence of any fact, than that which Divine Providence has actually provided for *this*; so that its credibility should be stronger, especially in remote ages, and to the end of time.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Cautions against superficial reasoning on this Subject.

GENTLEMEN,

IT is not my intention in these *Letters* to enter into a detail of the evidences of revealed religion. This I have done, in a great measure, in other publications; † but only to give you what I apprehend many of you have not at present, viz. some idea of the importance of the subject, and the nature of the evidence, in order to induce you to make farther inquiries concerning it; and I wish you to do this with the diligence and rigour that the case requires.

Be persuaded, then, to examine with due care and impartiality the evidence of the facts on which revealed religion is founded, as you would do with respect to any other interesting facts of the same historical nature. It is acknowledged that the facts recorded in the books of scripture are not analogous to any that now fall under our observation, and that, therefore, they require a proportionably stronger evidence. But then you will find the evidence to *be* proportionably stronger than that for ordinary facts; no other facts recorded in history being nearly so well attested. Circumstanced as the primitive Christians were, we cannot doubt but that both they, and their enemies, felt themselves deeply interested in ascertaining the truth with respect to them. In consequence of this situation, we may be well assured that no other facts whatever underwent a thousandth part of the

* Vol. XV. pp. 325—348.

† Vol. II. pp. 65—230; IV. pp. 444—548; XV. pp. 182—362; XVI. pp. 14—418.

scrutiny that, from the nature of the case, these *must* have done; and while they were *recent*, so that the examination was the most easy. Both the *persecuted* and the *persecutors* would do every thing that their opposite interests could suggest to prove, or to disprove, the miracles appealed to. And we see that after a contest of three centuries, when Christianity had all the powers of the world, and all the learning of it too, to contend with, it prevailed, and established itself. What could this be owing to but the power of truth? for it had no other advantage whatever.

Do not content yourselves with saying that "mankind have always been the dupes of imposition, so that there is no occasion to trouble yourselves with inquiring by what means they were imposed upon in this, or any other particular case."

Credulity is an affection of the human mind that well deserves to be considered by philosophers. Like other *effects*, this must have a fixed *cause*. And the only reason why men become disposed to believe without much inquiry, is an idea, acquired by themselves, or received from others for whose opinion they have a respect, that strict inquiry was not necessary; the thing to which their assent is demanded being so analogous to other undoubted events, that a slight evidence is sufficient. This, however, supposes that the credibility of some events to which these are analogous was originally well established. Consequently, the too easy belief of extraordinary events affords a pretty strong presumption, that, though not the events in question, yet that others similar to them, were well authenticated.

If we see any person, by his knowledge of philosophy, chemistry, sleight of hand, or any other means, do things that astonish us, we give the closest attention to the facts, and do not admit them at first without very particular evidence. But having seen them, or been by any other means fully satisfied of their reality, we do not think it necessary to make the same strict examination of similar facts, reported to be performed by the same person, by those in connexion with him, or by similar means. They are then considered as common events, being agreeable to a new analogy of things.

The readiness, therefore, with which the reports of miracles said to be wrought by your saints in the dark ages, in which there is reason to suspect gross mistake, or imposition, will afford a philosopher an argument for believing that, in some preceding age, real miracles had been wrought, and that the credit of them had been well established. For such

would be the necessary effect of the reality of the miracles of Christ and of the apostles. These being admitted, the credulity of the Christian world with respect to subsequent miracles followed of course, but not upon any other supposition.

In a similar manner I account for your incredulity with respect to all miracles. You have given no attention to the evidence of the original and well-authenticated miracles, but only to that of the subsequent and fabulous ones; and seeing reason to disbelieve *these*, you have been led by a false analogy to suspect *all*. But without considering the present state of things, you should place yourselves in the situation of a philosopher at the time of the promulgation of Christianity, and examine the circumstances of the original miracles, the credit of which procured the too easy belief of the fabulous legends, at which you so justly revolt.

Many *Unbelievers*, viewing things very superficially, think to satisfy themselves and others with saying, that *ancient traditions* are never to be depended upon; that there were *Egyptian* and *Grecian* fables, as well as *Jewish* and *Christian* ones, but that now men of sense pay no regard to any of them.

But they do not attend to the obvious and important distinction between *tradition* and *history*, between opinions taken up a long time after a supposed event, and written records of transactions coeval with them; and this is precisely the difference between the fabulous histories of *Egypt* and *Greece*, and the *Mosaic* and *Christian* histories. For it is as certain that the books of Moses were written and published to the whole of the Hebrew nation in his life-time, and the history of the evangelists and the *Acts of the Apostles* in the age in which the transactions were recent, as that the histories of *Thucydides* and *Tacitus* were written and published in the same circumstances; because the people among whom they were published equally received them as genuine, and thereby gave their testimony to the general truth of their contents. And at no period of time would it have been more easy to procure them the reception they obtained in the one case, than in the other.

As human nature was the same at all times that it is at present, we may form a judgment of the difficulty of imposing upon any nation or people such histories as those of the Scriptures, by a supposition respecting ourselves. Let any person, then, endeavour to persuade the people of this country, that their ancestors, in some remote period, passed

from Calais to Dover, by walking through the sea, which divided to make them way, and let him produce *books* containing a circumstantial account of the event, as written at the time. Would he be able to procure any credit to the narrative? He would certainly be laughed at for his pains. In fact, it would be no less difficult for him to do this, than to divide the sea, as he had related. He would find the one to be as really impossible, as much contrary to the established course of nature, as the other.

In like manner, let any person produce books similar to those of the *New Testament*, and see if he can gain such general credit to them, as to induce thousands of all descriptions of men to undergo the greatest hardships, and even lay down their lives, for their faith in them, even in circumstances far more favourable to his purpose than those in which the evangelists wrote; he would find it as easy to raise the dead, as to effect any such thing.

It requires only a due attention to *facts*, such as no person who has any faith in history can deny, and to the well-known principles of *human nature*, to perceive this. But few unbelievers in revelation have been disposed to pay this due attention to either; and, in consequence of this, they really believe things more extraordinary in their nature, and, therefore, more truly *incredible*, than the Jew or the Christian.

Study, then, with particular attention the history of the times in which Christianity was promulgated. The narrative is as circumstantial, and as open to inquiry, as that of *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, or that of any other period of antiquity; and you will find indubitable facts, and innumerable of them, absolutely inconsistent with your hasty and random hypothesis.

You will find men of all descriptions and of all nations, many of them as cool and sensible as yourselves, and who had as much at stake, with respect to character or fortune, as you can have; men who had every means of informing themselves on the subject, and who evidently spared no pains in doing so; so impressed with the persuasion of the reality of the great events on which the truth of Christianity is founded, that they persisted through life in giving the fullest evidence of their conviction.

And it is particularly to be observed, that this was not a persuasion concerning *metaphysical opinions*, of which few persons are competent judges, but things that were the objects of the senses; such as the instant cure of disorders

well known to be the most incurable, raising the dead to life, and other works equally miraculous and stupendous, in which there could be no suspicion of fallacy, and of which all persons are equally judges.

But some of your writers have given so little attention to this subject, though it is merely an historical one, that they have denied the very existence of Jesus Christ, have asserted that the very term *Christ* was borrowed from some eastern language, having the same origin with *Christnou*, one of the gods of *Hindostan*, and that Christianity is only a particular modification of the worship of the sun.*

Serious as the subject is, it is not possible to forbear smiling at such palpable ignorance. I shall expect that the same writers will soon attempt to allegorize the history of *Julius Cæsar*, and maintain that no such person ever existed; for there is not a hundredth part of the evidence for the existence of *Julius Cæsar*, that there is for that of *Jesus Christ*. Hereafter the history of France itself may be allegorized; the very names of *Lewis*, *Dumourier*, and *Pethion*, may be derived from ancient languages, and the present war of your republic against the despots of Europe, may be said to mean nothing more than the war of the elements of nature. If I had not seen so much of the power of prejudice, I should wonder that so many men, of unquestionable good sense among you, and even able writers, should have given so little attention as they have done to *natural probability*, in judging concerning an historical subject.†

The letter of *Pliny* the younger is well known to all the learned, and its genuineness was never called in question; and yet one would think that some of your writers against Christianity had never heard of it. He wrote about A. D. 106, between seventy and eighty years after the death of *Christ*. In it he asks advice of the emperor *Trajan* how to act with respect to the *Christians* who were brought before him; and, speaking of the progress that the new religion had made in his province, *Bythinia*, he says, "Many of every rank, and of both sexes, are accused, and will be accused; nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but lesser towns also, and the open country. Nevertheless, it seems to me that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the temples, which were almost forsaken, begin to be more frequented, and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived.

* See Vol. XVII. pp. 82—84, 344, 357.

† See *ibid.* p. 359.

Victims are every where bought up, where for some time there were few purchasers."*

Could Christianity have made this amazing progress in so short a time, without force, and against every possible mode of opposition, if there had been no such person as Jesus Christ, or if there had been no truth in the evangelical history? *Bythinia* was not very far from *Judea*, where it originated; and as both countries were within the same empire, there could not have been wanting any opportunity of making inquiry into the truth of the facts. And it is remarkable, that the nearer we approach *Jerusalem*, as at *Antioch in Syria*, where the imposture, if there had been any, must have been more evident, the more Christians we find. That this should have been the case without there being such a person as Jesus Christ, or any truth even in the miraculous part of his history, would be more extraordinary than any thing that is related by the evangelists; the admission of which makes all the rest perfectly easy and natural.

M. *Lequinio*, a later writer than M. *Volney*, does not deny the existence of Jesus Christ, † but what he says of him is more improbable than even *this*. He represents him as the wisest and best man that ever lived, which he certainly was; "One who was actuated by the most sincere goodwill to all the human race,—teaching the great principles of moral equality, and the purest patriotism; braving all dangers, opposing the great,—despising alike glory and fortune, equally temperate with respect to himself, beneficent to others, and sympathizing with all;—hated by the powerful, whom he provoked, persecuted by the intriguing, whose artifices he exposed; and put to death by a blind and deceived multitude, for whom he had always lived.—This generous philanthropist," he says, "who wholly sacrificed himself to the public good, who gave his whole existence to the unhappy, and even to his persecutors, never lied but to teach virtue." ‡

Was ever a character in romance more unlike any thing in nature than this? And yet this was an ordinary Jewish carpenter, who had no advantage of education or knowledge of the world. This man, M. *Lequinio* supposes, without any thing supernatural about him, to have acquired this most extraordinary super-human disposition, a generosity

* See Vol. IV. p. 524; VIII. p. 106; XVI. p. 136.

† See Vol. XVII. p. 9.

‡ *Préjugés détruits*, p. 286. (P.) See *infra*, p. 108, Note.

and magnanimity exceeding that of all the heroes and philosophers of antiquity, to have converted thousands of his countrymen to the belief not only of his being a prophet, or a man inspired of God, but even the *Messiah*, whom before this they had universally expected would be a king and a conqueror; and that, after dying in the most public manner, he rose from the dead, as he declared beforehand he should do, in confirmation of his divine mission.

If a person of so excellent a moral character could be a mere impostor; if a man with so few natural advantages could deceive so many of his countrymen, all previously disposed to reject his claim, and enable them to deceive so many more, of all nations, we must say, that nature, neither before nor since that time, ever produced such men, either to deceive or to be deceived. It is not, however, a little extraordinary, that M. *Lequinio*, should express this high admiration of a man who directed his whole life, and finally died, to establish that very *prejudice* which he himself is labouring to destroy. He certainly did not judge of the feelings of Jesus Christ by his own.

Some of you may be disposed to arraign the conduct of Providence in not superseding the use of miracles, by such a general plan of things as should render them unnecessary for the moral instruction and improvement of man. But, besides that it might be sufficient in reply to this to say, that it is not our business to dictate to the Author of nature, we may easily perceive, that if an attention, on the part of man, to the Author of nature be of any use to us, as it evidently is, this end is much better gained by occasional deviations from the laws of nature than by a rigorous adherence to them.

Such is the constitution of human nature, (which we must take for granted is the best,) that things of constant occurrence, and perfectly regular in their appearance, do not easily excite particular attention. Who of the bulk of mankind asks the reason why the sun rises, why plants produce their proper seeds, or seeds their respective plants? But unusual appearances excite universal attention, and we cannot be satisfied without knowing why they happen. It is very possible for a nation of men to pass their whole lives in the view of all the wonders of nature, without ever inquiring after the Author of nature. But let their attention be excited by prodigies or miracles, and they will be led to reflect upon the subject, and thus come to revere God in all his works, those of common providence as well as those of

an extraordinary nature; and thus a respect for Him and his laws may possess their minds, and influence their conduct. And no person is authorized to say that this great end can be equally answered without miracles, or occasional deviations from the regular laws of nature.

Let me advise you, in a more especial manner, to read with the greatest attention the historical books of scripture, and see whether they bear any marks of forgery. If your minds be truly unprejudiced, you will be satisfied that no books were ever written with so much ingenuousness, or that have so many internal marks of truth. But do not expect that, with regard to composition, and accuracy in other things, they should be without faults. Consider the manners, opinions, and prejudices of the times in which they were written, and make due allowance for them. A tincture of these is an argument of their genuineness. For all that is pretended by well-informed Christians is, that the books that are usually termed *sacred*, were written by pious and honest men, well acquainted with the facts which they relate, but that they reason about them in such a manner as it was natural that persons in their circumstances would do. Different writers also, like all other genuine original historians, relate facts with the same variations, with respect to order, and less important circumstances, when they agree in every thing of real consequence.

Consider, also, that no writer is properly responsible but for what he relates as of his own knowledge, or the events and transactions of his own times. The history of *Moses*, for example, properly commences with the *Exodus*. The whole of the book of *Genesis* must have been collected from tradition, and his account of the creation was such as appeared to him, and other persons of his age, to be well founded. He no where says that he was divinely inspired in what he wrote on that subject.

That the books of scripture were written by particular divine inspiration, is a thing to which the writers themselves made no pretensions. It is a notion destitute of all proof, and that has done great injury to the evidence of Christianity; as also have other absurd opinions, and various superstitious practices, adopted by Christians of later ages, though from the influence of the circumstances in which they were.

In my "History of the Corruptions of Christianity" *

you will find an account of all, or the principal, of those opinions and practices, and of the causes which gave rise to them. I beg your attentive perusal of that work, as well as of my "History of the Christian Church to the Fall of the Western Empire."* You will there, I flatter myself, see a natural account of the rise and progress, as I hope you will also see the termination, of those monstrous corruptions of Christianity which justly shock you so much, and which have indisposed so many persons of good sense, to all inquiry into the subject.

I mean particularly such doctrines as those of the trinity, transubstantiation, vicarious suffering, and eternal torments; and, above all, the usurpation of all power, temporal and spiritual, by the *Popes*, and other ecclesiastical persons, with the horrid cruelties committed by some Christians upon others on account of religion; and that most unnatural union of civil and ecclesiastical authority in all the civil establishments of Christianity in this country, as well as lately with you, from which circumstance alone religion has been enabled to do so much mischief in the world.

These, and many other absurd doctrines and practices, I disclaim as much as you can do. They are far from being countenanced in the Scriptures, though, from gross mistake, and from motives of interest and ambition, they have been represented as essential parts of them. You have been taught from your earliest years to consider them in this light; and hence, when you come to reflect, your rejection of the whole system, as manifestly absurd, but without taking pains to examine whether the things at which you revolted were really parts of Christianity, or not. You may also have been insensibly influenced in your rejection of Christianity by a prejudice, natural to men of sense, against whatever is commonly received by the vulgar.

A real philosopher, however, will endeavour to divest his mind of *this*, as well as of every other *prejudice*, and to see things as they really *are*. And I flatter myself, that when your infidelity, which has been produced by the civil establishment of a corrupted Christianity, shall have contributed to the overthrow of that system, that which is genuine will meet with a candid hearing and a cordial reception among you. True religion, not enjoined or salaried by the state, but the choice of the individual, you will find

a valuable support of public virtue and public spirit ; and a great security to your liberty. On this account, among others, I shall rejoice if, by any means, you can be induced to give to this important subject the attention which it deserves, and I shall then have double pleasure in subscribing myself.

Your fellow-citizen.

LETTER V.

GENTLEMEN,

IN the preceding *Letters* I have addressed you as *philosophers* and as *men*, interested in the discovery of important truth, and acquainted with the methods of investigating it. If I were to address you as *politicians* on the subject of *religion*, it would be in the language of the French merchants to your famous *Colbert* when he asked them what the government could do in favour of trade, *Laissez nous faire*, Let us alone. It is a business with which, as statesmen, you have nothing at all to do, and in which you can never interfere with any advantage either to *religion* or to the *state*.

Naturally, there can be no more connexion between *religion* and *civil government*, than between *philosophy*, *medicine*, or any other branch of knowledge, and civil government ; the objects of both being essentially different. The proper object of civil government is the security of men's persons and property, which requires the union of force ; but it has no respect to any thing beyond the present life. Whereas religion consists of peculiar doctrines and practices, which relate to men, personally and not collectively considered, with respect to which no union of force can be of any advantage to them ; and the great object of it is the happiness of men, not as members of society, but as individuals, and in a future state, to which the power of civil governors does not extend.

With much more reason might the state interfere in directing what *medicines* should be administered to the members of the state, and who should administer them ; * because it might be said, that the strength of the state depends upon the health and vigour of the citizens. But whatever be men's opinions concerning a future state, and the means of pre-

* See, however, on such a direction, Vol. XIX. pp. 287, 288.

paring for it, or whether they have any belief in a future state or not, care may be taken by good laws, and a wise administration of them, to prevent their injuring one another in this life.

As far as religion comes in aid of good morals, it can only be by giving men an idea of its being their duty, from a regard to God and a future state, to behave well and to befriend their neighbours. But this depends upon the sincerity of their belief in religion, which no power of the state can enforce. Temporal punishments, or worldly emoluments, which are all that civil government can hold out to men, cannot make them *believers*. It can only make them *hypocrites*. * And therefore there are more conscientious men among sectaries, who are not favoured, but frowned upon by the state, than among the members of establishments. Are not the *Protestants* among you at least as good members of society as the *Catholics*, many of them only nominally so; though the former, besides bearing the whole expense of their own religion, contribute their share to that of the state? It is time that they be relieved, if not indemnified, for this extraordinary expense. The same may be said of the *Dissenters* in England.

To suppose that Christianity cannot support itself without the aid of civil government, is the greatest reflection upon it, and contradicted by the clearest facts in history. Not only did this religion establish itself in the world without the aid of civil power, but during three centuries, while all the civil powers in the world were hostile to it. And after Christianity had considerable countenance from the Roman emperors, the salaries of Christian ministers arose from the voluntary contributions of the laity, and there was no such thing as *tithe*, or any thing in the form of a *tax*, for its support, for more than a thousand years after the Christian æra. †

* "France," says *Gordon*, in 1741, "still abounds with concealed *Heretics*, Spain and Portugal with disguised *Jews* and *Moors*. So that by a conduct more tyrannical and infamous than that of the *Pagans* and *Mahometans*, they have only established an uniformity of hypocrisy and barbarous ignorance." *Independent Whig*, III. (ed. 2,) pp. 25, 26.

† Earlier, according to *Father Paul*, who says "that all the sermons of those times, (about the year 800,) and for some ages after, without touching on matters of faith, were all pointed to prove the obligation of paying tithes. A preacher in the time of Charlemagne informed his audience, that they ought not only to pay tithes to the priests, but to carry them to their houses."

F. Paul adds, "History puts it out of all doubt, that there never were any tithes paid either in *Africk* or the *East*, and that they owe their original to France." There "the Council of *Mascon*, A. D. 585, proceeded to excommunicate those who paid not tithes." *Eccles. Benef. and Reven.* pp. 37, 38.

Nay the wealth of the church, without the aid of the state, grew exorbitant, and often required to be checked. This more than sufficient provision for the clergy, from the superstition of ignorant ages, occasioned such a redundance in that order of men, that all Christian countries soon groaned under the burden; and an independent subsistence, secured to them by private donations, and the laws of the state, took from them all restraint upon their conduct; so that in many countries they became vicious and abandoned in the extreme, a great cause of the corruption, not of the reformation, of morals.

In this state of things, religion being a mere trade, its doctrines, from causes that I have elsewhere explained, exceedingly absurd, and the practices enjoined by it a miserable superstition, men of good sense and little inquiry, and especially those who were disposed to be licentious, easily became *unbelievers*. This has been remarkably the case with you, and begins to be so with us. But as all evils, in the course of Divine Providence, tend to cure themselves, this infidelity, which has been produced by civil establishments of religion, will, I hope, be the means of overturning them; and then rational Christianity, without any aid from the state, will recommend itself to all thinking and serious men, and the world will be *re-christianized*.

I shall not trouble you, or myself, with the recital of all the evils that have arisen from civil establishments of Christianity. Almost the whole of the long catalogue of complaints of philosophers and politicians against religion, have had no other source than this. All religious *persecution*, and the hatred of one sect to another, has been owing to exclusive privileges granted to some sects. In *North America*, where there is no civil establishment of any form of Christianity,* the members of all Christian societies, however discordant, live upon the best terms with one another, and the state is at no expense on account of any of them.

With us the case is widely different, and the consequences are sufficiently apparent. We, who are *Dissenters* from the Establishment, all lie under civil disadvantages, and many of us are not even tolerated by law.† In these circumstances every attempt to obtain any relief from our burdens, nay all our endeavours, by means of the

* See Vol. IX. pp. 5, 6.

† See Vol. XV. pp. 390—392.

press, to enlighten the minds of our countrymen on the subject of religion, and especially on the evil of establishments, excites the greatest hatred and animosity against us. This is perfectly natural with men interested in the continuance of the abuses by which they subsist.

What a glorious example would you set the Christian world, if you could relieve civil government of all concern about religion, and leave men to provide for it as they should think proper themselves. No person who has a real value for his religion could complain of this. On the contrary, he would think his religion disgraced by any support from the state. If the zeal of its friends will not provide for its support, it ought to fall. The *Protestants* among you have not suffered their religion to fail for want of sufficient funds; and do the *Catholics* think less highly of their religion, or have they less zeal for it than the *Protestants* have shewn for theirs? I believe not.

I do not mean, in these *Letters*, to do any thing more than to suggest a few hints to lead your thoughts to the subject of *religion*, and its relation to the state, so as to make it appear as worthy as I conceive it to be of your most serious attention. In several of my publications I have considered it much more at large. If you wish to know which of them I would more particularly recommend to your notice, I would take the liberty to mention my “*Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*,”* “*Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*,”† and the “*History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ*,”‡ besides the “*History of the Corruptions of Christianity*,” the “*History of the Christian Church to the Fall of the Western Empire*,” and the “*Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus*,”§ noticed before. These relate to the subject of religion in general, and the evidence of it. The subject of civil establishments of Christianity, I have considered in my “*Essay on the first Principles of Civil Government*,” in my “*Letters to Mr. Burke*,”|| and my “*Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*.”¶

With my earnest wishes for your prosperity, and especially for the speedy and happy settlement of your civil constitution; trusting that it will be favourable to your best interests, by leading to *virtue* and *happiness*, (with respect to

* Vol. II. pp. 1—380.

† Vol. IV. pp. 311—548.

‡ Vols. VI. VII.

§ See *supra*, p. 95.

|| Vol. XXII.

¶ Vol. XIX. pp. 183—206, 271—290.

which I cannot help considering *religion* as of the most eminent use,) and with sincere gratitude for the honour you have conferred upon me; while, in my native country, which I have faithfully endeavoured to serve, I have found neither protection nor redress, I am

Your fellow-citizen,

J. PRIESTLEY.*

Clapton, Jan. 21, 1793.

Of the French Republic 2.

* I take the opportunity of adding the whole of *Lequinio's* 26th Chapter, entitled *De Jésus-Christ*, of which some passages are translated (*supra*, p. 100):

“ Il s'est dit le fils d'un Dieu; qui des mortels oserait attester qu'il eût tort? Il montra toujours des vertus; il parla toujours la raison; il prêcha toujours la sagesse; il aima sincèrement tous les hommes et voulut du bien jusques à ses bourreaux; il développa tous les principes de l'égalité morale et du patriotisme le plus pur; il affronta tous les dangers; il s'éleva contre les grands qui, de tout temps, ont abusé de leur pouvoir; il peignit la dureté des riches; il attaqua l'orgueil des rois; il osa résister en face aux tyrans; il méprisa la gloire et la fortune; il fut sobre et soulagea l'indigence; il aida les malheureux à souffrir; il soutint la faiblesse; il fortifia la caducité, consola l'infortune, et sut répandre des larmes avec tous ceux qui pleuraient; il apprit aux hommes à dompter leurs passions, à penser, à réfléchir, à s'aimer et à vivre heureux autant qu'ils doivent espérer de l'être; il fut haï des gens puissans qu'il irritait, et persécuté des intrigans qu'il démasquait; il mourut sous les coups de cette multitude aveugle et trompée pour laquelle il avait toujours vécu.

“ Patriote du moment; regarde, si tu l'oses: est-ce là ton portrait? Tu cries au bien public; hé bien apprends à mourir et je vais croire à tes vertus; souffre d'être humilié; méprise la faveur populaire quand ta conscience trahirait tes paroles; laisse-toi balloter, s'il le faut, par cette multitude amie du bien, mais si aisément séduite et si fréquemment victime des audacieux, qui la flattent pour l'égarer; livre-toi sans réserve à son bonheur; consens d'être ignoré pour le faire, persécuté même et trahi; tu seras mon héros.

“ Mais si la gloire est ta passion; si tu parles pour être prôné; si tu cours après la fortune; si tu préfères ton aisance à celle des malheureux; si tu ne veux qu'être aperçu de vulgaire, et si tu ne sais pas supporter jusques à l'opprobre et jusqu'à l'ingratitude d'un peuple toujours bon par lui-même, et qui ne devient injuste qu'alors qu'il est trompé; si tu ne sais pas, enfin, trouver ta récompense en toi seul et dans la probité; vas; fuis loin de moi, vil hypocrite; vis tromper les ignorans; vas te faire couronner, par ceux que tu séduis; vas conquérir d'aveugles applaudissemens; vas, te couvrir de gloire devant cette tourbe insensée que tu sacrifierais à ton amour-propre, au besoin, et sois couvert de honte à mes yeux; vas, et me laisse adorer cet homme sincèrement patriote et qui aurait mérite vraiment d'être un Dieu, puisqu'il ne travailla jamais que pour le bien des autres; ce généreux philanthrope qui se sacrifia tout entier au bonheur public, qui livra son existens aux malheureux, même, qui le persécutaient, et qui ne mentit, jamais, que pour enseigner la vertu.” See “*Les Préjugés Détruits*, par J. M. Lequinio, Membre de la Convention Nationale de France, et Citoyen du Globe,” à Paris, 1792, (*Anno evento, quo reges et sacerdotes, ab orbe terrarum obliterandi. Primâ die Novembris*,) pp. 286—288.

This inconsistent panegyrist of the Founder of Christianity, has prefixed to his work a poetical *Invocation à la Vérité*; fondly predicting that, on the advent of Truth, which he eloquently invokes, *Revealed Religion*, as well as *Monarchy*, will be universally exploded. These, as if he had never heard of the American Republic, *Lequinio* assumes to be inseparable.

“ En efforts superflus tous les cœurs vains se fendre,
Et les Trônes en poudre, et les Bibles en cendre.”

A
CONTINUATION OF THE LETTERS
TO THE
Philosophers and Politicians of France,
ON THE
SUBJECT OF RELIGION ;
AND OF THE
LETTERS TO A PHILOSOPHICAL UNBELIEVER ;
IN ANSWER TO
Mr. Paine's Age of Reason.

—————
[Northumberland Town, 1794. *]
—————

PREFACE.

THIS pamphlet consists of two Tracts, or rather it is the continuation of two different works, which, because they both relate to the same general subject, I publish together. When the works to which they belong shall be reprinted, they will, of course be separated. †

The turn that infidelity has lately taken in *France* is not a little remarkable ; but it promises well for the cause of religion. Whether the belief professed by the *National Assembly* in the being and attributes of God, and in a future state, be sincere, or not, it shews the sense they entertain of the *importance* of this faith, to the good conduct and happiness of men, as members of society. And as a comparison of the evidences of *natural* and *revealed* religion, will soon convince all reasonable persons, that the latter is much more free from difficulty than the former, I am persuaded, that when the prejudice which is now conceived against Christianity, on account of the shocking corruptions and abuses of it, shall begin to wear off, it will be embraced first by

* Republished, London, 1796, "with a Preface by Theophilus Lindsey, A.M." See *Appendix*, No. III.

† As the former Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever have already appeared in Vol. IV., this pamphlet is reprinted exactly according to the Author's edition.

philosophers, then perhaps by the French nation in general, and lastly by the world at large; when, I have no doubt, it will be found to be infinitely better calculated to answer the purpose, not of *moralists* alone, but even of *politicians*, than the principles of mere natural religion.

We must not, however, be surprised if infidelity should continue to prevail to a much greater extent than it has done yet. The same general causes, which, in a late publication, * I have endeavoured to point out, and which have produced what we now see, must continue to operate some time longer; and the prophecies of scripture lead us to expect the same. Consequently, the faith of intelligent Christians, will be so far from being shaken, that it will be confirmed, by the present appearance of things, though all that is gained by the most rational and effectual defences of Christianity be little more than an increased attachment of the few who are truly serious and considerate.

How exceedingly superficial and frivolous are the hack-nied objections to Christianity, and how entirely they arise from the grossest ignorance of the subject, will appear from my animadversions on Mr. Paine's boasted work. † He would have written more to the purpose, if he had been acquainted with the writings of *Voltaire*, and other better informed unbelievers. But he seems entirely unread on the subject, and thereby to be unacquainted with the ground on which either the friends or the enemies of Christianity must stand. Had he been better acquainted with the Scriptures, which are a constant subject of his ridicule, he might have made a much more plausible attack upon them.

This, it must be owned, leaves but little merit to the best answerer of Mr. Paine. But it is proper that when, from

* "Observations on the Increase of Infidelity," 1793. See Vol. XVII. p. 3.

† "The Age of Reason; being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology, by Thomas Paine, Secretary for Foreign Affairs to Congress in the American War, and Author of the Works entitled, Common Sense and Rights of Man, &c. Paris, printed by Barrois, 1794, second Year of the French Republic." I have referred to this Paris edition, in the following pages. Dr. Priestley used, probably, a reprint in America.

This work had been finished "not more than six hours," when the author, then a member of the Convention, was arrested "as a foreigner," under *Robespierre's* "reign of terror," and conveyed "to the prison of the Luxembourg." There he had a very narrow escape, for "among the papers of *Robespierre*" was found "a note" in his "hand-writing," thus expressed:

"Demander que Thomas Paine soit décrété d'accusation pour l'intérêt de l'Amérique autant que de la France." On "the fall of *Robespierre*, the Convention," says Mr. Paine, "to repair as much as lay in their power, the injustice I had sustained, invited me publicly and unanimately to return." *Preface to Age of Reason*, "Part the Second," London, 1795, pp. vii. x. xi.

whatever circumstances, any work is likely to make an unfavourable impression on the minds of men, endeavours should be used to counteract the effects of it. I may also be allowed to make the same apology for my frequent defences of revealed religion, that *Voltaire* did for his infinitely varied attacks upon it, viz. that different works fall into different hands, and provided the great end be answered, repetitions are not useless. For my own part, so sensible am I of the unspeakable value of revealed religion, and of the sufficiency of its proofs, that I think no man can employ his time better, than in giving just exhibitions of them, and in diversifying those exhibitions, as particular occasions call for them.

But the more I attend to this subject, the more sensible I am, that no defence of Christianity can be of any avail till it be freed from the many corruptions and abuses which have hitherto incumbered it; and this must particularly strike every reader of Mr. Paine's "Age of Reason."* The exposing of these corruptions, I therefore think to be the most essential preliminary to the defence of Christianity, † and consequently I shall omit no fair opportunity of reprobating in the strongest terms, such doctrines as those of *transubstantiation*, the *trinity*, *atonement*, &c. &c. &c., to whatever odium I may expose myself with such Christians as, from the best motives, but from ignorance, consider them as essential to the scheme. That these doctrines, and others which are still generally received even by Protestants, are corruptions of Christianity, and were introduced into it from the principles of Heathen philosophy and the maxims and customs of Heathen religions, I have demonstrated in various of my writings, especially in my "History of the Corruptions of Christianity," ‡ a third edition of which will soon be published in this country. Here we happily enjoy the greatest freedom of discussion, as well as the freest exercise

* Who, speaking "of the Reformation by Luther, remarks not incorrectly, (pp. 75, 76,) that "the mythology still continued the same, and a multiplicity of national popes grew out of the downfall of the Pope of Christendom." See Vol. XXII. p. 7, Note †.

† Which "cannot be vindicated," says Wakefield, "adequately and consistently against *Deism* by any votary of *systems* and *establishments*.—The sway," he adds, "of *creeds* and *councils*, of *hierarchies* and *churches*, whether *Protestant* or *Popish*, over the bodies and consciences of men, is diminishing apace: and the temple of Revelation, deprived of the mouldering props which priestcraft, and tyranny, and ignorant superstition had framed for its support, must repose solely, if it can repose, on its proper basis, the adamant of TRUTH." *Examination of the Age of Reason*, ed. 2, 1794, pp. 3—5.

‡ Vol. V.

of religion, without the interference of the state. * Here, therefore, we may expect the natural happy effect of true freedom, in the gradual prevalence of truth, and the manifold desirable consequences of it.

I am well aware that I shall be blamed by many sincere friends of Christianity, who may approve of my zeal, and even the ground of my defence of our common principles in other respects, that I so frequently introduce what is offensive to them, with respect to my ideas of Christianity. But it is in the nature of things impossible to separate the defence of Christianity from a view of what I deem to be its true principles, and which alone I can undertake to defend. The persons who object to me on this account, are equally at liberty to defend Christianity on *their* peculiar principles, though they introduce things offensive to me. Free discussion will in time enable us to demonstrate the truth of Christianity, if it be true, and also to ascertain the genuine principles of it, whatever they be. May the God of truth lead us into all truth !

Northumberland, October 27, 1794.

* See Vol. VIII. p. 5. It too soon appeared that no such "freedom of discussion" would be tolerated in England. "June 24, 1797," Mr. Williams was tried "in the Court of King's Bench, Westminster," at the instance of the Church of England's *Society for promoting Christian Knowledge*, "for publishing the First and Second Parts of Paine's *Age of Reason*;" of which, in the course of his trade, as a bookseller, he had printed a cheap edition, to supply the increased demand for that work, occasioned by Bishop Watson's able "Apology for the Bible," which had been largely circulated.

—On this occasion, Mr., now Lord, Erskine appeared in behalf of *Christianity*, and of "the learned and pious authors of the prosecution," whom he lavishly eulogized; and it has been not unjustly remarked, that "the ardour with which that gentleman exerted his abilities upon this occasion very naturally surprised and mortified those who had fondly regarded him as much more than a mere advocate, in his various and noble defences of the freedom of the press." (*Mem. of Wakefield*, II. pp. 38, 39.)

"April 28, 1798, Mr. Williams was brought up in custody of the keeper of Newgate, to receive judgment" for "a libel on the Christian religion," which was *judicially* declared to "constitute part of the Law of the Land," (*visum teneatis?*) and then, as if in the benign spirit of that religion, he was sentenced to "be imprisoned in the House of Correction for one year, there to be kept to hard labour." This *mild* sentence "the Court" pronounced "in consequence of Mr. Erskine's interference in his behalf." See *N. An. Reg.* XVIII. (1797) pp. (102—107), XIX. (1798) pp. (52, 53).

"From his entire silence respecting the prosecution of Williams, we are left to conjecture that Bishop Watson was not greatly offended, if he did not cheerfully accept this support of his *Apology*." Another *literary* opponent of the *Age of Reason*, Mr. Wakefield, on the contrary, "abhorred the principle of such a prosecution, and was disgusted by the conduct of all its promoters." It is added, that "the celebrated barrister," who displayed so much eloquence, and professed so much religion, in conducting the prosecution, "was degraded from Mr. Wakefield's former high estimation of him." *Mem. of Wakefield*, II. pp. 39, 40. See "Letter to Sir John Scott," quoted *ibid.* pp. 41—46. On the late revival of *antichristian* zeal against *unbelievers*, see Vol. XIV. pp. 514, 515, Note *.

LETTERS

ADDRESSED

To the Philosophers and Politicians

OF

FRANCE.

LETTER VI.

Of the best Method of communicating Moral Instruction to Man.

MY FELLOW-CITIZENS,

I HAVE read with pleasure, and even with enthusiasm, the admirable Report of *Robespierre** on the subject of *morals* and *religion*, and rejoice to find by it, that so great and happy a change has taken place in the sentiments of the leading men of France, since the year 1774, when I was in your

* This Report was made to the Convention, May 7, 1794. *Robespierre*, whom I am surprised Dr. Priestley could name without some epithet of abhorrence, took that occasion "to enlarge on the praises of republican morality and a democratic government." The following had precedence among the 11 articles decreed on the receipt of this Report:

"1. The French nation acknowledges the existence of a Supreme Being, and the immortality of the soul. 2. That the worship worthy of the Supreme Being consists in the practice of the duties of man. 3. It ranks among these duties, the detestation of treachery and tyranny, the punishment of traitors, the succouring of the wretched, respect for the weak, the defence of the oppressed, the doing to others all possible good, and the avoiding of injustice towards all their fellow-creatures."

The last article appointed "a festival in honour of the Supreme Being, to be celebrated on the 8th of June," and "the taste and genius of David, the celebrated painter, were employed to give effect and splendour to the spectacle." On that day, as Miss Williams remarks in her Letters, "*Robespierre*, as president of the Convention, appeared; and having for a few hours disencumbered the square of the revolution, of the guillotine, he invoked the Parent of universal nature, talked of the charms of virtue, and breathed the hope of immortality."

The exemplary *Theist* survived his triumph over *Atheism*, a very few weeks. "During the procession," on this festival, "his creatures attempted to raise the cry of *Vive Robespierre!* but it was faintly re-echoed by the spectators, many of whom followed him with curses, not loud but deep." He was denounced in the Convention July 27, and on the 28th, at the age of 35, *Maximilian Isidore Robespierre* met, in profound silence, his amply merited fate, with 22 of his accomplices, on that scaffold to which he had hurried so many victims of his sanguinary ambition See *N. Ann. Reg.* (1794) XV. pp. 364—366, 378, 381.

country. * Then, excepting M. Necker, † who was a Protestant, every person of eminence to whom I had access, and, as I saw reason to think, every man of letters almost without exception, was a professed *Atheist*, and an unbeliever in a future state on any principle whatever. At present, your whole *National Assembly* have professed their belief in the being of a God, and also in a future state, on the principle of “the immortality of the soul,” as highly useful, if not necessary, to the observance of those moral duties which are essential to the well-being of society.

Taking it for granted, that these are now *your* sentiments, as well as those of the *National Assembly*, many of whose members rank with philosophers, as well as politicians, give me leave freely to expostulate with you on your rejection of Christianity, which has no other than the same object, and the principles of which appear to me to be much better calculated to answer your great purpose. The laws of morality, whether they respect the Supreme Being, our fellow-creatures, or ourselves, such as the obligation of oaths, the duties of justice and humanity, those of men in the relations of magistrates and common citizens, of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, and the rules of sobriety and moderation in the government of all our passions, are taught with infinitely greater clearness and authority in the Scriptures, as the voice of God, the common parent of the human race, than they are by the mere light of nature.

The sufficiency of the light of nature is the frequent boast of unbelievers in revelation ; but the deduction of moral and religious truths, speculative or practical, from mere appearances in nature, is, in many cases, far too difficult for the bulk of mankind. That by the mere light of nature mankind in general would ever have attained to the idea of a God, an intelligent author of nature, is by no means probable. ‡ Appearances which are constant and invariable, as I have observed before, seldom draw the attention of the bulk of mankind. They see that stones, and other heavy bodies, always fall to the ground ; they see the sun, moon, and stars, rise and set every day ; they see summer and winter succeed one another every year ; they perceive in themselves various powers of action and enjoyment ; but,

* See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 118 ; XV. p. 366.

† Of whose “Religious Opinions,” there was a translation in 1787.

‡ See Vol. II. pp. 58—61, 75 ; XVII. p. 39, Note*.

without attending to the causes or reasons of these things, or contenting themselves with the most absurd and insufficient reasons. It is enough for them that the appearances are uniform, so that they can always depend upon them, and act accordingly.

The most sublime and fundamental doctrines of religion, are those of the unity of God, of the immensity of creation, being the work of one great Agent, governed by one superintending Providence, and tending to one great end, viz. the happiness of the percipient, and especially the rational part of the universe. But these are so far from being deductions easily drawn by the bulk of mankind, that, after being in possession of them, they have appeared to be too great to be retained by them, and have always eluded their grasp. The doctrine of a multiplicity of gods, gods of different provinces, powers, and characters, some aiming to do good, and others evil, has always forced itself on mankind, and has never failed to be followed by the most absurd and mischievous superstitious practices, calculated, as was imagined, to obtain the favour of these various deities. This has ever been the case, with *Heathens, Jews, and Christians*, and it has only been by repeated revelations, that men have been brought back to the belief of the unity of God, and the important practical consequences of that belief.

The precepts of universal benevolence and impartial justice, are allowed to be the most important in the whole system of morals; but nature, without a superior interpreter, does not teach them with sufficient clearness and uniformity; because we see many evils, and many of them such as the most innocent persons are involved in, take place in the usual course of nature, and therefore, no doubt, according to the will of the Author of nature. That all natural evils are ultimately subservient to good, I have no doubt, but it is far from being *apparently* so; and kings and conquerors, who spread undistinguishing havoc wherever they come, might plead that they imitate the Almighty, in his storms and tempests, in his plagues, pestilences, and famines.

It is possible, however, that by much reflection, and frequent observations on the general order of nature and providence, intelligent persons might arrive at the belief that all evil will ultimately produce good. But this will not give them the full satisfaction which all Christians have from believing, that men inspired by God have, in so many words, assured them, "that all things *will* work together for good to

them that love *him*," that they may safely rejoice in *all tribulation*,* and even cheerfully die in a good cause, depending upon a happy resurrection and an abundant recompence being made to them in the life to come. It is impossible that the mere contemplation of nature should give men this full confidence, which is the parent of habitual devotion, and of the most heroic action.

That men are the offspring of God, and, therefore, that he is our parent, are ideas sufficiently natural, pleasing, and useful; but they are only realized and felt when God actually calls us his children, and encourages us to address him as *our Father who is in Heaven*.

What nature teaches us with respect to the manner in which we should conduct ourselves in life, is not in *words*, intelligible to all men, but must be deduced by way of *inference* from appearances, which one man will interpret in one way, and another in a different one; and every man being necessarily biassed by his own prevailing inclination, he will generally conceive that his own favourite pursuit is not forbidden by it; so that most men will live much as they please, and yet all imagine that *they live agreeably to nature*. But in *revelation*, God, the author of nature, speaks in a language that, with respect to every thing of importance, can never be misunderstood, and which must ever command respect. It is equally the language of a parent, and of a sovereign, anxious for the happiness of all his children.

All that you can make of *nature* is a figurative personage, whom you may address as you would the heavens or the earth, which are parts of it; and of God, considered merely as the *author of nature*, (but who has never discovered himself except in visible objects, such as the sun, moon, and stars, the earth, or the plants and animals with which it is stocked,) you cannot form such an idea as you do of a *person*, approaching more nearly to a human being, of whose feelings you have a perfect knowledge, and to whom, by the principle of association, sentiments of veneration and love, which lead to obedience, are intimately united. The idea of the mere author of nature, whom you can see only in his works, will not make such an impression on the mind of man, as is made by that of a real person, who, besides being conceived to be intimately present to you, can, if he please, speak to you, and permit you to speak to him, and to whom you can always address yourselves with a certainty

* See *Rom.* viii. 28; 2 *Cor.* vii. 4.

of being heard, and being attended to by him. The promises and threatenings of such a being as this will be respected as those of a magistrate or a parent.

The God of the Scriptures is apprehended in this light, as the experience of all *Jews* and *Christians* witnesses. The God who appeared to *Abraham*, who delivered the law from *Mount Sinai*, who spoke by the prophets, and who displayed his power, and signified his will, by Christ and the apostles, will be considered, and behaved to, as a real person, the object of the highest reverence, and the most sincere attachment; one to whom men will naturally pray, and in whom they will put confidence. And the commands of such a Being, delivered by his authorized messengers, will be obeyed as those of a real sovereign, whose favour will be desired, and whose displeasure will be dreaded; and, consequently, as these commands had no other object than the duties of morality, this system of *revelation* which you disclaim, is far better adapted to promote your great object, than the system of mere *natural religion*.

So much more are men impressed by any thing approaching to *humanity*, that there was the greatest wisdom and propriety in the Divine Being condescending not only to make use of articulate sounds, such as constitute human speech; but to exhibit appearances of the human form in his first communications with man, as was probably the case with *Adam*, and perhaps with *Abraham*; though afterwards, as men attained more just and sublime ideas of the Supreme Being, those appearances were withdrawn. That there is nothing in reality revolting to the human mind in the idea of the Divine Being condescending to manifest himself to men in this familiar manner, however it may now be objected to, is evident from universal history, which shews that all men, in early ages, expected, and readily believed in, such appearances.* Nor was this the case with the vulgar only; for *Socrates* himself, sensible of the darkness in which he and the rest of mankind were involved, with respect to truths of the greatest importance, expressed his earnest wish for some divine instructor.†

I am, &c.

* "In those times," says Bishop Law, "God was pleased to manifest himself to the senses of men.—They were not yet able (with *Moses*) to see him who is invisible; and perform a purely rational and spiritual worship." He adds, "We may suppose the generality of them, to have been no better than *Anthropomorphites*, in their conceptions of the Divine Being; as many were found to be, long after them in more knowing times." *Theory of Religion*, 1784, pp. 58—61.

† See Vol. II. p. 105, XVII. p. 435.

LETTER VII.

Of Historical Evidence.

GENTLEMEN,

HISTORICAL evidence, on which the belief and authority of revelation must necessarily rest, has been greatly undervalued by the advocates for the sufficiency of the light of nature. But the experience of all mankind is against them; since there are no truths which more readily gain the assent of mankind, or are more firmly retained by them, than those of an historical nature, depending upon the testimony of others. It is a kind of evidence to which all men are most accustomed, so that it is quite familiar to them; and it is peculiarly adapted to the great bulk of mankind, who are unused to abstract speculation. The authority of a parent or of a tutor, we see to have the greatest weight with young persons and others who have not been used to think for themselves. They naturally take it for granted, that what they have been taught by *them* may be depended upon; and from their own natural love of truth, they acquire a general confidence, that when men who are even strangers to them, have no interest in their deception, they will not deceive them.

Hence it is that we have, in fact, no firmer persuasion concerning any thing, than we have of the existence of many things which we have never seen ourselves, nor ever expect to see, and of the truth of facts which we know only from the information of others, as that there are such places as Constantinople and Pekin, and that *Charles I.* of England, and *Lewis XVI.* of France, were beheaded; and no distance of time sensibly diminishes the force of this persuasion, when the facts have been fully ascertained. Who, that is at all acquainted with ancient history, entertains the least doubt of *Julius Cæsar* having been killed in the Roman senate-house, of *Xerxes* having been defeated in his attempts to conquer Greece, or of *Babylon* having been taken by *Cyrus*?

Such a faith as *this*, we see, in fact, to be as sufficient a foundation for *action*, as faith of any other kind whatever. Consequently, that God may choose to signify his will to men, that these men may prove their divine mission by *miracles*, or such works as God, the author of nature, could alone perform, and that the performance of such miracles may be attested by proper evidence, so as to be entitled to

our fullest credit, are things easy of belief to mankind in general. Indeed all men, in all ages, have been disposed to believe these things; and only a few sceptical persons have entertained doubts respecting the credibility of miracles, or the propriety of the Divine Being having recourse to them, in order to communicate his will to men. It is not from *suppositions* but from actual *facts*, that we are to learn what mode of instruction or what kind of evidence is best calculated to impress the minds of men. The Great Being who made man, and who best knows him, will, no doubt, employ the best method for this purpose; and it seems to be agreeable to the general plan of his providence, to make use of men for the instructors of men.

Rousseau, who received the morality, and even the divine mission of Jesus; * though, inconsistently enough, without admitting the *miracles* recorded in the books of Scripture, † appears not to have given sufficient attention to the nature and force of historical evidence, when he asks the following questions: "God, you say, has spoken. But to whom has he spoken? To men. But why, then, have I heard nothing of it? It would have been no more trouble to him, and I should then have been secure from deception. How has the mission of messengers from God been proved? By miracles? But where are those miracles? In books. Who have written those books? Men. And who have seen those miracles? The men who attest them. What! always human testimony? Always men who tell men, what other men have related?—How many men between God and me!" ‡

* "Je vous avoue," says his *Vicaire Savoyard*, "que la majesté des écritures m'étonne, la sainteté de l'évangile parle à mon cœur.—Mais où Jésus avoit-il pris chez les siens cette morale élevée et pure dont lui seul a donné les leçons et l'exemple?" Then, referring to "le parallèle qu'il fait lui-même de la morale de Moïse à la sienne, *Matt.* v. 21," &c., he adds, "Du sein du plus furieux fanatisme la plus haute sagesse se fit entendre, et la simplicité des plus héroïques vertus honora le plus vil de tous les peuples;" thus introducing his comparison of the deaths of *Socrates* and *Jesus*, quoted Vol. XVII. p. 428.

"Les faits de Socrate," proceeds his *Vicaire*, "dont personne ne doute, sont moins attestés que ceux de Jésus-Christ. Au fond c'est reculer la difficulté sans la détruire; il seroit plus inconcevable que plusieurs hommes d'accord eussent fabriqué ce livre, qu'il ne l'est qu'un seul en ait fourni le sujet. Jamais des auteurs Juifs n'eussent trouvé ni ce ton, ni cette morale; et l'évangile a des caractères de vérité si grands, si frappans, si parfaitement inimitables, que l'inventeur en seroit plus, étonnant que le héros." *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard*, in *Emile*, L. iv., *Œuvres de Rousseau*, 1792, XII. pp. 151, 153.

† "Ce même évangile," he adds, "est plein de choses incroyables, de choses qui répugnent à la raison, et qu'il est impossible à tout homme sensé de concevoir ni d'admettre." *Ibid.* p. 155.

‡ *Emile*, L. iv. (P.) "Dieu a parlé! voilà certes un grand mot. Et à qui a-t-il parlé? Il a parlé aux hommes. Pourquoi n'en ai-je rien entendu? Il a chargé d'autres hommes de vous rendre sa parole. J'entends: ce sont des hommes qui vont me dire ce que Dieu a dit. J'aimerois mieux avoir entendu Dieu lui-même; il ne

He might have asked just the same questions with respect to all facts in ancient history, or any thing else that he himself had not seen; and yet; like other men, he certainly entertained no more doubt with respect to many things of this kind, than if he had seen them himself.

As to the evidence of *miracles*, it is precisely of the same nature with that of other facts. It is only requisite that it be *stronger*, on account of their want of analogy to other facts. But if the evidence of any facts, miraculous or natural, be sufficient to satisfy those who saw them, it may be made equally satisfactory to those who did not see them. If the persons, who themselves saw the miracles, were in sufficient numbers, and sufficiently unbiassed, we can have no doubt but that (since those persons were constituted in the same manner as we are) had we been in their place, *we* should have been as well satisfied as they were. Nay, in many cases, men are even better satisfied with the evidence of other persons than they are with their own, from a distrust of their own senses and judgment.

I would also observe, that if other histories, though written in ancient and unknown languages, can yet be made credible to the unlearned, so may the history of the Bible; and it cannot be denied, that mere *French* and *English* readers have as firm faith in the histories of *Greece* and *Rome*, as those who are acquainted with the Greek and Roman languages.

Christianity, more than any other religion, is calculated for the use of plain and unlearned persons; and though the learned only can read the Scriptures in the original tongues, the most unlearned have sufficient means of satisfying themselves, by comparing different translations, &c. with respect to the fidelity with which the *general sense* has been conveyed to them; and this is all that they are interested in. This or the other particular book of the *Old* or *New Testament*, or particular parts of books, may be spurious; but if the general history of the Jews, as contained in the books of *Moses*, and the most general account of the life of Jesus, of his principal miracles, his death, and his resurrection, as related by any of the *Evangelists*, be true, we have sufficient reason to regulate our lives by the precepts of Christianity,

lui en auroit pas coûté davantage et j'aurois été à l'abri de la séduction. Il vous en garantit en manifestant la mission de ses envoyés. Comment cela? Par des prodiges. Et où sont ces prodiges? Dans des livres. Et qui a fait ces livres? Des hommes. Et qui a vu ces prodiges? Des hommes qui les attestent. Quoi! toujours des témoignages humains? Toujours des hommes qui me rapportent ce que d'autres hommes ont rapporté? Que d'hommes entre Dieu et moi!" *Œuvres*, XII. pp. 119, 120.

from the firmest faith in that resurrection to an immortal life, of which it gives us the fullest assurance.

In order to form a judgment concerning the reality of prophecies and miracles, which are the proper proofs of a divine mission, *Rousseau* says, "We must know the laws of chance and probabilities, to judge whether a prediction can be accomplished without a miracle: we must know the genius of ancient languages, in order to ascertain what is a prediction in those languages, and what is only a figure of speech; what facts are within the order of nature, and what are not; and, lastly, to say why God has chosen, as an attestation of his having spoken, methods which have themselves so much need of attestation; as if he sported with the credulity of men, and as if he purposely avoided the true means of persuading them." *

But if this writer would avoid what he himself considers as an intolerable inconvenience, viz. that "there should be as many miracles as natural events," † it is absolutely necessary, that they should not be exhibited to all men, but only to some men, and on particular occasions, and that the persons who were witnesses of them, should transmit their knowledge of them to others, in the usual, but what are found by experience to be sufficient, methods.

In some cases, no doubt, it may be difficult to distinguish a prediction from a fortunate guess, and also a miracle from an event within the compass of nature. But in many cases, and especially such as occur in the scripture history, there is no difficulty at all. With respect to these, the most sceptical of men cannot pretend that there could be any doubt of the reality of the prediction, or of the miraculous nature of the fact, if the appearances were such as the historians describe. Was it possible, for example, to have been by means of any natural disease, that the first-born, and the first-born only, of all the *Egyptians*, and the first-born of their cattle, as well as of their men, should all die in one night, and that those of the Israelites should entirely escape, and

* *Emile*, L. iv. (P.) "Il faut bien savoir la loi des sorts, les probabilités éventives, pour juger quelle prédiction ne peut s'accomplir sans miracle; le génie des langues originales pour distinguer ce qui est prédiction dans ces langues et ce qui n'est que figure oratoire; quels faits sont dans l'ordre de la nature, et quels autres faits n'y sont pas;—dire enfin pourquoi Dieu choisit, pour attester sa parole, des moyens qui ont eux-mêmes si grand besoin d'attestation, comme s'il se jouoit de la crédulité des hommes, et qu'il évitât à dessein les vrais moyens de les persuader." *Œuvres*, XII. p. 122.

† *Emile*, L. iv. (P.) "Si l'on tenoit pour vrais tous les prodiges que le peuple et les simples disent avoir vus;—il y auroit plus de prodiges que d'événemens naturels." *Œuvres*, XII. p. 123.

after an express and unequivocal prediction, that it would be so? Could any power in nature, that we are now acquainted with, divide the *Red Sea* and the river *Jordan* in such a manner, as that some millions of people should walk through them as on dry land?

With respect to *prophecy*, could it have been by any natural sagacity, that Moses predicted the fate of the *Israelitish* nation to the end of the world; or, leaving what is yet to come, could he have described their situation so exactly as all history shews it to have been, till this very time, and as we ourselves now see it to be? Or could our Saviour have foretold the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the total demolition of the temple, as events that should take place in that very generation, when it is evident, that no other Jew of that age had the least apprehension of any such thing? It requires no more knowledge of philosophy, or of human nature, than all men are possessed of, in order to avoid deception in such clear cases as these.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Of the Evidence of a future State.

GENTLEMEN,

THE principles on which you maintain the doctrine of a *future state of retribution*, are much more liable to be called in question than those of revelation. Philosophers will never approve of them, and their opinions will have weight with those who are not philosophers; and no authority of laws can prevent this. It is not your *National Assembly* decreeing that the belief of the being of a God, and of the immortality of the human soul, are the principles of religion with *Frenchmen*,* that will make them be *believed* by the people of France, or of any other nation. The proper authority, on which any speculative principles, which are the foundation of all practice, are founded, must be the *reasons* alleged in their favour; and it will be said, that, admitting there is a God, or an intelligent author of nature, where is the evidence of man surviving the grave?

Men are not, in reality, actuated by any other *principles* than those of other animals. Our faculties differ from theirs

* See *supra*, p. 113, Note.

only in *degré*, and by no means in *kind*; and those of some brutes approach very near to those of some men; and as men live, so they die, in the same manner as brute creatures. Consequently, if it be any thing in the natural constitution of man, on which you found your expectation of the immortality of the thinking principle within him, you must have the same expectation with respect to every brute creature, and even every insect.

When men cease to breathe, they cease to think, and also to shew any signs of perception, just as brutes do; and you commit both in the same manner to the earth, when every principle of which they consisted, is either dissolved and dispersed by the process of putrefaction, or affords nourishment to other animals, so as to sustain life in some other form. What appearance, then, or what natural evidence of any kind, is there, that any part of the dead man, or the dead animal, escapes? Or, if any thing invisible to us should escape at death, what evidence is there of that part of man retaining all the powers of perception and thought?

If while a man lives, his faculty of thinking is deranged by a blow on the head, or a disease of the brain; or if when he is thrown into a state of sound sleep, his faculty of thinking be suspended, how can he perceive, or think, when his brain is infinitely more disordered, or when he has no brain at all? Certainly there is no analogy in nature that can lead us to form such a conclusion. Had we had no knowledge of men but in a state of death, it would have been no more rational to suppose that *they* were possessed of the power of thinking, than that so many logs of wood had the same power.

If you say that it is impossible to conceive *how* the properties of perception and thought should result from any organization of mere matter, I say it is equally impossible to conceive how the properties of gravitation, of magnetism, or of electricity, should result from the substances which we find to be endued with them. The connexion between the substance and the properties is equally unknown in all the cases. Besides, what do we know of *immaterial substances* more than we do of those that we call *material*? We have, in fact, no proper idea of any *substance*; but only of the *properties* by which they affect our senses, and which we say inhere in, or belong to them; so that to the mere terms *material* or *immaterial*, as expressive of *things* or substances, and exclusive of their *properties*, which we say belong to them, we equally annex no ideas at all. Consequently our difficulty with respect to the cause of perception and thought,

is not at all removed by supposing that they belong to an immaterial substance, which is invisible to us, and which escapes when a man dies.

If you say that there must be something in man which is immortal, in order to his receiving a just recompence for his actions in this life, it will be asked, what reason have you to expect that men will receive from the Author of nature, any other recompence than they do in this life? You can only judge of the *designs*, as well as of the *power* of God, from what you see of his works and his providence; and if you see that men actually *do* die in their crimes, without receiving any proper punishment, the fair inference is, that the Author of nature, who is the author of life and of death, did not intend that they should receive any. If you form any other idea of God, he is a Being of your own imagination, and therefore nothing that you can suppose such a being as he ought to do, or to provide for, can be the ground of any real expectation whatever.

I cannot help observing, that M. *Robespierre*, in his excellent *Report* on the subject,* gives no reasons whatever for his belief in the immortality of the soul, besides the importance and use of the doctrine; and Mr. Paine, who in his "Age of Reason" professes the same belief, contents himself with saying, "The power that gave me existence is able to continue it,—and it appears more probable to me that I shall continue to exist hereafter, than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began."† But he gives no reason whatever *why* this appears to him to be probable. Before he had any existence at all, there were numberless millions to one, that he never would have existed. For exactly such a person as Mr. Paine was but *one* of an infinite variety of beings, that might have been produced, and therefore, consistently enough with what he has advanced, there may be many millions to one against his existence after death. That the power which gave him existence is *able* to continue it, is no proof at all that he *will* continue it; since there is, no doubt, an infinite number of things within the power of the Almighty, that never actually take place.

The more attention you give to this important subject, the more satisfied, I am confident, you will be, that no principles besides those of Christianity can ensure the firm belief of a future state, as necessary to that doctrine of *future retribution*, which you wish to establish. In the principles of

* See *supra*, p. 113.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 116.

Christianity there is nothing metaphysical or dubious. That man will survive the grave, Christianity assures us, not on the principle of the immateriality or immortality of any thing invisible belonging to a man which death cannot affect, but on the actual resurrection of the whole man in a future period; and this upon the positive word of Him that made man, and who, no doubt, has power, though in a manner which we cannot comprehend, to restore the life which he first gave.

That the Divine Being *has* given men this assurance, is confirmed by such evidence as no person can reasonably object to. For in the nature of things, stronger evidence could not have been given, or even imagined; as I presume I have sufficiently proved in my “Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus,”* to which I take the liberty to refer you. What could the most incredulous of men have required more, than that a man commissioned by God, and evidencing his mission by unquestionable miracles, (some of which were raising of dead persons to life,) should not only assert the doctrine, on the authority of those miracles, but, as an ultimate proof of it, should exhibit himself as an example of it, by announcing his own death and resurrection within a limited time, being put to death by his enemies, in the most public manner possible? The certainty of his resurrection was also evident from the conduct and miracles of the apostles, acting in his name afterwards.

Evidence of this kind is far better adapted to the nature of man than any arguments that can be alleged in favour of the immortality of the human soul, which, it is well known, never, in fact, produced any considerable effect, so as to induce men to *live* and to *act*, and still less to *die*, in the full persuasion of its truth; and it cannot be denied, that this has been unquestionably the case of thousands and tens of thousands, with respect to the Christian doctrine of a resurrection. What real influence had the doctrine of the immortality of the soul upon any of the *ancients*? And it is well known, that the little appearance there was of the belief of it, had vanished before the time of Christ. It is sufficiently evident that even *Cicero*, who with great ingenuity collected and stated all the arguments he could find in favour of this doctrine, did not himself lay any stress upon them. †

The *Deists* of the last century, in England, began indeed with professing, as you do, their belief in the immortality of

* Vol. XV. pp. 325—348. † See Vol. II. pp. 99, 100, 102, III. pp. 356, 357.

of the soul, as well as in that of the being of a God, and of a providence; but it was not retained by their disciples.* Few persons have had an opportunity of being better acquainted with the *Unbelievers* of my own age and country than myself; and I can assure you, that I have hardly ever known one of them who had the least expectation of a future life, and some of them have publicly maintained, that the belief of it, as well as that of the being of a God, has done much harm in the world. If, therefore, you wish to establish the belief of a future state as a security for good morals, you must not discountenance the Christian doctrine of a resurrection, and rely on a principle which has never yielded it any solid support.

Simple *Unitarian* Christianity invites your particular and serious attention. What you have hitherto seen of Christianity, has been little more than the shocking abuses and corruptions of it, which have made it subservient to the mischievous policy of kings and priests. Be persuaded to examine for yourselves, and you will find, that none of those things which have given you so much just offence, are at all authorized by the pure Gospel of Christ. On the contrary, his doctrines are most favourable to the *liberty and equality of man*, and to every thing else that contributes to his dignity and happiness. In the Gospel, men of all ranks and descriptions, *Jew or Gentile*, “Barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free,” as the apostle *Paul* expresses himself, [*Col. iii. 11.*] are considered as *brethren*, being equally children of God, and heirs of immortality. They are represented as having different parts to act on the great theatre of the world, but as entitled to an equal reward, if they act them well. So far is there from any preference being given to the rich and great, that their chance for future bliss, is always represented as less than that of the poor, who, on that account, are pronounced most happy.

In the original institutions of *Moses*, there was no provision for a *king*, though all the neighbouring nations were governed by kings, and in the most arbitrary manner; and when the *Hebrews* wished to imitate their neighbours in this respect, as they did in every other, the prophet *Samuel*, speaking by authority from God, described to them the fatal consequence of adopting that form of government, in as earnest and as emphatical a manner as you yourselves could

* See Vol. II. pp. 102, 103.

now do it, viz. as leading to oppression and every species of abuse.*

So far is the Gospel from being a system of *ecclesiastical tyranny*, which is the use that has been unhappily made of it, that nothing is so strongly inculcated by Jesus as the virtue of humility, and that all pre-eminence is founded on usefulness. Having called his apostles together, on two of them discovering some symptoms of ambition, he 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 be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” The very style made use of by the *Pope*, who gradually usurped all power in heaven and in earth, clearly points out this original maxim of the Gospel, for he calls himself *the servant of the servants of God*.

Originally all Christian churches were nothing more than voluntary associations of Christians who appointed officers for the use of the society, and displaced them whenever they pleased; and it was their first custom, to appoint a number of the same rank, to manage all their concerns; not one of whom, as the *bishop* in after times, had any more power than another. In short, nothing could be more favourable to the principles of *equal liberty* than the genuine maxims of the Gospel, and the uniform practice of the primitive ages of Christianity.

Still more evident is it, that Ministers, in Christian churches, had originally nothing at all to do in civil matters. In what manner they acquired the power of which we find them possessed afterwards, and what use they made of it, ecclesiastical history abundantly shews. But in no other case will you plead for the total disuse of any thing, on account of the abuses to which it has been subject.

Hoping that in the present very critical and interesting situation of your country, and of all *Europe*, you will take these things into your serious consideration, I am, with my sincere wishes for the perfect establishment of your liberty, and the disappointment of all your enemies, your highly honoured fellow-citizen,

J. PRIESTLEY.

*Northumberland in America, Vendémiaire 7,
De la République Française, Ann. 3 [1794].*

* See 1 *Sam.* viii. 11—18, Vol. XI. pp. 282, (*Note*), 365.

LETTERS

TO

A PHILOSOPHICAL UNBELIEVER.

PART III. *

LETTER I.

Of the Sufficiency of the Light of Nature for the Purpose of Moral Instruction.

DEAR SIR,

CONSIDERING how distinguished and important a part Mr. Paine has acted on the theatre of the political world, and the eagerness with which his writings have been read, not only in *America* and *England*, but, by means of translations, in all parts of *Europe*, I do not wonder that you are apprehensive that his virulent attack upon revelation, in his late work entitled "The Age of Reason," should make an unfavourable impression upon many persons. And as I have been happy enough, in the former part of our correspondence, to have given you some satisfaction with respect to the writings of Mr. Gibbon, † and other modern *Unbelievers*, you request my perusal of this work, and my opinion of the strength or weakness of the arguments contained in it.

I agree with you in thinking, that this work shews the same vigour of mind and strength of expression, that distinguish the other writings of Mr. Paine. ‡ But I hope to satisfy you, and others who are sufficiently candid, that he had not the same previous knowledge of the subject of which he treats; and without this knowledge of his subject, the

* For the former Parts, see Vol. IV. pp. 311—548.

† See *ibid.* pp. 535—548.

‡ "That the former writings of *Thomas Paine*," says *Wakefield*, "abound with indications of original conception and profound thought, of comprehension and sagacity, far beyond the vigour of ordinary minds, no man, I presume, of established character for intelligence and integrity, will venture to deny. To the authority of venal sycophants, and all the retainers of corrupt and wicked systems, whether in *politics* or *religion*, who have sold themselves to professional hostility with reformers and reformation, no competency can be allowed for a decision on this subject: but, on the contrary, the virulence of their abuse is in itself no unequivocal symptom of extraordinary merit." *Examination*, pp. 1, 2.

greatest mental ability and command of words only enable a man to impose upon the ignorant and unwary; who will naturally presume that when a man writes with great confidence in his own opinion, and contempt of that of others, (which are undisguised in this work of our author,) he has taken pains to make himself master of his subject, and that he feels the ground on which he stands. There can be no doubt but that Mr. Paine thought so. But let us examine the foundation of his confidence, beginning with what he says of the sufficiency of the light of nature for moral instruction.

“What more,” says he, “does man want to know, than that the hand or power that made these things, is divine, is omnipotent? Let him believe this, with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permits his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course.”* Speaking of the *creation*, he says, “It preaches to all nations, and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.”†

Now, much more is necessary to be known by man, than that the hand which made him and all things, is omnipotent. For all the rules of moral conduct by no means follow from this scanty knowledge. A being may be omnipotent, and yet malevolent. For though the idea of a devil has, I believe, no archetype in nature, it is possible in itself, and universally thought to be so. Nay, whole nations have believed in an originally evil principle, as well as an originally good one.

Indeed, forgetting what he had said about the idea of the mere *omnipotence* of the Author of nature, being sufficient to lead men to the knowledge of all moral duties, Mr. Paine calls to his aid the marks of *benevolence* which are impressed on the face of nature, supposing the author of it to say to man, “Learn from my munificence to all, to be kind to each other.”‡ There are, no doubt, marks of benevolence, as well as of power, in the constitution of nature and the conduct of Providence, sufficient to enable a reflecting mind to conclude that the Author of nature is supremely benevolent, and that the great end of all his works is the happiness of his creatures. But this is not so *apparent*, but that many have drawn a contrary conclusion; and there are appearances in nature which would seem to justify the generality of man-

* *Age of Reason*, p. 70. (P.) *Paris*, p. 51.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 66. (P.) *Paris*, p. 47.

‡ *Age of Reason*, p. 86. (P.) *Paris*, p. 63.

kind, who are unable to take enlarged and extensive views of things, in drawing it. At least, we see in these appearances the natural causes of their mistake: for it cannot be denied, that there is much evil as well as good in the world, much pain as well as pleasure; and, that the introduction of the evil was with a view to the production of more good, and not the pleasure which the introducer of it took in the thing itself, is not always evident.

Men naturally judge of the thoughts and designs of other intelligent beings by what they experience in themselves, and observe in those about them. Now, whatever be the cause, there certainly are persons who really delight in mischief, and take a pleasure in the sufferings they occasion to others. It is no wonder, therefore, that men have supposed that there are beings above them, and at whose mercy they are, who take pleasure in tormenting them; and though they should form an idea, that *one Being* was the author of the various and seemingly contradictory appearances in nature, (which, however, is more than mankind have ever in fact attained to themselves,) they might suppose that this great Being was of a variable disposition, sometimes rejoicing in good, and sometimes in evil. To learn of him, therefore, and to imitate his conduct, they might think was occasionally to indulge themselves in a little mischief; as, they might say, the Author of nature did, by storms and earthquakes, or when he sent war, and pestilence, and famine among men. Men, therefore, left to the mere light of nature, might say, that since, in these cases, there is an evident violation of all the rules of justice, as well as of mercy and goodness, there was no reason why men should be bound by laws by which the Supreme Being did not bind himself.

Agreeably to this, it is well known, that in the very worship which the Heathens paid to their gods, they indulged both their lust and their revenge without the least restraint.* They even inflicted the greatest tortures upon themselves as well as upon others, as the surest way to gratify the inclinations and secure the favour of the objects of their worship; and absurd as we now justly think those practices to have been, it was not the wisdom of man, but the preaching of that Gospel which Mr. Paine treats with so much contempt, that brought men off from them. This despised instrument did more for mankind in this important respect in a few years, than all the learning of the *Egyptians* and the

* See Vol. II. pp. 80, 83, 84.

philosophy of the *Greeks* were able to do in many centuries. In fact, this learning and philosophy, and all the light of nature, shining on the most improved of human minds, effected no real change at all; not one of the most absurd of the popular superstitions having been corrected by them.

That nature teaches the duty of *prayer* to God, Mr. Paine is so far from asserting, that he ridicules the idea of it. "What," says he, "is the amount of all his prayers, but an attempt to make the Almighty change his mind and act otherwise than he does?"* And yet men, when left to nature, have universally had recourse to prayer. How, then, does Mr. Paine's theory and the practice of mankind agree? It is, however, evident to me, that mankind in general have, in this respect, judged and acted more naturally than Mr. Paine. The generality of mankind, judging of other intelligent beings, and consequently of the Supreme Being, from what they experienced in themselves, and observed in those with whom they had intercourse, would naturally suppose that his feelings bore a resemblance to their own, and that his conduct would be directed by the same principles. As, therefore, they had been accustomed to apply for what they wanted, to their earthly superiors, they would naturally apply to the Supreme Being for such things as they imagined *he* alone could give. Their believing that he knew all their wants, and was well disposed towards them, would not prevent their applying to him; since, judging from their own conduct towards their children and dependants, they might think that he would defer his bounty till they applied for it; as that would be an expression of the sense they had of their dependence upon him, and their obligation to him.

In an advanced state of human nature, I can conceive that *petition* may be an unnecessary part of prayer. We may perhaps even see an impropriety in any mode of direct address to the Deity; and, rejoicing in the full persuasion that we have of the benevolence and wisdom of the Supreme Being, indulge no sentiments but those of gratitude and joy. But that *petition*, as well as *thanksgiving*, is adapted to the present state of human nature and human life, and that it becomes even the most intelligent of men to join with the vulgar in that practice which Mr. Paine so much ridicules, I have the fullest persuasion.

Prayer is a necessary step in the intellectual and moral improvement of man. That habitual regard to God, which

* *Age of Reason*, p. 63. (P.) *Paris*, p. 44.

does not imply any direct address to him, but (as Dr. Hartley has admirably and philosophically explained the process)* eminently contributes to exalt and purify the mind, cannot be attained without it. As good and as pious a man as Mr. Paine may be, (and on this, no doubt, he founds the "hope" he expresses to have of "happiness beyond this life,") † I am confident he would have been more pious, and consequently more virtuous, if he had made conscience of daily prayer, though it may be too late for him to make the experiment of having recourse to it now.

If we form our judgment of the light of nature, not from the practice of the bulk of mankind even in all ages, and all nations, but from the avowed principles and conduct of those who, in opposition to the friends of revelation, make the greatest boast of it, we shall see reason to form no high idea of the sufficiency of it; since the most celebrated of modern *Unbelievers* have defended practices which are evidently unjustifiable.

If there be any thing of a moral nature that is indisputably right, as a branch of perfect *integrity*, it is, that a man's professions should correspond to his real sentiments, and his conduct to his professions; so that both by his words and his actions, he should lead others into no mistake concerning his principles. In this Mr. Paine perfectly agrees with me. "It is impossible," he says, "to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and in order to *qualify* himself for that trade, he begins with perjury. Can we conceive any thing more destructive to morality than this?" ‡

This instance of immorality, Mr. Paine sees in its just light, when *Christians* are guilty of it. But *Unbelievers*, who

* *Observ.*, Pt. ii. *Prop.* lxxiii.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 8. (*P.*) *Paris*, p. 2.

‡ *Age of Reason*, p. 10. (*P.*) *Paris*, pp. 3, 4. "These very rational and most important observations," says *Wakefield*, "are applicable in the fullest latitude to the *subscriptions* and *confessions* exacted from young men at our *Universities*, for *degrees*, and from the candidates for the ministry in the *Church of England*, and among some *Dissenters*."—Of such "delightful advocates" of "the simplicity and sincerity of the Gospel," *Wakefield* adds, they "thus bind their understandings, as it were, to the belief of certain tenets, manufactured and imposed by others; and thereby preclude themselves from pursuing their theological inquiries beyond the limits assigned in *councils*, *synods*, and *parliaments* of former days,—nor can we be surprised at a plenteous harvest of *unbelievers* in a vineyard cultivated by labourers of this complexion." *Examination*, pp. 12—14.

have professed the greatest attachment to the light of nature, have not only been habitually guilty of the same enormity, but have defended their conduct with respect to it. *Rousseau*, who first solemnly abjured the *Protestant* religion, in which he was educated, and afterwards as solemnly renounced the *Catholic* religion without pretending to have changed his opinion, says, "In the uncertainty in which we are, it is inexcusable to profess any other religion than that in which we are born; and falsehood, not sincerely to practise what we profess."* *Voltaire* always professed himself a Catholic Christian, and on his death-bed he made a confession of his faith, in which he declared, that he died in the Catholic religion, in which he was born.† Mr. Hume, Mr. Gibbon, and the generality of *Unbelievers* in England, always wrote under the mask of Christianity, and attacked it not directly, but only in an artful, insidious manner. Not so the apostles, the primitive Christians, and the Protestant martyrs. It is only among the believers in revelation that we shall find the noble heroism of dying, rather than profess what is believed to be a falsehood. Many *Unbelievers*‡ have not scrupled to throw away their lives in *duels*, or to destroy themselves through disappointment, or *ennui*. But how much more noble is it to die for important truth!

Another virtue of the greatest importance to the good order of society is chastity, or an adherence to the rules which have been laid down by all the civilized part of mankind to restrain the commerce of the sexes. But *Unbelievers*, who profess to live according to nature, have, in general, made little account of this virtue. *Rousseau* professed to think

* *Emile*, L. iv. (P.) "Dans l'incertitude où nous sommes, c'est une inexcusable présomption de professer une autre religion que celle où l'on est né, et une fausseté de ne pas pratiquer sincèrement celle qu'on professe." *Œuvres*, XII. p. 165.

† See his *Life*, written by *Condorcet*. (P.) See Vol. XVII. p. 63, *Note* †. The following scene, described among "Anecdotes of M. Voltaire's Reception at Paris, and of his Death," leaves a very different impression:

"The Marquis de Villette, with whom Voltaire resided in Paris, when he perceived his visitor's death approaching, sent for Mons. Bonnet, Curé of St. Sulpice, to persuade him, if possible, to comply with the usual customs of their religion, in order that the proper honours might be paid to his remains. The Curé began by questioning Voltaire, 'if he believed in the divinity of Jesus Christ,' but was hastily stopped by the wit's saying, 'Ah! M. le Curé, if I pass that article to you, you will demand if I do not also believe in the Holy Ghost, and so on, until you finish by the *Bull Unigenitus*.' 15

"The Curé departed; but in a few hours after, a great change appearing, he came a second time, and began with putting his hand on the dying man's head as he lay in bed; upon which Voltaire raised his own hand to the Curate's head, and pushed him away, saying, 'I came into the world without a *bonnet*, and will go out without one; therefore let me die in peace!' He accordingly turned his back toward the Curé, and died in a few minutes, without speaking another word." *Ann. Reg.* (1778), XXI. p. 4.

‡ And, probably, as many *professed* Christians.

himself the very best of his species, though he made no scruple of his criminal connexion with a great variety of women. He was not married till late in life to the woman by whom he had several children, all of whom he sent to the foundling hospital, without taking any care of their education. He also speaks in the highest terms of the sublime virtue of a woman, * with whom himself, and, according to his account, many others in their turns had the same connexion. Surely, then, the positive command of God was highly expedient, if not absolutely necessary to restrain those irregularities, eventually so hurtful to society, and destructive of its peace. The authority of the great and wise Parent of mankind was required to guide the conduct of his children, before their own reason would have discovered the true rule of life, and the way to happiness.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the Nature of Revelation, and its proper Evidence.

DEAR SIR,

IT must be allowed by all persons, that the only proper evidence of revelation, is a *miracle*, or something out of the usual course of nature: for no other than the author of the laws of nature can controul them, and depart from them. "But," says Mr. Paine, "unless we know the whole extent of those laws, and of what are commonly called these powers of nature, we are not able to judge whether any thing that may appear to us wonderful, or miraculous, be within, or be beyond, or be contrary to, her natural power of acting." †

To this it is easy to reply, that though no man knows the whole extent of the powers or laws of nature, we are sufficiently well acquainted with *some* of them. Not to mention the case of the death of the first-born, and of the first-born only, both of men and of cattle, throughout the whole land of *Egypt*, in one hour of one particular night, and that distinctly announced beforehand; or the dividing the *Red Sea* or the river *Jordan*, so that a whole nation could march through them at their leisure, which are facts in the *Old Testament* history: will Mr. Paine himself say, that the

* *Madame Warens*. See Rousseau's *Confessions*.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 136. (*P.*) *Paris*, pp. 104, 105.

instantaneous cure of all kinds of diseases, not excepting those that require the longest medical treatment, such as dropsies, palsies, and insanity, by speaking a word, was within the usual course of nature; or that a man could walk on the sea, and still a tempest, by command, without a miracle? Still less will he say that a man who had been crucified on *Friday*, and left alone in a sepulchre, could walk about and converse on the *Sunday* following, as if nothing had been done to him, without a miracle. Admitting the facts to be as they are represented in the Gospel history, he would surely say, that, little as we know of the whole compass of nature, such things as *these* are clearly beyond it, and unquestionably *supernatural*.

It is mere burlesque writing, and unworthy of this serious subject, to say, (*on* the supposition of miracles being employed to prove a divine mission,) as Mr. Paine does, "It is degrading the Almighty into the character of a showman, playing tricks to amuse, and make the people stare and wonder;"* when, in the nature of things, miracles were necessary to engage the attention of mankind, and to convince them of the power and presence of God.

He says, that "whenever recourse is had to show for the purpose of procuring belief, (for a miracle under any idea of the word is a show,) it implies a lameness, or weakness, in the doctrine that is preached."† But might not Mr. Paine with just as much reason say, that the exhibition of the works of nature is only another kind of show; and therefore that no doctrine can be taught by *it*? But there are doctrines which, to man at least, absolutely require the aid of miracles to their proof; as that of a resurrection from the dead at a future period, which it is impossible for us to learn from any appearances in nature; but which we may firmly believe on the express word of our Maker, ascertained in the only way in which it possibly can be ascertained, viz. by a miracle.

But Mr. Paine thinks that, admitting the possibility of miracles, the reality of them can never be made *credible*. "Is it more probable," says he, "that nature should go out of her course, or that a man should tell a lie? We have never seen, in our time, nature go out of her course; but we have good reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time. It is, therefore, at least millions to one that the reporter of a miracle tells a lie."‡

* *Age of Reason*, p. 139. (P.) *Paris*, p. 107. † *Ibid.* (P.)

‡ *Age of Reason*, p. 141. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 108, 109.

This is by no means the true state of the case, as it respects the miracles recorded in the Scriptures. Should, indeed, any single person, especially a stranger, come and tell me that he saw a man, who was unquestionably dead, suddenly rise up, walk about, and converse as in perfect health, I should, no doubt, conclude either that he was deceived himself, or that he designed to impose upon me; this being more probable than the truth of the fact. But when I find that thousands, and tens of thousands of persons, who had the best opportunity of informing themselves concerning a fact of this miraculous nature, and who had every motive that men could have to scrutinize the evidence with the greatest rigour, shew their full persuasion of the truth of it, by relinquishing every thing dear to them in life, and even life itself, rather than give up their belief of it; the question to be considered is, whether it be more probable that such a number of persons, circumstanced as these were, could be imposed upon, or the thing itself be true; and especially if a great and good end was visibly answered by the truth of the fact, which is the case with respect to those miracles which established the belief of Christianity. And what a Christian says, is, that to suppose all these persons, who had the perfect use of all their senses, and who were as capable of judging as he himself could be, and as much interested in ascertaining the truth, to be deceived, would, in reality, be more extraordinary, and therefore, properly speaking, more miraculous, than the fact in question.

It is, no doubt, true, that millions of lies have been told by men; but if only ten or a dozen men of Mr. Paine's own acquaintance should, independently of one another, tell him the same thing, as equally seen by themselves, and he should not be able to discover any motive that they could have to wish to deceive him, I am persuaded that, like any other man in the same circumstances, his incredulity would be staggered.

It is upon the idea of the utter incredibility of miracles, that Mr. Paine, speaking of them, makes the following extraordinary assertion: "It is," says he, "the most equivocal sort of evidence that can be set up; for the belief is not to depend upon the thing called a miracle, but upon the credit of the reporter, who says that he saw it; and therefore the thing, were it true, would have no better chance of being believed than if it were a lie."* The credit of the

* *Age of Reason*, p. 139. (P.) *Paris*, p. 107.

reporter, is, no doubt, necessary to my faith in the miracle which he reports. But this being established, the miracle is a just foundation of my belief in a divine interposition, because none can work a miracle but God only.

It is upon the same supposition of the absolute incredibility of miracles, that he says, "Since appearances are so capable of deceiving, and things not real have a strong resemblance to things that are, nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose that the Almighty would make use of means, such as are called miracles, that would subject the person who performed them to the suspicion of being an impostor, and the person who related them to be suspected of lying, and the doctrine intended to be supported thereby, to be suspected as a fabulous invention."* But the suspicion of imposture does not necessarily arise from the relation of a miracle, but upon various circumstances attending the narrative; and in these cases, one person might entertain a suspicion, when another had none at all. History unquestionably proves that Mr. Paine's reasoning on the absolute incredibility of miracles is not well founded. Since he cannot deny that credit has been given to miracles by men of all nations, in all ages, it is evident that they *are* adapted to gain credit with men, and that by having recourse to them, the Supreme Being has not made use of an improper instrument for gaining his purpose.

The following is another truly curious, and I believe quite an original argument of Mr. Paine's on this subject: "It is," says he, "a contradiction in terms and ideas, to call any thing a revelation, that comes to us at second hand, either verbally, or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication. After this it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him, and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner, for it was not a revelation made to *me*, and I have only his word for it, that it was made to him."†

On this principle, it is not incumbent on Mr. Paine to believe what any person may tell him, and he may give credit to nothing but what he sees himself, in which case his faith will be reduced to a very small compass indeed. His pretence to "a contradiction in terms" is a mere quibble. We do not say, that the revelation made immediately to *Moses*, or to *Christ*, is, strictly speaking, a revelation to *us*.

* *Age of Reason*, p. 138. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 106, 107.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 13. (P.) *Paris*, p. 6.

But if we see sufficient reason to believe that the revelation was made to *them*, we are, properly speaking, believers in revelation; and if the revelation, whatever it be, relate to the whole human race, as well as to the person to whom it was immediately made, all mankind, Mr. Paine himself included, will find themselves under an equal obligation to respect it.

Mr. Paine's observation on the insufficiency of human language, to transmit the knowledge of revelation, is trite, but as little to the purpose. "Human language," he says, "is local and changeable, and is therefore incapable of being used as the means of unchangeable and universal information."* "As to translations," he says, "every man who knows any thing of languages, knows that it is impossible to translate from one language into another, not only without losing a great part of the original, but frequently of mistaking the sense."† But the truth of revelation does not depend upon niceties of ideas, which it is difficult to express, or upon the niceties of any particular language, which it is difficult to transfuse into another language. What mistake has ever arisen, or can possibly arise, from the translation of the *ten commandments*, or the *Lord's prayer*, into all the languages in the world? Mr. Paine might as well say, that the great facts in the Roman History, such as the conquest of *Carthage*, or the death of *Julius Cæsar*, could never be credible, because they are recorded in human language, which is local and changeable, and the translation of it uncertain, as that the *Mosaic* or *Christian* history is incredible on that account. If there be such a thing as *cavilling*, unworthy of a serious writer, it is such reasoning as this. Indeed, I do not think I have any where met with more confident assertions, or a looser mode of arguing, than in this tract of Mr. Paine's.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Object of Christianity, and of the History of Jesus.

DEAR SIR,

YOU will not much wonder that a person so occupied as Mr. Paine has been, and so usefully occupied, in matters of

* *Age of Reason*, p. 58. (P.) *Paris*, p. 45.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 64. (P.) *Paris*, p. 46.

civil policy, should not understand *every thing*; though his extraordinary success in writing on some subjects, might lead him to think himself equal to any other. But you are now, I am persuaded, convinced, that, distinguished as his abilities are, he has not given sufficient attention to the subject of *revelation*, that he has totally misconceived the object of it, and especially the nature of its *evidence*. His ignorance of this subject, (arising, I suppose chiefly, from his contempt for it,) is more apparent in what he says concerning Christianity in particular; the origin of which, as lying within the compass of well-known 'history,' it was much easier for him to make himself acquainted with.

What is more remarkable still, Mr. Paine admits things that are manifestly inconsistent with one another. For, according to him, nothing can be more truly amiable and excellent than the character of Jesus, the founder of Christianity, or more upright and disinterested than his views in founding it, and yet nothing more detestable than the real spirit and tendency of it. Indeed, he himself says, speaking of the *New Testament*, "Out of the matters contained in those books, together with the assistance of some old stories, the church has set up a system of religion very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears."*

"He was," he says, "a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind, and though similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before, by the Quakers † since, and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any." ‡

"The church," he says, "has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue, in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty." § Jesus, he says, "preached most excellent morality, and the equality of man; but he

* *Age of Reason*, p. 57. (P.) *Paris*, p. 40.

† "The Quakers undoubtedly," says *Wakefield*, "take them all in all, are, as a PRACTICAL, SOCIAL body, on account of their *pacific* principles, the most respectable of all the religious sects that have come to my knowledge; but what can be more supremely ridiculous, than to exemplify *their* morality in contradistinction to that of the *Gospel*, when they are one and the same? To say, moreover, of the *Christian* system merely, that 'it has not been exceeded by any systems ancient or modern,' is such a misconception, as candour will choose to impute, not to malignant disparagement of its merits, but to an ignorance rather of the philosophical systems of antiquity, and the comparative purity of evangelical morality." *Examination*, pp. 24, 25.

‡ *Age of Reason*, p. 18. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 9, 10.

§ *Age of Reason*, p. 57. (P.) *Paris*, p. 40.

preached also against the corruptions and avarice of the Jewish priests, and this brought upon him the hatred and vengeance of the whole order of priesthood.* “All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish,” he says, “appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.” †

Here, then, is an extraordinary circumstance, which requires a little investigation. The founder of the Christian system was confessedly the most unambitious of men, and yet his religion (for he does not say, the corruptions or abuses of it) was an invention “set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.” If the apostles and not Jesus, were the founders of this religion, as Mr. Paine seems to intimate, they were peculiarly unfortunate in their choice of a patron, and very unsuccessful with respect to their object. For none of them acquired any share of power or profit; and, in general, after living wretched lives, subject to every mode of persecution, died violent deaths. If this scheme “to enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit,” had any later origin, it cannot be ascribed to Christianity itself, but to something that arose out of it, and for which it is not answerable; and all history, though Mr. Paine may be unacquainted with it, proves that this was the very fact.

But before I consider Mr. Paine’s account of the origin of the system to which he so much objects, I shall attend to what he farther says concerning *Jesus* himself; and this, like his account of the object of his religion, is a strange mixture of truth and falsehood. “That such a person as Jesus Christ existed,” (a thing not admitted by M. *Volney*, *Lequinio*, ‡ and other philosophers in France,) Mr. Paine does not deny. He farther says, “That he was crucified, which was the mode of execution at that day, is an historical relation strictly within the limits of probability.” § “Most proba-

* *Age of Reason*, p. 22. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 12, 15.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 9. (P.) *Paris*, p. 3. *Wakefield* calls this “a just remark, concisely and pregnantly expressed.” He adds, “National churches are that ‘hay and stubble,’ (1 *Cor.* iii. 12,) which might be removed without any difficulty or even danger of confusion, from the fabric of religion, by the gentle hand of reformation, but which the infatuation of ecclesiastics will leave to be destroyed ‘by fire.’ (1 *Cor.* iii. 15.) National churches are that impure incrustation which has enveloped, by gradual concretion, the diamond of Christianity; nor can, I fear, for the reason just now stated, the genuine lustre be recovered, but by such violent effort of restitution, as the separation of substances, so long and closely connected, must inevitably require.” *Examination*, pp. 10, 11.

‡ Incorrect as to *Lequinio*. See *supra*, pp. 100, 108, *Note*.

§ *Age of Reason*, p. 22. (P.) *Paris*, p. 12.

bly," he says, he worked "at his father's trade, which was that of a carpenter," and "it does not appear that he had any school education,—for his parents were extremely poor." This the evangelical history confirms; but when he adds, that "the probability is that he could not write,"* he certainly had no foundation for it at all. If the general account of the history of Jesus, which Mr. Paine does not call in question, may be depended upon, he read in a Jewish synagogue, and the probability is, that a man who can read fluently, as reading in public requires, could also write. In one incident recorded of him, (*John* viii. 6,) he "wrote," or made some kind of characters, "on the ground." Mr. Paine says, "Jesus wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or any thing else. Not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people."† But such was the case with *Socrates*, and yet it was never inferred from that circumstance, that he could not write.

That Mr. Paine was very little acquainted with the real character, and even the common history of Jesus, is evident from his saying, "It is not improbable that the Roman government might have some secret apprehension of the effects of his doctrine, as well as the Jewish priests. Neither is it improbable, that Jesus Christ had in contemplation the delivery of the Jewish nation from the bondage of the Romans. Between the two, however, this virtuous reformer and revolutionist lost his life."‡

Certainly there is no appearance of any thing like this in the evangelical history. On the contrary, Jesus not only carefully avoided giving any umbrage to the Roman government, but he declined giving his opinion on any political subject whatever. When he was applied to about the division of an estate, he said, (*Luke* xii. 14,) "Who made me a judge, or a divider over you?" § When he was appealed to about the lawfulness of paying tribute to the Romans, he cautiously answered, [*Mark* xii. 17,] "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

When *Pilate*, who certainly would not have been so much disposed to favour him, as he evidently was, if he had suspected him of any designs against the government, asked him

* *Age of Reason*, p. 48. (P.) *Paris*, p. 34.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 19. (P.) *Paris*, p. 10.

‡ *Age of Reason*, p. 23. (P.) *Paris*, p. 13.

§ See Vol. XIII. p. 240.

if he was a king ; he acknowledged it, indeed, but added, that his kingdom was “ not of this world,”* and that he was *sent to bear witness concerning truth.*

When the common people would more than once have placed him at their head, and have actually made him a king, he always rejected the proposal with indignation, so that at length they ceased to importune him on the subject. If he had had any scheme of this kind, but did not choose to trust the common people, he would naturally have consulted with the great men of his nation ; and this might have recommended him to them. Whereas so differently did they conceive of his views, as most hostile to theirs, (whose wish, as their whole history shews, was to emancipate themselves from the yoke of the *Romans*,) that they thought there was no safety for themselves but in putting him to death, which accordingly they contrived and executed.

This, however, certainly shews, that Jesus was a very conspicuous character. Else, why all this alarm ? He had no advantage of birth, or connexions, that could make him formidable. He does not appear to have been a man of any extraordinary natural talents ; and, according to Mr. Paine, could not even write his name. Why then were the rulers of the Jewish nation so much afraid of him ? Why take away the life of a poor illiterate carpenter ; and, not content with their own forms of judicature, contrive to get him condemned by the Roman governor himself, and crucified by his order ?

But Mr. Paine says, “ The manner in which he was apprehended, shews he was not much known at that time ; and it shews also that the meetings he then held with his followers were in secret, and that he had given over, or suspended preaching publicly. Judas could no otherwise betray him, than by giving information where he was, and pointing him out to the officers, who went to arrest him ; and the reason for employing and paying Judas to do this, could arise only from the causes already mentioned, that of his not being much known, and living concealed.” †

This difficulty, however, is easily removed. The apprehension of Jesus was to be in the night, and by the common officers of justice ; and it is very possible that, let a man be ever so well known in the day-time, such persons as these might neither be able to find him in the night, nor distinguish his person at that time without some assistance. Besides,

* *John* xviii. 36. See Vol. XIII. p. 348, *Note* †.

† *Age of Reason*, (*Paris*,) p. 35.

why did the Jewish rulers think it necessary to use the precaution of apprehending Jesus in the night, but because he was so popular at that time with the common people, that the apprehending of him in the day-time was thought to be too hazardous? That the preaching of Jesus was then, and at all times, most public, his whole history clearly shews; and when he was seized in the night, he himself said, (*Mark* xiv. 48, 49,) "Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple, teaching, and ye took me not."

Mr. Paine says of Jesus, "The idea of his concealment not only agrees very ill with his reputed divinity, but associates with it something of pusillanimity; and his being betrayed, or in other words, his being apprehended, on the information of one of his followers, shews that he did not intend to be apprehended, and consequently that he did not intend to be crucified."*

It would be of material consequence to the cause of infidelity, that what Mr. Paine here asserts should be true, viz. that Jesus had no apprehension of the violent death to which he was exposed. But the whole of his history shews, that he knew from the beginning that he was to die in consequence of his undertaking, and by a public crucifixion; and though for some time he chose to withdraw himself from the persecution of his enemies, it was only till the proper time was come for his throwing himself into their hands.

Some time before his last journey to *Jerusalem*, it is said, (*Matt.* xvi. 21,) "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must go up unto *Jerusalem*, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." At the same time, and on other occasions, he plainly forewarned his followers, that they must be ready to suffer as he did; language which was ill calculated to favour any conceivable purpose of an impostor. When *Peter* on this occasion [*vers.* 22—25] rebuked him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord! This shall not be unto thee." He turned and said unto *Peter*, "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." He then said to 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

* *Age of Reason*, (*Paris*), pp. 35, 36.

† See Vol. XIII. p. 185.

life for my sake, shall find it." If they were to die in his cause, what prospect could they have of gaining any thing by their attachment to him?

In one of the public discourses of Jesus, in which he compared himself to a shepherd, he said, (*John* x. 15, 17,) "I lay down my life for the sheep," and "therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again."

On his last journey to *Jerusalem*, he said, (*Matt.* xvii. 22, 23,) "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again;" when we find the disciples, to whom this language was addressed, as was natural, "exceedingly sorry."

That Jesus went to *Jerusalem* at this time with a fixed purpose to die there, is evident from what he said when he was told that *Herod* sought to kill him. *Luke* xiii. 33: "I must walk to-day and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of *Jerusalem*."* As they were travelling, (*Matt.* xx. 17,) he "took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, 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 Jesus was arrived at *Bethany*, and was at supper there, he said, by way of apology for *Mary*, who had anointed him with some valuable ointment, (*John* xii. 7,) "Let her alone; against the day of my *embalming* has she kept this." When he was discoursing in the temple, a few days before his death, he said, alluding to it, (*vers.* 24, 25,) "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." That he not only apprehended his death at this time, but that he was most sensibly affected with the idea of it, appears from what he added on this occasion; "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." ‡

But nothing shews the steady purpose of Jesus to give up his life in his undertaking, whatever it was, more clearly,

* See Vol. XIII. p. 205.

† See *ibid.* p. 268.

‡ See *John* xii. 27, *ibid.* p. 281.

than his solemn institution of the *eucharist* the very night in which he was betrayed, expressly as a memorial of his death; the bread representing his body, which was to be broken; and the wine, his blood, which was to be shed. All his discourses to his disciples, recorded in *John* xiv., xv. and xvi., and his solemn prayer, (xvii.,) as they went to the garden of *Gethsemane*, were calculated to comfort them with respect to his approaching death, and his temporary separation from them. *John* xvi. 16, 20, 22: "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.—Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.—Ye now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." In his last prayer, he says, (*John* xvii. 11,) "Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world; and I come to thee." What did he mean by this, but that he was going to die? In the garden he appears to have felt what I believe any man of equal sensibility would have felt in the same circumstances. But though he wished, if it had been possible, to have avoided his painful and ignominious death, and therefore prayed, saying, (*Matt.* xxvi. 39,) "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" he added, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."*

As Jesus knew from the beginning the purpose of *Judas*, why, if "he did not intend to be apprehended," † did he go to the place where he expected to meet him; and why did he not endeavour to make his escape, which, when they who came to apprehend him (probably overawed by his presence and manner of speaking) "fell to the ground," (*John* xviii. 6,) he had an opportunity of doing? When he was in the presence of his Jewish judges and of *Pilate*, did he behave like a man who wished to avoid the fate that he could not but see was impending over him? Had he recourse to any mean submission, or apologies, to save his life? Nay, did he not shew as great marks of presence of mind, and calm intrepidity, as any man ever shewed in the face of certain death?

If all the circumstances of the apprehension, the trial, and crucifixion of Jesus, be duly attended to, we shall no where find an example of truer fortitude, accompanied with the most perfect benevolence, and the most entire resignation to

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 338, 339. † See *supra*, p. 143.

the will of God ; especially if we consider his extreme sensibility, discovered in his agony in the garden. To die with a spirit of revenge, and to bear torture with rage against a man's enemies, is a common and low attainment, compared to dying with that spirit of perfect meekness and forgiveness which was discovered by Jesus, when he prayed for his executioners. This argues a mind of a superior and extraordinary cast.

Mr. Paine, not considering that the great use of the death of Christ was to prepare the way for the most satisfactory evidence of the resurrection, says, "The Christian mythologists tell us that Christ died for the sins of the world, and that he came on *purpose to die*. Would it not then have been the same if he had died of the fever, or of the small-pox, of old age, or of any thing else?"* But it is obvious to observe, that had Christ died of any disease, and of course in *private*, among his friends, it would always have been said by *Unbelievers*, that he never had been actually dead ; whereas this could not be said of a man who was condemned to death by his enemies, and publicly crucified. †

Mr. Paine's account of the resurrection of Jesus, shews that he was but little acquainted with the circumstances of that part of the history. "A small number of persons," he says, "not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say they *saw it* ; and all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it. But it appears that Thomas did not believe the resurrection ; and, as they say, would not believe without having ocular and manual demonstration himself, *so neither will I* ; ‡ and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas. It is in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise this matter. The story, so far as relates to the supernatural parts, has every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it. Who are the authors of it, it is as impossible

* *Age of Reason*, p. 52. (P.) *Paris*, p. 36.

† *Wakefield* observes, "He did not 'die of a fever, or of the small-pox, of old age,' or in any private customary manner ; but by a public exhibition of death, before the natives of all civilized countries under heaven, upon a cross : that he, whose resurrection had been previously appointed by himself for the test and demonstration of the whole *Christian system*, as it related to the destruction of death and the gift of immortality, might be shewn to the world unequivocally and indubitably dead." *Examination*, p. 63.

‡ "The man," says *Wakefield*, "who is resolved to believe no transaction, but upon 'ocular and manual demonstration,' is compelled to belie his own theory in every movement of his life.—The emphatical declaration, therefore, of Christ, (*John* xx. 29,) which has been a subject of so much debate and dissertation, is no fanatical ejaculation of a wild enthusiast, but a position strictly philosophical and intrinsically wise." *Examination*, pp. 33—35.

for us to know, as it is for us to be assured that the books in which the account is related, were written by the persons whose names they bear. The best surviving evidence we now have, respecting this affair, is the Jews. They are regularly descended from the people who lived in the times this resurrection and ascension is said to have happened, and they say *it is not true.*”*

Instead of eight or nine, the eleven apostles, and several other persons saw Jesus repeatedly after his resurrection, and he met the great body of his disciples in *Galilee* by particular appointment. *Paul* says, (1 *Cor.* xv. 6,) that “he was seen *by more than* five hundred at once,” the greater part of them *being then alive*; and it is easy to observe, that if the evidence of five hundred persons, none of whom had any interest in deceiving, or being deceived, was not deemed sufficient to establish the truth of any fact, which requires nothing more than the evidence of the *senses*, that of five thousand, or any other number, might be objected to as insufficient. And so far is this story from bearing any mark of fraud, or imposition, that I challenge Mr. Paine, or any other person, to propose any other circumstances that would have made it more credible than it now is, at this distance of time. This I think I have sufficiently shewn in my *Discourse* on this subject, † though I do not expect that Mr. Paine will think it worth his while to look into it.

If by “the Jews” who say that the story of the resurrection “is not true,” Mr. Paine means the *Jews* of this age, or the *Jewish rulers*, and the majority of the *Jewish* nation, at the time, it is acknowledged. But their unbelief is much more easily accounted for, on the supposition of the story being true, than the belief of the many thousands of Jews who entertained no doubt of it at the time, on the supposition of its not being true. For these must have had as strong a prejudice against the belief of it as any other Jews; and no prejudice of which we have any account in history could be stronger than this.

Had the *Jewish* nation in general, in consequence of their believing this fact, become Christians, Mr. Paine would have had much more to object to the story than he now has; as he would, no doubt, have said that the *Jewish* priests and rulers were in the secret, and must have had it in their power to contrive and execute the scheme of a resurrection, or any

* *Age of Reason*, p. 21. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 11, 12.

† Vol. XV. pp. 325—348.

thing else which they had thought proper for their purpose ; that there does not appear to have been any motive for a rigorous inquiry into the truth at the time, and that it is too late now.

Mr. Paine may require the same evidence for the resurrection of Jesus that *Thomas* did, and he may require the same evidence of any other fact, and believe nothing but what he himself sees. But it satisfies me, that persons as incredulous as *Thomas* evidently was, and as much so as Mr. Paine himself could have been, persons as capable of judging in the case, and as much disposed rigorously to examine into the truth, were convinced of it. The evidence that satisfied such persons as these, and a sufficient number of them, would, no doubt, have satisfied me, if I had been in their place. It is not expected that facts in the Christian history, or those in any other history, will be believed by the violently prejudiced. It is enough that they gain the assent of persons of competent judgment and candour, and whose minds are in a proper state to be impressed by reasonable evidence.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of the proper Origin of the Scheme of Christianity, and the Antiquity of the Books of the New Testament.

DEAR SIR,

Mr. Paine's account of the origin of what he calls Christianity, is the most curious romance I have ever met with. He does not deal in dates, any more than in quotations, writing wholly from his memory, and, as he acknowledges, without having even a Bible at hand.* But he should have told us about what time he supposed the Christian system, which gives him so much offence, was formed. He owns it is unjustly ascribed to Christ himself. We may, therefore, suppose that the æra to which he refers it, was either the time when the books of the *New Testament* were written, or when they were collected and arranged as they now are. But as they were collected and kept together, almost as soon as they were written, those two dates cannot be far distant

* Mr. Paine says, "I keep no Bible." *Age of Reason*, (Paris,) p. 52. In the Preface to his "Part the Second," (1795, p. vi.) he says, speaking of the former Part, "I had neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both, nor could I procure any."

from one another; and, indeed, he himself makes no great distinction between them; but having no knowledge of history, he refers the writing of these books to a period even some centuries later than the true one, as acknowledged by all other enemies of Christianity.

“The writings ascribed to the men called Apostles,” he says, “are chiefly controversial, and the gloominess of the subject they dwell upon, that of a man dying in agony on a cross, is better suited to the gloomy genius of a monk in a cell, by whom it is not impossible they were written, than to any man breathing the open air of the creation.”*

Now it is well known, that nothing of the system of monkery existed, or was thought of, in the time of the apostles; and the great maxims of their writings condemn every thing that leads to it. Let Mr. Paine point out any passage in the *New Testament* that, in the most distant manner, intimates that God is pleased by the mortifications and torments that men inflict on themselves, or that it is their duty, or at all acceptable to God, that they should shut themselves up from the world, and decline the active duties of life. On the contrary, if he will condescend to look into his Bible once more, (but from the contempt with which he speaks of it, it is not probable he ever will, or that he could read it without prejudice if he did,) he will find that the great duties which he himself would say are most incumbent upon men as members of society, are those which are chiefly insisted upon there, and that nothing is more strongly inculcated in the Scriptures, than that men are to shew their love to God, their common parent, by kind offices to his children, and their brethren.

Mr. Paine is of opinion, that the passages in the *New Testament*, on which “the whole theory or doctrine of what is called the redemption is built, have been manufactured and fabricated, on purpose to bring forward the secondary and pecuniary redemptions” of the Church of Rome. “Why,” says he, “are we to give this church credit, when she tells us that those books are genuine in every part, any more than we give her credit for any thing else she has told us; or for the miracles she says she has performed? That she *could* fabricate writings is certain, because she could write; and the composition of the writings in question is of that kind, that any body might do it; and that she *did* fabricate them is not more inconsistent with probability than that she should

* *Age of Reason*, p. 73. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 53, 54.

tell us; as she has done, that she could, and did work miracles."*

Here Mr. Paine is guilty of the grossest *anachronism*, since it is well known, that the system of "pecuniary redemptions" was not established till many centuries after the writing of the books of the *New Testament*, which it is evident contain nothing that could lead to it. To say that the church could, or that it was willing to invent books, with any particular view, is nothing to the purpose, when all history shews, that the books actually existed long before the church had any such views. Besides, if some persons were interested in forging books, were not others as much interested in detecting the forgery? Or will Mr. Paine say, that the apostles, and other primitive Christians, had any advantage in point of literature, or superior understanding, which could enable them to impose upon the whole world, and so much to their injury, as Mr. Paine pretends? This *church* must have been a most extraordinary personage, to have done all that Mr. Paine ascribes to her. She must have been a very great knave, and the world a very great fool. But all knavery has not been confined to churchmen, nor all folly to the rest of the world. History shews that both these articles have been pretty equally divided between them both.

Writing, as Mr. Paine evidently does, without the least knowledge of the Scriptures, or indeed of history, his work may make an impression on those who are as ignorant as himself. But what scholar will not smile at his account of the influence which he asserts the progress of Christianity had on *the progress of knowledge*? "However unwilling," he says, "the partisans of the Christian system may be to believe, or to acknowledge it, it is nevertheless true, that the age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system. There was more knowledge in the world before that period, than for many centuries afterwards. Had the progression of knowledge gone on proportionably with the stock that before existed, that chasm" (meaning what are generally called the *dark ages*) "would have been filled up with characters rising superior in knowledge to each other; and those ancients we now so much admire, would have appeared respectably in the back ground of the scene. But the Christian system laid all waste." He farther says, "The setters up and the advocates of the Christian system of faith

* *Age of Reason*. p. 58. (P.) *Paris*, p. 41.

could not but foresee, that the continually progressive knowledge that man would gain by the aid of science, of the power and wisdom of God manifested in the structure of the universe, and in all the works of the creation, would militate against and call into question the truth of their system of faith; and therefore it became necessary to their purpose to cut learning down to a size less dangerous to their project; and this they effected by restricting the idea of learning to the study of dead languages."*

In all this Mr. Paine must have written from documents existing in his own brain only, the real state of things is so much the reverse of what he describes. No real progress had, in fact, been made in any thing that Mr. Paine himself would call *useful science*, for several centuries before the Christian æra. The only pursuits to which men of leisure and letters devoted themselves, related to the arts of speaking and writing. In the knowledge of moral duties it is certain, that no real progress was made; nor do I think that Mr. Paine will say that in all this period any considerable improvement was made in the science of government; and for about three centuries after the Christian æra, every thing of this kind went on just as it had done before, without any obstruction, but without any real progress. How then does it appear that in this respect, "the Christian system laid all waste"?

Christianity was promulgated in a state of the world the most enlightened, the most favourable to the progress of knowledge, and consequently the most unfavourable to any scheme of imposture, of any from the beginning of the world to that time. All the civilized part of the world was then at peace, and the ruling nation had been for some time enamoured with such science as then prevailed. Christianity, though at first embraced chiefly by the unlearned, soon made converts of the learned; and in consequence of this, the Heathen writers became fewer, and the Christian writers more numerous; and there was certainly no appearance of the learned among the Christians discouraging literature. This was so far from being the case, that in a very short time the Christians published more books than the Heathens had ever done, till at length we hardly find any Heathen writers at all, but Christian writers without number. And this continued to be the case till the invasion of the *Roman*

* *Age of Reason*, pp. 96, 98, 92. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 73, 75, 70.]

empire by the northern barbarians; and this circumstance, not Christianity, was the thing that "laid all waste."

As to the deep scheme that Mr. Paine ascribes to the "setters up of the Christian faith," in consequence of the umbrage they took at the progress of knowledge, viz. their contriving that all learning should consist in the study of dead languages, I will venture to say it never existed but in his own single imagination; no other writer, at least, having ever entertained such a notion. The apostles and other early Christians, whom Mr. Paine may call the "setters up" of Christianity, were in general unacquainted with any language but their own, except that some of them understood *Greek*. This, however, was so much the language to which all persons who could read were most accustomed, that it was necessary that all the books of the *New Testament* should be in that language; and in all the *eastern* parts of the world, nothing was written in any other language by Christians or Heathens.

At *Rome*, and in the *western* parts of the empire, the Christians as well as the Heathens wrote only in *Latin*, and few of them appear to have known any thing of *Greek*. There were then no dead languages to study, except *Hebrew*, with which only a few of the more learned Christians were acquainted. But those who were, and those who in any other respect distinguished themselves by their application to literature, as *Origen*, *Jerome*, *Pamphilus of Casarea*, and *Eusebius*, were held in the highest esteem on that account. How then did Christianity lay all things waste?

On the irruption of the northern barbarians, (which is well known to have been the commencement of that age of darkness which Mr. Paine ascribes to Christianity,) all the books and the literature which then existed, were preserved, not by the *Heathens*, but by *Christians*; and had Mr. Paine been living at that time, he must have looked for every thing of this kind in cathedral churches, but more especially in monasteries, where it was the occupation of many of the fraternity to transcribe ancient books; and without this, it is probable we should not now have had any of the writings of those ancients, of whom our author (without knowing perhaps so much of them as he does of the Scriptures) speaks with so much respect. What was done for the remains of *Roman* literature by the Christian monks in the west, was done for the *Greek* literature by those in the east.

In those times, and at the revival of letters, all books

being in *Greek* or *Latin*, the knowledge of those languages became absolutely necessary; and without any concurrence of the priests, and much less of the setters up of the Christian faith, who had all been dead many centuries, it was the only source of knowledge, and almost the whole of literature was, in their circumstances, reduced to the study of them. "Such is the *deep scheme* laid by "the setters up" of Christianity, to confine all learning to the study of languages. How a plain tale, as *Shakspeare* says, will sometimes put a man down!

Mr. Paine's account of the compiling of the canon of the *New Testament*, is sufficiently of a piece with his account of the origin of Christianity. "How much," he says, "or what parts of the books called the *New Testament* were written by the persons whose names they bear, is what we know nothing of; neither are we certain in what language they were originally written."* Now there is, I may venture to say, a hundred times the evidence of the books of the *New Testament* having been written by the persons whose names they bear, that there is of *Virgil* or *Ovid* having been the authors of the poems ascribed to them, or *Julius Cæsar* of his *Commentaries*; and there never was the least doubt as to the language in which any of the books of the *New Testament* was written, except with respect to the Gospel of *Matthew*, which some said was written in *Greek*, and others in *Hebrew*, and which was probably written in both. †

In proportion as any subject is more interesting, the more pains men will naturally take to ascertain the truth; and the Christians who made so much use of the books of the *New Testament*, and who valued them so highly, were from the beginning exceedingly careful in distinguishing those that were genuine from those that were spurious. *Eusebius* divides those that were not spurious into two classes, those that were universally received, and those of doubtful authority; and the former contains all the historical books, or those which record facts, and likewise the epistles which bear the name of *Paul*. Indeed, as these epistles were mostly written to whole churches, it was absolutely impossible that an imposition with respect to *them* should not have been detected.

The only books of the genuineness of which the Christians in the early ages had any doubt, are very few, and those of the least consequence. There never was any more doubt

* *Age of Reason*, p. 55. (P.) Paris, pp. 38, 39.

† See Vol. XX. pp. 366—370.

of the epistles of *Paul* being really written by him, (though Mr. Paine, without giving any reason for it, supposes that even these may be spurious,)* than that the epistles of *Cicero* were written by that Roman orator. The internal evidence is also as strong in the one case as in the other. Let any person read Mr. Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, † and be of a different opinion if he can. I will add, that for these epistles (to say nothing of the other books of the *New Testament*) to be written so early, and to be received as they were, and the facts referred to in them not to be true, is absolutely impossible, if human nature was the same thing then that it is now.

Mr. Paine farther says, "When the church mythologists established their system, they collected all the writings they could find, and managed them as they pleased. It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us, whether such of the writings as now appear under the name of the Old and the New Testament, are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them, or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up. Be this as it may, they decided by *vote*, which of the books out of the collection they had made should be the WORD OF GOD, and which should not. They rejected several; they voted others to be doubtful, such as the books called the Apocrypha; and those books which had a majority of votes, were voted to be the word of God. The book of *Luke* was carried by a majority of one only. ‡ Had they voted otherwise, all the people since, calling themselves Christians, had believed otherwise; for the belief of the one comes from the vote of the other. Who the people were that did all this we know nothing of; they called themselves by the general name of the church, and this is all we know of the matter." §

This may be all that Mr. Paine knows of the matter. But any person who will take the trouble may easily know a great deal more, and that the fact was the reverse of what Mr. Paine describes. The greater part of the books of the *New Testament* (and I have no occasion to look any farther) were unquestionably written, while the facts recorded, or

* *Age of Reason*, p. 56. (P.) His words are, "The forgery of letters has been such a common practice in the world, that the probability is, at least, equal whether they are genuine or forged." *Paris*, p. 40.

† "Or the Truth of the Scripture History of St. Paul evinced by a Comparison of the Epistles which bear his Name with the Acts of the Apostles, and with one another. Eleventh Edition," 1820. See Vol. XX. pp. 455, 456.

‡ This remark on *Luke* I cannot find in the *Paris* edition; nor in *Wakefield's* quotation of the passage in his *Examination*, p. 46.

§ *Age of Reason*, p. 33. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 20, 21. See *Wakefield* on this passage, *Appendix*, No. IV.

alluded to in them, were recent, and they were received with full credit by those who were deeply interested in their contents. They were written, not in concert, or at one time, but separately, and by different persons, as particular occasions called for them. Having relation to the same great subject, they were, as might naturally be expected, collected and kept together, as the *Jews* did the different books of their scriptures. But all persons using their best judgment and opportunities, some collected more, and others fewer of them.

In this state things continued near four hundred years; when, as these books, written by apostles or apostolical men, were appealed to in the decision of controversies, it was thought proper to have a standard collection; and the bishops, met in council at *Laodicea*, A. D. 373, * did this as well as they could, but by no means to the satisfaction of all. For, with respect to some of the books, there are different opinions even to this day. What books should be taken into this collection, and be deemed *canonical*, was of course decided "by vote;" but if, as Mr. Paine says, those bishops had managed the business *as they pleased*, and not to the satisfaction of the Christian world in general, (then, and from the beginning, divided into many parties, some of whom were sure to object to what had been done by others,) their decision would have signified very little.

As to the Gospel of Luke being carried by a majority of one only, † it is a legend, if not of Mr. Paine's own invention, of no better authority whatever. For my own part, I must say, that I never heard of it before; and on the same authority, I doubt not, he might have added, if he had so pleased, that the Gospel of *Matthew* was carried by two votes, that of *Mark*, by three, and that of *John*, by four. The Gospel of *Luke*, and the *Acts of the Apostles*, written also by him, are unquestionably among the oldest books of the *New Testament*. They were evidently written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and their authenticity was never called in question by any person, Christian, Jew, or Heathen; so that it never was in the power of any council, by any voting, to shake their established credit. He might just as well say that it is in the power of any assembly of literati, to vote *Rapin's* "History of England," or *Ramsay's* "of the American Revolution," to be authentic, or not.

Mr. Paine says, "The church mythologists established

* "Probably A. D. 364." See Vol. VIII. p. 463.

† See *supra*, p. 154, Note †.

their system," at the time that the canon of the books of the *New Testament* was formed, though this was near the close of the fourth century, long after the *Roman empire* became Christian. Will Mr. Paine say, that there was no Christianity in the world before that time? Others will say that its best days were then over, and that a corrupted kind of Christianity had then begun to take its place. And it was not till long after that time, that, from causes easily traced, it came to be that system of priestcraft and oppression, which Mr. Paine so ignorantly confounds with Christianity itself.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of Mr. Paine's Ideas of the Doctrines and Principles of Christianity.

DEAR SIR,

YOU have seen, and I dare say have been surprised at the ignorance of Mr. Paine on the subject of revelation in general, and of the *evidence*, as well as of the *spirit* of Christianity, in particular. But his ignorance, real or affected, (for I own, I suspect the latter,) of the *doctrines and principles* of it, is not less. He loads the system with all the absurdities which, he might easily have known, have long been discarded by intelligent Christians. But such a view of its doctrines as he has given, best answered his purpose, which was to discredit *revelation*, by turning it into ridicule. Indeed, the greatest part of his book consists of little else than this kind of scurrility, of which I shall only give the following specimen:

"Putting aside," he says, "the outrage offered to the moral justice of God, by supposing him to make the innocent suffer for the guilty, and also the loose morality and low contrivance of supposing him to change himself into the shape of a man, in order to make an excuse to himself for not executing his supposed sentence upon Adam;—it is certain, that what is called the Christian system of faith, including in it the whimsical account of the creation, the strange story of Eve, the snake, and the apple, the amphibious idea of a man-God, the corporeal idea of the death of a God, the mythological idea of a family of Gods, and the Christian system of arithmetic, that three are one and one is three, are all irreconcilable, not only to the divine gift of reason that God has given to man, but to the knowledge

that man gains of the power and wisdom of God, by the aid of the sciences, and by studying the structure of the universe that God has made." *

As Mr. Paine is far from being deficient in understanding, he might, with a little pains, have satisfied himself, that the doctrines of *atonement*, *incarnation*, and the *trinity*, † to which he here alludes, have no more foundation in the Scriptures, than the doctrines of transubstantiation or transmigration. He might have added all the peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome, and the discordant doctrines of all other churches nominally Christian.

Mr. Paine, either from art, or for want of better information, uniformly takes it for granted, that every thing which has been ascribed to revelation, even by the most absurd of the *Catholics*, really belongs to it; and it is sometimes amusing to follow him, in his observations on subjects concerning which he is wholly ignorant. On that of *mystery*, as well as on that of *miracles* and *prophecy*, which I shall presently consider, he enlarges much to his own satisfaction; and as, no doubt, he thought, to the instruction of his readers.

"Having shewn," he says, "the irreconcilable inconsistencies between the real word of God, existing in the universe, and that which is called *the word of God*, shewn to us in a printed book that any man might make, I proceed to speak of three principal means that have been employed in all ages, and perhaps in all countries, to impose upon mankind. Those three means are Mystery, Miracle, and Prophecy. The two first are incompatible with true religion; and the third ought always to be suspected." ‡ Then, after some just but obvious remarks upon the subject, § he says,

* *Age of Reason*, p. 89. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 69, 70.

† "Christian mythology," he says, p. 107, [*Paris*, p. 81.] "has five deities. There is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, the God Providence, and the Goddess Nature." On what authority Mr. Paine asserts this, is best known to himself. He might just as well have said, that Christians had fifty, or five hundred deities. (P.)

‡ *Age of Reason*, p. 129. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 99, 100.

§ "With respect to mystery, every thing we behold is, in one sense, a mystery to us. Our own existence is a mystery: the whole vegetable world is a mystery. We cannot account how it is that an acorn, when put into the ground, is made to develop itself, and become an oak. We know not how it is that the seed we sow unfolds and multiplies itself, and returns to us such an abundant interest for so small a capital.

"The fact, however, as distinct from the operating cause, is not a mystery, because we see it; and we know also the means we are to use, which is no other than putting the seed in the ground. We know, therefore, as much as is necessary for us to know; and that part of the operation that we do not know, and which if we did, we could not perform, the Creator takes upon himself and performs it for us. We are, therefore, better off than if we had been let into the secret, and left to do it for ourselves." *Ibid.* pp. 100, 101.

“ though every created thing is in this sense a mystery, the word mystery cannot be applied to *moral truth*, any more than obscurity can be applied to light. The God in whom we believe is a God of moral truth, and not a God of mystery or obscurity. Mystery is the antagonist of truth,” &c.* “ Religion, therefore, being the belief of a God, and the practice of moral truth, cannot have any connexion with mystery.” †

Mr. Paine, I suppose, did not know that in many of his observations on this subject, he was writing like a *rational Christian*. He had never, I believe, heard, that Dr. Foster, one of the most intelligent and most zealous of Christians, and who wrote in defence of revelation, ‡ distinguished himself by saying, that *where mystery begins, religion ends*. §

If we look into the Scriptures, we shall find that the word *mystery* is never used in the sense that Mr. Paine affixes to it, viz. of something which it is impossible to understand, or comprehend, but only something that was unknown till it was revealed, or explained. It was in this sense that the word was used by all Christians for several centuries before the doctrines of the *Trinity* and *Transubstantiation* were known; and this was also the common use of the word in the English language. Thus the *mysteries* of any trade did not mean any thing incomprehensible in that trade, but only the *secrets* of it, which every master was obliged to make known to his apprentice. || The *great mystery* that the apostle *Paul* speaks of, ¶ was the preaching of the Gospel to the *Gentiles*, as well as to the *Jews*, which, though unknown and unsuspected by the zealots among the latter, there was no difficulty in understanding.

As to any other kind of *mystery* in religion, such as the doctrine of *incarnation*, that of the *trinity*, or *transubstantiation*, we disclaim them as much as Mr. Paine can do. We also agree with Mr. Paine in acknowledging that there are some things which we cannot help believing, though we cannot comprehend them. He acknowledges the belief of a God to be in this sense mysterious or incomprehensible.

* “ It is a fog of human invention, that obscures truth and represents it in distortion. Truth never envelops *itself* in mystery; and the mystery in which it is at any time enveloped, is the work of its antagonist, and never of itself.” *Age of Reason*, (Paris,) p. 101.

† *Ibid.* pp. 131, 132. (P.) Paris, p. 101.

‡ Against “ Christianity as old as the Creation.” See his just and liberal manner of conducting the controversy, Vol. X. p. 512, Note ||.

§ See, also, his Sermon on *Deut.* xxix. 29.

|| “ Art and mystery” are the terms used in the companies or corporations established to encourage new manufactures.

¶ *Rom.* xvi. 25. See Vol. XIV. p. 260, Note †.

For, certainly we can have no conception how the universe should require a cause, and yet that the cause of the universe should require none. But we find ourselves compelled to believe it, because we should otherwise involve ourselves in a still greater difficulty, viz. that the universe must have begun to exist without any cause at all. Consequently, something *must* have been uncaused. The Christian doctrine of a resurrection is not more mysterious in this sense than Mr. Paine's belief of an immaterial and immortal soul, which evidently does not think without the body and the brain, and which it is therefore philosophical to suppose incapable of thinking without them, and yet is taken for granted to continue to think when the body and brain are totally destroyed.

Mr. Paine strangely enough supposes, that we are to look for the origin of Christianity in that system of *Heathenism* to which it is most hostile, and which in the end, it completely overthrew. "It is not difficult," he says, "to account for the credit that was given to the story of Jesus Christ being the son of God. He was born when the Heathen mythology had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people for the belief of such a story. It is curious," he farther says, "to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian church, sprung out of the tail of the Heathen mythology. A direct incorporation took place in the first instance, by making the reputed founder to be celestially begotten. The trinity of Gods that then followed, was no other than a reduction of the former plurality, which was about twenty or thirty thousand. The statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus. The deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints. The mythologists had gods for every thing, the Christian mythologists had saints for every thing. The church became as crowded with the one, as the pantheon had been with the other, and Rome was the place of both. The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue; and it yet remains to reason and philosophy to abolish the amphibious fraud." *

In all this, Mr. Paine, for want of better information, or affecting to want it, has most evidently confounded, as indeed he does perpetually, the corruptions of Christianity, †

* *Age of Reason*, pp. 16, 17. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 8, 9.

† "Materials," says Wakefield, "heaped up, for the security of usurped dominion and secular interest, by the hands of priests and devotees: a tribe of Christians, as far as their sentiments are concerned, holden by Mr. Paine and myself in equal estimation." *Examination*, p. 24.

and even those of a very late date, with Christianity itself. The former, it is acknowledged, arose from the principles of the Heathen philosophy and the Heathen religion, as myself and many others have clearly proved. Mr. Paine should have shewn, that these doctrines of the *incarnation*, of a *trinity of Gods*, and a multiplicity of objects of worship, were authorized by the Scriptures; because otherwise it makes nothing for his argument. But it was more convenient for his purpose not to make this obvious distinction. He must have known, that there are many Christians who believe nothing more of the things that he here objects to, than himself.

Mr. Paine is perpetually introducing the *Mosaic* account of the creation, * as a necessary part, nay the very foundation of the system of *revelation*, and yet he himself says, "Moses does not take it on himself, by introducing it with the formality that he uses on other occasions, such as that of saying, *The Lord spake unto Moses, saying.*" † After giving an account of "the ancient mythologists," and the war of "the race of giants against Jupiter," he says, "The Christian mythologists tell, that their Satan made war against the Almighty, who defeated him, and confined him afterwards, not under a mountain, but in a pit. It is here easy to see that the first fable suggested the idea of the second; for the fable of Jupiter and the giants was told many hundred years before that of Satan. Thus far the ancient and the Christian mythologists differ very little from each other. But the latter have contrived to carry the matter much farther. They have contrived to connect the fabulous part of the story of Jesus Christ with the fable originating from Mount *Ætna*, and in order to make all the parts of the story tie together, they have taken to their aid the traditions of the

* "I agree with *Thomas Paine*," says *Wakefield*, "that the account of the creation, with which the book of *Genesis* opens, has all the appearance of being a tradition, which the *Israelites* had among them before they came into *Egypt*; and after their departure from that country, they put it at the head of their history, without telling, as is most probable that they did not know, how they came by it."

"But what majesty of sentiment, what a dignified simplicity of expression, what a comprehensive brevity, characterises the *Mosaic* account of the creation of the world! Compare only this elegant and compendious relation with the strange, confused, and despicable *cosmogonies* of the *Greeks*: for it is manifest from internal evidence, that *Ovid's* beautiful description, though debased with some puerility of expression, was constructed upon the *Mosaic* narrative: nor, otherwise, is it probable, that the literary *Romans* of the *Augustan* age should be strangers to the *Greek* translation of the *Old Testament*."

Wakefield adds, "*Fuscus Aristius*, to whom *Horace* addresses the 22d Ode of the first Book, and his tenth Epistle, one of the most intimate and beloved friends of the poet, was either a native *Jew*, or a *proselyte*. Compare *Sat. i. 9, 60—72.*" *Examination*, pp. 52, 53.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 37. (*P.*) *Paris*, p. 24.

Jews; for the Christian mythology is made up partly from the ancient mythology, and partly from the Jewish tradition."*

From what we have already seen of Mr. Paine, we have no reason to expect from him much accuracy with respect to history and chronology. If he supposes, as he evidently does, that the fable of *Satan* was subsequent to that of *Jupiter* and the giants, and borrowed from it, he ought to produce his authorities for so novel an opinion. For I believe it is universally allowed that the books ascribed to Moses are at least a thousand years older than any others that are extant. But the history of *Satan*, though found at full length in *Milton*, where Mr. Paine probably learned it, is not found in the writings of *Moses*, who does not so much as mention *Satan*, or the devil, in any part of his writings. † Both the idea and terms were probably introduced from the *oriental* philosophy, in which there was a principle of *evil* opposed to a principle of *good*. But by *Satan* or the devil, it is most probable that the sacred writers meant only an allegorical, not a real person. ‡ Our Saviour calls *Judas* "a devil," and *Peter* "*Satan*," because their thoughts were improper, arising from something that was evil, or amiss, within them. §

"The most extraordinary," Mr. Paine says, "of all the things called miracles, related in the New Testament, is that of the devil flying away with Jesus Christ, and carrying him to the top of a high mountain, and to the top of the highest pinnacle of the temple." || But the probability is, either that all this scenery was a vision, or a figurative account of what passed in the mind of Jesus; representing all the trials to which he would be exposed in the course of his

* *Age of Reason*, p. 24. (P.) *Paris*, p. 14.

† See, on *Gen.* iii. 1; Vol. XI. p. 48. "The whole fable of the *Devil* and his angels, with all its terrific appendages," says Wakefield, "has been gratuitously fabricated by the fertile fancy of superstition, from one or two emblematical passages in the *Revelation*, where the author has delineated future characters and events under the guise of these fictitious personages." *Examination*, p. 43.

‡ "The origin of evil, moral and natural, is a problem which has exercised the ingenuity of man, since the creation of the world; and the *Hebrews* relieved the distress of mind resulting from these disquisitions, by personifying an *evil principle* under the denomination of *Satan*, or the *enemy*. The *Greeks* also had recourse to a similar contrivance for their satisfaction on this point, and employed *Atè*, the *Furies*, and other malignant deities, as convenient substitutes for the origin of evil. (See Homer's *Iliad*, xix. 87—91.) Nor were similar fictions, with a view to the same embarrassment, unknown to the followers of *Confucius*; and *Zoroaster*, to the *Persians* and *Egyptians*, to the aboriginal *Indians of America*, to the divines of *Peru* and *Mexico*." *Ibid.* pp. 43, 44.

§ See, on *Matt.* xvi. 23, Vol. XIII. p. 185.

|| *Age of Reason*, p. 132. (P.) *Paris*, p. 110.

public ministry, trials arising from ambitious or interested views.*

The story of the *miraculous conception* of Jesus could not escape a person whose object it was to turn Christianity into ridicule. So much does Mr. Paine consider this miracle as essential to the Christian scheme, that he says, "As to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth."† Now Mr. Paine might have known, that there have been in all ages, Christians who never professed to believe the miraculous conception. The *Jewish Christians* in general, who may be presumed to be the best judges in the case, never received it. Their *Gospel*, which was that of *Matthew*, had not the two first chapters; and though there is not the same external evidence of the spuriousness of the two first chapters of the Gospel of *Luke*, there is great internal evidence of it, and some of an external nature, as may be seen in my "History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ."‡ However, the truth of Christianity does not rest upon any miracles performed in secret, such as that of the miraculous conception, or the temptation of Jesus, if the literal account of it be true; but upon facts of the most public nature, which were open to the examination of great numbers of persons, such as his miracles wrought in the face of the whole country, in the presence of his enemies, his death, and his resurrection. If these facts were true, there can be no doubt of the divine origin of Christianity, whatever we may think of particular circumstances relating to it.

The most extraordinary account of the nature and tendency of Christianity, that I believe was ever given by any man, and the farthest from every appearance of truth, is, Mr. Paine's representing it as nearly allied to *Atheism*. "As to the Christian system of faith," he says, "it appears to me as a species of atheism, a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of manism, with but little deism; and is as near to atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his maker an opaque body, which it calls a redeemer, as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun; and it produces by this means a religious, or an irreligious eclipse of light. It has put the whole orbit of reason into shade. The effect of this obscurity has been that of turning every thing upside down,

* See Vol. II. p. 374, XIII. pp. 36, 37.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 19. (P.) Paris, p. 10.

‡ Vol. VII.

and representing it in reverse; and among the revolutions it has thus magically produced, it has made a revolution in theology."*

This is such random, wild assertion as requires no particular refutation. With much more reason did Mr. Paine assert, that Christianity is nearly allied to *Paganism*; for what he conceives Christianity to be, abounds with objects of worship, superior and inferior, just as the Pagan religion did. In imitation of Mr. Paine, I shall not attempt to reason on this subject. Let any man read the *New Testament*, and say whether Jesus and the apostles were *Atheists*, or whether they taught what had any tendency to make them so. It looks as if Mr. Paine was pre-determined to load Christianity with every term of reproach that occurred to him, however inconsistent with one another. To complete the inconsistency, this same Christianity, which is so nearly allied both to *atheism* and *polytheism*, has, according to Mr. Paine, in my last quotation from him, a little of *deism* in it.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of prophecy.

DEAR SIR,

MR. PAINE'S account of *prophecy*, intended to turn the subject into ridicule, is, I believe, quite peculiar to himself, and by no means corresponds to what may be collected concerning it in the Scriptures.

"All the parts of the Bible," he says, "generally known by the name of the prophets, are the works of the Jewish poets, and itinerant preachers, who mixed poetry, anecdote, and devotion, together.—The word," he says, "was originally a term of science, promiscuously applied to poetry and to music, and not restricted to any subject upon which poetry and music might be exercised. Deborah and Barak are called prophets, not because they predicted any thing, but because they composed the poem or song that bears their name, in celebration of an act already done. David is ranked among the prophets, for he was a musician; and was also reputed to be, (though perhaps very erroneously,) the author of the Psalms. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; are not called prophets. It does not appear, from any accounts we have, that they could either sing, play music, or make poetry."

* *Age of Reason*, p. 74. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 54, 55.

We are told of the greater and the lesser prophets. They might as well tell us of the greater and the lesser God; for there cannot be degrees in prophesying, consistently with its modern sense. But there are degrees in poetry, and therefore the phrase is reconcilable to the case, when we understand by it the greater and the lesser poets.*

It is truly curious to observe, how completely Mr. Paine supposes he had obviated every thing that can be advanced by the friends of revelation on the subject of prophecy, by his new definition of the term. "It is altogether unnecessary," he says, "after this, to offer any observations upon what those men styled prophets have written. The axe goes at once to the root, by shewing that the original meaning of the word has been mistaken; and consequently, all the inferences that have been drawn from those books, the devotional respect that has been paid to them, and the laboured commentaries that have been written upon them, under that mistaken meaning, are not worth disputing about." †

No doubt, the prophets generally delivered themselves in elevated language, such as is said to constitute *poetry*; but if Mr. Paine had not forgotten the contents of his Bible, he would have recollected, that the Jewish prophets, in the plainest of all language, predicted many important future events, so as to be entitled to the name of *prophets* in the strictest, and what he calls the modern sense of the word. These predictions he ought to compare with the events predicted. It is not his arbitrarily changing the signification of a word that can avail him any thing.

Any person who only looks into his Bible, must smile at Mr. Paine's palpable mistake of the meaning of the term "greater and lesser prophets;" for it has no relation whatever to what they wrote, or to the manner of their writing, but only to the quantity of it. *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel*, whose books are comparatively large, are, on that account, called "the greater prophets;" whereas, *Hosea*, and eleven others, who wrote but little, are therefore called "the lesser prophets."

As Mr. Paine triumphs not a little on this subject, I shall quote what he farther says upon it. "The original meaning of the words *prophet* and *prophesying*," he says, "has been changed, and a prophet, in the sense in which the word is now used, is a creature of modern invention; and it is owing to this change in the meaning of the words, that the

* *Age of Reason*, pp. 38, 44. (P.) *Paris*, pp. 26, 30, 31.

† *Age of Reason*, p. 45. (P.) *Paris*, p. 31.

flights and metaphors of the Jewish poets, and phrases and expressions now rendered obscure by our not being acquainted with the local circumstances to which they applied at the time they were used, have been erected into prophecies, and made to bend to explanations at the will and whimsical conceits of sectaries, expounders, and commentators. Every thing unintelligible was prophetic, and every thing insignificant was typical. A blunder would have served for a prophecy; and a dish-clout for a type. If by a prophet, we are to suppose a man to whom the Almighty communicated some event that would take place in future, either there were such men, or there were not. If there were, it is consistent to believe that the event so communicated would be told in terms that could be understood, and not related in such a loose and obscure manner as to be out of the comprehension of those that heard it, and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen afterwards. It is conceiving very irreverently of the Almighty, to suppose he would deal in this jesting manner with mankind. Yet all the things called Prophecies, in the book called the Bible, come under this description.

“But it is with prophecy as it is with miracle. It could not answer the purpose, even if it were real. Those to whom a prophecy should be told, could not tell whether the man prophesied or lied, or whether it had been revealed to him, or whether he conceited it; and if the thing that he prophesied, or pretended to prophesy, should happen, or something like it, among the multitude of things that are daily happening, nobody could again know whether he foreknew it, or guessed at it, or whether it was accidental. A prophet, therefore, is a character useless and unnecessary, and the safe side of the case is, to guard against being imposed upon, by not giving credit to such relations.”*

By Mr. Paine's own account, he has not read his Bible lately, † and probably will never look into it any more. But I appeal to any person who is in the habit of reading it, whether *his* account of prophecy, or that which I shall give, be the more just. *Prophets*, in the scripture sense of the word, were men to whom God communicated whatever he intended to be delivered to others. Some of these communications were moral admonitions, but others were distinct, unequivocal annunciations of future events; to take place,

* *Age of Reason.* (P.) Paris, pp. 112—114.

† See *supra*, p. 148, Note.

either very soon, or at distant periods. Such are the prophecies of *Moses*, now in a state of fulfilment, concerning the future history of the *Israelitish* nation, their settlement in the land of Canaan, their expulsion from it, and their dispersion into all parts of the habitable world, previous to their final restoration to it; those of *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, and others, concerning many particular definite events, which happened in their own time, as well as the future glorious state of their nation, and the peaceful and happy state of the world in general; those of *Daniel* concerning the succession of the four great monarchies, and those of our Saviour concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Let any person of common discernment peruse these prophecies, and say whether they could have been written so long before the events, by *guess* or by *accident*. If not (which such a person must pronounce to be the case), the language could only be dictated by that great Being who sees all events in their most remote causes, and therefore are proofs of divine communication.

Some parts of the book of *Daniel*, and also of the *Revelation*, are written in such a manner, that it is probable we shall not understand them completely, till we can compare them with the events to which they are to correspond. But it is very possible we may then be satisfied, that only He who can see the end from the beginning, could have described them even in that obscure manner so long beforehand; and the reason of the obscurity of those particular prophecies, concerning events which are yet to come, is pretty obvious. For as these prophecies are now in the hands of those who respect them, it might have been said that they contributed to their own fulfilment, by the friends of revelation endeavouring to bring about the events predicted. However, though some intermediate steps in the great train of events be thus obscure, both the great outline of the whole, and the catastrophe, are most clearly expressed. Obscure as is the language of these prophecies, they plainly enough indicate a long period of great corruption in Christianity, especially by the rise of a persecuting power within itself; but that this power, together with all the temporal powers of this world, in league with it, is to be overthrown; and that this will be a season of great calamity, such as the world had never experienced before; that after this, Christ will come in the clouds of heaven, when there will be a resurrection of the virtuous dead, and a commencement of a glorious and peaceful state of the world in general. After this will be

the resurrection of all the dead, and the general judgment. Is it conceiving irreverently of the Almighty, and supposing that he jests with mankind, when he clearly announces to them, events of this great magnitude, in which they are so nearly interested?

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

The Conclusion.

DEAR SIR,

IT is amusing to observe how differently the same things impress different persons. Mr. Paine, speaking of the Bible in general; says, "Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that hath served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest every thing that is cruel. We scarcely meet with any thing, a few phrases excepted, but what deserves either our abhorrence or our contempt, till we come to the miscellaneous parts of the Bible."*

The probability is, that I am much better acquainted with the Bible than Mr. Paine, and I read it daily in the original,† which is certainly some advantage, and one to which Mr. Paine will not pretend. Now I can truly say, that I read it with increasing satisfaction, and I hope with much advantage in a moral respect. I do not consider it as written by divine inspiration; but it consists of books relating to the most important of all subjects, the historical parts being written by persons well acquainted with the events which they relate, and the prophetic parts by persons who had communications with God, so as to deliver the most solemn admonitions, or the most important predictions, in his name. There are the most unequivocal marks of the most exalted piety and the purest benevolence, in the writers of these books; so that the perusal of them

* *Age of Reason*, p. 38. (P.) *Paris*, p. 25.

† It should seem as if, for a moment, Mr. Paine had forgotten that the Bible was not written in *English*; since, as a proof that some parts of it are in "poetical measure," he quotes our common version. See his *Note*, p. 40. (P.) *Paris*, p. 27.

cannot fail to warm the heart by exciting the same generous sentiments; with every thing that is truly great and excellent in man.

The Bible contains the history of a most remarkable people, through whom it has pleased God to make his principal communications to mankind; and being a truer history than any other, it exhibits a faithful account of the vices as well as the virtues of the most distinguished persons in that nation, as well as of some in other nations; but with the strongest disapprobation of those vices, so that those particulars in the narrative are as instructive as any others.

In the writings of Moses and the prophets, in the discourses of Christ, and in the epistles of the apostles, there is a dignity and an authority to which nothing in the writings of any of the Heathens approaches. Even *Socrates* and *Plato* are cold and dry, when compared with them. The writings of the ancient philosophers contain but little of what man is most interested to know; whereas the Scriptures leave nothing unknown, that is of much importance for man to be acquainted with. They give the most satisfactory view of the whole conduct of Providence with respect to this life, so as to enable men, under all events, prosperous or adverse, to live with satisfaction, and to die with confidence and joy, in the firmest belief of a future state of retribution. Whereas all that Mr. Paine says, is, "The power which gave me existence is able to continue it,—and it appears more probable to me, that I shall continue to exist hereafter, than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began;"* which certainly affords him no real ground of expectation at all: for what was the probability of his receiving existence before he had any?

Upon the whole, there are, in my opinion, no writings whatever that are at all comparable to the Scriptures for their moral tendency, in giving just views of the attributes and providence of God, or in adding to the dignity of man, fitting him for the discharge of his duty in this life, and making him a proper subject of another and better state of being, of which it gives him the clearest information and the most satisfactory evidence. I own I am at a loss for words, to express my veneration for those books for which

* *Age of Reason*, p. 150. (*P.*) *Paris*, p. 116.

Mr. Paine expresses the greatest contempt.* Let those who are best acquainted with them judge between us.

I shall be happy if these observations on this work of Mr. Paine's give you any satisfaction, and am,

Dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Northumberland in America,

October 27, 1794.

* It was not inaccurately stated by Mr. Thomas Christie, of Philadelphia, that "from a want of the necessary qualifications, and, above all, from a want of devotional sentiment, Mr. Paine was no more qualified to judge of the value and merit of the Scriptures, than a blind man is qualified to judge of colours, or a deaf man of sounds." *Review*, annexed to "Memoirs of Priestley," 18, p. 759.

On a very different question, Mr. Paine was well "qualified to judge;" (see *supra*, p. 128, Note †;) and the following *American* document will shew that his talents in that department were highly, though not unduly appreciated, even before he had completed his political reputation, by his reviled and prosecuted but yet unrefuted *Rights of Man*:

"In Congress, August 26, 1785.

"Resolved, That the early, unsolicited, and continued labours of Mr. Thomas Paine, in explaining and enforcing the principles of the late revolution by ingenious and timely publications upon the nature of liberty and civil government, have been well received by the citizens of these states, and merit the approbation of Congress; and that in consideration of these services, and the benefits produced thereby, Mr. Paine is entitled to a liberal gratification from the United States.

"October 3, 1785.

"Resolved, That the Board of Treasury take order for paying to Mr. Thomas Paine the sum of three thousand dollars, for the considerations mentioned in the resolution of the 26th of August last." *Constitution of the United States, &c.*, 1794, p. 28.

The following passages, in the principal publication to which the *Congress* alluded, will serve to shew, that in 1776 Mr. Paine was not, or at least did not profess to be, an *Unbeliever*:

"But where, say some, is the king of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind, like the royal b—— of B——. Yet that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly honours, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the charter; let it be brought forth placed on the *divine law, the word of God*; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know that so far we approve of monarchy, that in America THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law ought to be king; and there ought to be no other. But lest any ill use should afterwards arise, let the crown, at the conclusion of the ceremony, be demolished, and scattered among the people whose right it is." *Common Sense*, (London, reprinted,) 1776, pp. 28, 29.

"As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of all government, to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business which government hath to do therewith. Let a man throw aside that narrowness of soul, that selfishness of principle, which the niggards of all professions are so unwilling to part with, and he will be at once delivered of his fears on that head: Suspicion is the companion of mean souls, and the bane of all good society. For myself, I fully and conscientiously believe, that it is the will of the Almighty, that there should be a diversity of religious opinions among us: it affords a larger field for our *Christian* kindness. Were we all of one way of thinking, our religious dispositions would want matter for probation; and on this liberal principle, I look on the various denominations among us, to be like children of the same family, differing only in what is called their *Christian* names." *Ibid.* pp. 37, 38.

AN
OUTLINE

OF THE
Evidences of Revealed Religion.

Quelle étonnante révolution viens-je de contempler ! Quels hommes l'ont opérée !
 Quels obstacles ont-ils eu à surmonter !

BONNET.

—————
 [Philadelphia, 1797.]

—◆◆◆—
PREFACE.

WHEN any controversy becomes very extensive, and of course complicated, branching itself out into many parts, the connexion of which with each other is not easily perceived, it is of great use to have a general outline of the whole; shewing the mutual relation of the parts, and their respective importance. This I have here endeavoured to do with regard to the evidences of divine revelation. This, in some measure, resembles the map of the seat of war, by looking on which an intelligent statesman will perceive the real value of any progress that may be made by the armies on each side, and thereby will neither be unreasonably elated with any trifling advantages, nor depressed by considerable losses, but only when he perceives that the enemy is advancing to the heart of his country.

This appears to be now more necessary with respect to the evidences of revelation than to any other controversy. The articles comprehended in them are very numerous, and are becoming daily more so; the objections of *Unbelievers* being of very different kinds, and many of them exceedingly overrated in the eyes of the objectors. Also many Christians, having been accustomed to lay undue stress on certain articles of their faith, are apt to be alarmed lest the whole should be overturned, when perhaps the advantage

the that has been gained by the adversary is of real service to their cause, the article that was untenable having been a real incumbrance on the system, and no way connected with it. They are, therefore, under obligation to *Unbelievers* for objecting to them.

I hope, therefore, that the following outline of the arguments in favour of divine revelation, in which the proper place and the relative importance of each is distinctly stated, will be of some use. The believer will hereby see what is the real amount of any objection that he meets with, and what will be the consequence of admitting the force of it, or how far it really affects the proper evidence of his religion. Also, by taking in the whole compass of the argument, it will be more in his power to bring *Unbelievers* from any trifling cavil, on which they are very apt to dwell, to the real merits of the question; and if they can give him no satisfaction with respect to *these*, every thing else he will see to be of little consequence, and hardly worth replying to; though every difficulty is worth discussing among the friends of revelation, as is every difficulty in the system of nature, by those who believe its divine origin.

The difficulties that the believer may safely neglect in a controversy with *Unbelievers* are, inconsistencies in the account of the mere circumstances of historical facts; the authenticity of particular books or parts of books, when enow still remain as evidences of the leading facts; mistakes of the writers in point of reasoning, and every thing besides the evidence of the principal *facts*, which are the *miracles* that are said to have been wrought at the promulgation of the Jewish and Christian religions.

I sincerely wish that intelligent and candid *Unbelievers* (for I doubt not there are such) would give a similar concise and comprehensive view of their objections to revelation. It would contribute to bring the controversy to a fair issue, which is certainly a thing to be wished for by every lover of truth; and no question that was ever proposed for discussion can be of more real importance than this.

This tract contains only the heads of the arguments in favour of the *Jewish* and *Christian* revelations; but they are discussed at large in several of my publications.*

* Especially the following: 1. "Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever," 3 Parts. 2. "Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France on the Subject of Religion," 2 Parts. 3. "Discourses relating to the Evidences of Revelation," 3 Vols. 4. "A Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus." 5. "Observations on the Increase of Infidelity," (P.)

AN OUTLINE, &c.

SECTION I.

Of the Nature of Evidence, as applicable to this Inquiry.

EVIDENCE is of different kinds, according to the different objects of inquiry. When *quantity*, or *numbers*, is the subject, the evidence of the truth of any propositions is the perception of the perfect coincidence of the two terms of which they consist, as that 2 and 2 make 4, and that the three angles of a right-angled triangle are equal to two right angles. And it may be shewn, that the number denoted by the expression 2 and 2, is the very same with 4, and that the sum of the three angles in the triangle is the same with that of the two above-mentioned.

The proof of a proposition of this kind is called a *demonstration*, and as the science of mathematics is conversant about numbers and quantity, it is often called *mathematical demonstration*. The contrary of a true proposition of this kind is an absolute *impossibility*, as that 2 and 2 should make 5, or any other number than 4, and such an assertion is said to be a *contradiction*.

Another ground of belief is the constant observation of particular facts, as that of stones, and other bodies, when there is no impediment to their motion, falling to the ground; whence we infer, that though we do not know *why* they do so, it is in consequence of some invariable law of nature, and therefore we conclude that they always will do so. All our faith in the principles of natural philosophy and chemistry is of this kind. But to assert the contrary of propositions of this kind is not called a contradiction, because, antecedent to the observation of the fact, the contrary, for any thing that we could tell, might have been true. Also all general propositions of this kind, however well founded, are subject to limitation from farther and more accurate observations.

Thus it is not true that all bodies, without exception, as at the first we naturally imagine, will fall to the ground; but only such as are heavier than the air of the atmosphere; and in certain circumstances even very heavy bodies mount up-

wards, as pieces of iron placed under a magnet, &c. And till we know the manner in which these events are produced, or the real causes of them, and the mode of their operation, it is impossible for us to say to what farther restrictions such general propositions may be subject. A person who had never seen water in any other form than that of a liquid, would be inclined to say, that it could not appear in any other; though we know by observation, but not from any reasoning *à priori*, that, in a certain degree of cold, it becomes solid, and that in a certain degree of heat, it assumes the form of vapour or steam.

All our faith in history, which relates to things too remote with respect to time or place to be the subject of our own observation, is of this kind; depending upon the knowledge and veracity of those who relate the facts. But we have found by our experience, that in certain circumstances the testimony of others has not deceived us, and therefore we presume that, in the same circumstances, it never will deceive us; and, therefore, that it may be depended upon, even as much as that a stone, if left to itself, will fall to the ground. We have, in fact, no more doubt of the truth of facts of this kind, as that there exists such a city as Rome, or of the past existence of such men as *Alexander the Great*, and *Julius Cæsar*, than we have of that of a stone falling to the ground, or indeed than we have of the truth of the mathematical propositions above-mentioned, the difference in the strength of our persuasion in these cases being altogether imperceptible. But to assert the contrary would not be called a contradiction, the thing not being naturally impossible; since all historians, and all travellers, *may* have told a lie, and therefore all that, in strictness of speech, can be said, is, that the non-existence of such a city, and of such persons, is exceedingly *improbable*, considering the nature of the evidence in its favour.

To prove what is a real contradiction, as that 2 and 2 make 5, no evidence whatever can be sufficient. But there is nothing within the bounds of *possibility* that may not be proved by sufficient testimony; that is, the evidence may be so circumstanced, as that the supposition of its being false shall be more improbable than the fact that is supported by it.

In all cases of testimony, our backwardness to give our assent arises from a want of analogy in the fact that is asserted to be true, to what we have ourselves found to be so, or that, on any other evidence, we believe to be so. Thus,

after having seen many stones, and other bodies, constantly fall to the ground, we not only readily believe that other stones, but that all other bodies which we call *heavy*, as wood, and even feathers, will fall downwards, when not supported by any thing. But having never seen any body whatever rise in the air, except when it was forced upwards for a short time by the power of the wind, we should not immediately believe the account of a man's rising in the air, and ascending above the clouds, by means of a balloon, or in any other method whatever; and our reluctance to believe such a narration will continue till the testimony of those who declare that they have seen it shall be such, as that we shall think it more probable that the fact should be true, than that our informers should either have been deceived themselves, or have intended to deceive us. For on these two circumstances the credibility of all testimony depends.

Believing that all men are constituted alike, that they have all the same senses, as those of seeing, hearing, &c., we can have no doubt but that what is actually seen or heard by other persons, would have been seen or heard by ourselves, if we had been in their place, and therefore their testimony has the same effect as our own observation would have had. Nay, in many cases, a man may have a better opinion of the accuracy of other persons' observation than of his own. He may think their senses more perfect, their attention greater; or their judgment better than his, and therefore he may believe a fact more firmly on their evidence, than on any observation of his own. In all cases we believe a thing something more firmly for other persons having seen or heard it, as well as ourselves. Mankind in general have so much confidence in their parents and ancestors, that, without any examination of their own, or a very superficial one, they receive their faith with respect to every thing, from them.

On these principles, however, the king of Siam was not unreasonable in refusing to believe what some Dutch navigators told him, that in their country, water was sometimes so hard, as to bear men and carriages. For, having never seen or heard of water being in any other state than that of a fluid, he might think it more probable that strangers and travellers should impose upon him, than that such a thing should be true.

This is precisely the difficulty that is to be overcome with respect to the credibility of *miracles*, or such events as are out of the usual course of nature, and which have not been seen by many persons. In this case a man would at first

distrust even his own senses, and much more those of other persons, till, upon mature consideration, the testimony should appear to be so circumstanced, that, new and strange as the fact in question was, it should be, on the whole, more probable than the insufficiency of the evidence in its favour.

The antecedent probability, or improbability, of any events, and consequently the credibility of the testimony respecting them, must be estimated by their analogy, or their want of analogy, to other known events. And the circumstances of things may be such, as that even extraordinary events shall not appear improbable, but be rather expected. In extraordinary situations of human affairs, extraordinary characters are expected to arise, and extraordinary events to take place, without appearing incredible, or exciting any surprise. And such was the state of the world antecedent to revelation, that, if all the circumstances be duly attended to, it will appear far from being unnatural to expect such a divine interposition, which could only be evidenced by miracles, or such a controul of the laws of nature as only the Author of nature is equal to. These circumstances were the following:

SECTION II.

Case wd. use means of revelation is being most effective
not — *insufficient* — *Revelation not antecedently improbable.*

1. MANKIND were sunk into the most deplorable state of ignorance and vice, and were in consequence exposed to much misery.

2. From this it appeared, by the experience of ages, and some of them the most enlightened that there was any reason to expect, that men were not able to rescue themselves.

3. It might, therefore, be expected, that the Divine Being would interpose in their favour. As he is the Maker, and the benevolent Father of mankind, he must have had a motive for attending to the conduct of men; and their happiness or misery could no more be a matter of indifference to him, than the happiness or misery of a child can be to an earthly parent.

4. The Divine Being would naturally choose this method of instructing mankind, viz. by occasional interpositions, evidenced, as they could only be, by miracles; because it is better calculated to excite *attention* than any constant and uniform appearances, the causes of which men in general do not trouble themselves to inquire into.

5. Moral instruction is communicated in a more intelligible and forcible manner by means of *language*, such as that of prophets commissioned by God for the purpose, than by any exhibition of natural appearances; there being great difficulty in deducing the proof, if not of the Being, yet of the moral attributes of the Deity, such as his benevolence and rectitude, from the works of nature and the usual course of Providence.

6. It was absolutely impossible that, by the mere light of nature, men should ever have attained to the knowledge of a *future state* of retribution; whereas the most satisfactory evidence of it possible is easily communicated by revelation, and this knowledge was necessary to enforce the practice of virtue, whenever any great sacrifice, especially that of life, was required by it.

7. The laws of virtue come with more authority and effect when they proceed immediately from the mouth of God, or persons especially commissioned by him, than by the medium of the light of nature. *Changes footing of argument -*

Upon the whole, therefore, though the relation of miracles would be incredible, could we perceive no sufficient *occasion* for them, the incredibility vanishes when it appears that they are calculated to answer so great and valuable a purpose, and when it appears that the Divine Being, who, no doubt, had it in his *power* to work them, had a sufficient *motive*, from his benevolence and good-will to men, to work them.

It is farther evident from *fact*, that divine revelation is not naturally, or necessarily, improbable; because it is an objection that was never mentioned by any ancient Unbeliever. It is, indeed, entirely modern; and had there been any natural reason for the rejection of divine revelation antecedent to the consideration of the evidences alleged in its favour, it could not but have occurred to men in all ages, to the ancients, as well as to the moderns.

SECTION III.

The external Evidence of Divine Revelation.

That the Divine Being, the great author of nature, has actually interposed to give mankind the information of which they stood in so much need, respecting their duty here, and their expectations hereafter, is proved by the testimony of witnesses in all respects the most unexceptionable; the miracles recorded in the Scriptures (a collection of books

which contain a history of the intercourse between God and the human race) having the following characters, and they are all that can be required by the most incredulous of mankind :

1. They are sufficiently numerous.
2. They are, on account of their being on a large scale, and other circumstances, free from all suspicion of artifice and imposition.
3. They were performed in the presence of great numbers of persons, whose senses must have been under a supernatural illusion, if they were deceived with respect to them. Consequently, we have only the choice of a series of most extraordinary and most extensive miracles to answer no purpose but that of *mere deception*; or of others to answer the greatest and most benevolent purpose.
4. They were performed in the presence of enemies, or that of persons the most indisposed to admit the truth of them.
5. Many of them were of long continuance, so as to have afforded sufficient opportunity for the most rigorous examination.
6. Many persons had the strongest motives to examine into the truth of the facts while they were recent; some having been exceedingly offended at the publication of them, and others suffering in consequence of their belief of them, and that for a period of several generations.
7. The accounts of these miracles which we now have were published while the facts were recent.
8. They produced the greatest effect, which proves that they were believed at the time, by persons qualified, and interested, to examine them.
9. Their effect was the greatest on the middle and lower classes of men; for such were the apostles, and the generality of the primitive Christians, Jews, and Heathens, men who had not the advantage of a liberal education. The vulgar, of all nations, are only credulous with respect to things that are analogous to their former faith. They are, therefore, in all cases the last to be convinced of any thing contrary to their former opinions. Persons of education and curiosity are the most ready to embrace any thing that is quite new. Such persons often take a pride in this; thinking it to be a proof of a superiority over others, and of a freedom from vulgar prejudices. There was, however, among the primitive Christians a considerable proportion of persons of rank and education.

SECTION IV.

The Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus.

All the preceding characters of credibility are found in the history of the resurrection of Jesus.

1. His death was ascertained by a public execution, performed by his enemies, whose great object had long been his destruction; and there was no doubt of the fact at the time. Had he not died in consequence of being nailed to the cross and remaining six hours upon it, the wound in his side by the spear must have been mortal. Even if he had not been quite dead, he must have been incapacitated for walking about, and much more for appearing perfectly well, so soon as the third day.

2. None of the disciples of Jesus had the least expectation of his resurrection; so that it required the strongest evidence to convince them of it. The testimony of their friends would not satisfy some of them. Nothing less than that of their own senses could do it.

3. After his resurrection he appeared to his disciples many times, in the space of forty days; at first when none of them had the least expectation of any such event, so that they could not have been imposed upon by a fond imagination; and afterwards by particular appointment, when they had had leisure to recollect themselves, and consider of any kind of evidence that they should think necessary for their complete satisfaction.

4. None of the appearances were momentary, like that of most supposed apparitions, but of sufficient continuance to give opportunity for examination, as for handling him, and examining his wounds, which he invited them to do. He also more than once ate and drank with them.

5. At two of these meetings all the apostles, and probably many others (*Thomas* only being absent at one of them) were present; and at the appointed meeting in Galilee more than five hundred, some of whom had doubted. And if the evidence of five hundred will not satisfy, neither could that of five thousand, or any number whatever.

6. Jesus not appearing to all the people, many would not believe his resurrection, and were exceedingly provoked at the report of it, especially the governors and leading men in the country, while those who were convinced of its truth maintained it at the hazard of their lives. Consequently, there

Always explanatory
in basis of total
... of ...

... evidence ... 500 ...

was the strongest motive on both sides to examine into the truth of the fact, while it was recent; and the persecution of Christians, and therefore this motive to scrutinize the fact, continued three hundred years.

7. As the enemies of Jesus had the custody of his body, they ought to have produced it after his supposed resurrection. It was not in the power of his disciples, few and disheartened as they were, to get the body out of the power of the guard that was purposely set to watch it, especially at the time of full moon, when the city of Jerusalem was crowded with strangers, as it always was at the time of pass-over, so that many of them must have spent the nights in the neighbouring places, as Jesus and his disciples had done. Besides, their merely securing the body could not have availed them. How was it possible for the few who were actors in the business to persuade more than five hundred persons to say that they had seen Jesus alive, and to persist in doing so at the hazard of their lives? Had there been any imposition in the case, it was abundantly in the power of the magistrates to have detected it, and it is evident they wanted no motive to exert all their vigilance for that purpose.

8. The persecution of the Christians by the Jews, shews that the propagation of Christianity was not favoured by the governing persons of the country; and on this account the fact of the resurrection is more credible at this day than it would have been if it had been so public as to have convinced all the Jews of that age. It would then have been said by *Unbelievers* of the present age, that the whole was a contrivance of the Jewish rulers, that there is no evidence of its having been sufficiently scrutinized at the time, and there are no means of doing it now. Thus in consequence of the evidence not appearing perfectly satisfactory at the time, it has become more so at this day.

Such is the *direct*, or *external*, evidence of the truth of Divine interposition; or revelation. But, besides this, there is another branch of the evidence that is *indirect*, commonly called *internal*, because not depending on the evidence of others, but on facts now existing, and subject to our own examination.

SECTION V.

The internal Evidence of the Jewish and Christian Revelations.

1. The present state of the world, in the existence of the Jewish and Christian religions, cannot be accounted for

without admitting such a state of things previous to it, as, being traced backwards, will require the truth of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures. With respect to the Jews, their present state proves the truth of their preceding history, till we go back to their emancipation from their bondage in Egypt, which could not have been effected without the miracles recorded in the books of Moses. Nor could the overthrow of the various systems of Heathen religion, which we now see to be overturned, through the whole extent of the ancient Roman empire, and such a prevalence of Christianity as we are witnesses of, have been effected without admitting the truth of ecclesiastical history, and that of the *Acts of the Apostles*, and of the *Evangelists*, as part of it.

2. The existence of the public rites of the Jewish and Christian religions, the *Passover*, and the *Lord's Supper*, are standing memorials of the truth of other facts connected with them, and cannot be satisfactorily accounted for without admitting the divine origin of those religions.

3. The circumstance of the education and characters of *Moses* and *Jesus*, rendered them incapable of devising the systems of religion of which they were the founders, systems so much superior, with respect to the true principles of philosophy, to every thing that we find in the Heathen world. Also such men as the apostles; so illiterate, and ignorant of the world, were incapable of carrying on schemes of such complicated and difficult imposture.

4. The evident marks of genuine piety and integrity in the characters of *Moses* and of *Jesus*, and also of the writers of the books of the *Old* and *New Testament*, make it to the last degree improbable that they should have been *impostors*. And it is equally evident that they were not wild *enthusiasts*, but men in the possession of their right minds, and who acted with uniform consistency in the whole of their conduct.

The character of *Jesus*, in particular, bears such marks of extraordinary greatness; the authority that he assumed, and the dignity with which he uniformly acted, were such as no person of his low birth and education could have supported without a consciousness of a divine mission. Nor were the *Evangelists* at all capable of feigning such a character; there being nothing equal, or approaching, to it in all history. * But the perception of this requires a more attentive study of the evangelical history than many persons have given to it, and also a more accurate acquaintance with human nature.

* See *supra*, p. 119, Note *.

5. Many prophecies, known to have existed many ages, are receiving their accomplishment at present, especially with respect to the state of the Jews, and many more had their accomplishment long after the existence of the books of scripture in which they are recorded, if there be any truth in history.

SECTION VI.

Various Objections to the Jewish and Christian Revelations considered.

Obj. 1. It may be said that the books of scripture which contain the account of the promulgation of the Jewish and Christian religions, may be spurious, and therefore that the history is not entitled to any credit.

Answer. The evidence of the principal facts on which the truth of Christianity depends, does not rest on the authenticity of the books of the *New Testament*, but on the fact of the speedy promulgation of Christianity among *Jews* and *Gentiles*, which could only be caused by the belief of the miraculous history; and this must be allowed on a variety of other evidence than any that is found in the books, which were not the *cause*, but the *effect* of it, none of the books having been written till Christianity had made a considerable progress. According to the most probable opinion, none of the Gospels were written till about thirty years after the death of Christ; when there were Christians in all parts of the Roman empire.

But there is abundant evidence of the principal of the books of the *New Testament* having been published while the facts recorded in them were recent, and they could not have been received as they were, by such numbers as were interested in their contents, unless their general truth had been admitted. Consequently, the reception of these books as genuine, and containing a faithful account of facts, gives us the concurrent testimony of all those persons, as well as that of the writers of these books.

The high respect which was entertained for the writings of the apostles, and other books of the *New Testament*, while the writers were living, the many copies that must have been taken of them, and their speedy translation into various languages, would effectually prevent any material alteration of these books. Any material corruption of the books would

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also have been prevented by the various *sects* into which Christians were divided in very early times.

The authenticity of the historical books of the *New Testament*, as the *Evangelists*, and the *Acts of the Apostles*, which record all the principal facts, was never doubted in early times; nor was that of the Epistles of *Paul*, the most active propagator of Christianity among the Gentiles. And it is manifestly impossible that such letters as his are, giving an account of his progress, and of the effects of his preaching, letters abounding with allusions to particular persons, places, and occurrences, and addressed to large bodies of men, who must have known whether the facts alluded to in them were true or not, could have been received as they were, if there had been no truth in them. *Paul* had also many enemies, who would have been ready enough to take advantage of any falsehoods in his accounts.

There were, no doubt, forged *Gospels*, and forged *Epistles*, in pretty early times; but not till after the publication of the Four Gospels that are commonly received, and after that of the genuine epistles of *Paul* and others; so that, being only imitations, they rather prove the existence of the originals.

Besides, all these spurious Gospels contained an account of the leading facts in the gospel history, such as the miracles, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus, and the speedy propagation of his religion afterwards. For though the *Gnostics*, the supposed authors of these books, said that Christ had no real body, and was not really crucified, they allowed that he had the appearance of a body, and also that there was the appearance of a crucifixion; so that all the facts that were subject to men's senses are the same in both the histories. And though the *Gnostics* separated themselves from the great body of Christians, so as to be denominated heretics, and did not believe the resurrection of the body, they believed a future state of retribution with respect to the soul; so that they held all that was really essential to Christianity, all that could be a motive to a good life. The fact of the existence of those *Gnostics* so early as the times of the apostles, and who were in opposition to them, and yet called themselves Christians, is most important with respect to the evidence of the truth of Christianity; as on account of their peculiar philosophical tenets, they must have been exceedingly averse to the Christian doctrines, which accorded so ill with their own.

But if all the books that compose the *Old* and *New Tes-*

tament could be proved to be spurious, the difficulty of accounting for the rise and propagation of the Jewish and Christian religions would not be lessened. Because nothing but the supposition of the truth of facts of a similar nature with those recorded in these books, can account for what is well known, on other evidence, concerning the existence and the propagation of those religions.

For the authenticity of the books of the *Old Testament*, especially those of Moses, which are the principal, we have the uniform testimony of the Jewish nation, the only proper evidence in the case, and also the occasional mention of them by writers of other nations. And a system of religion, so ungrateful as that of Moses was to the great body of the Hebrew nation, from their leaving Egypt to their captivity in Babylon, would never have been conformed to by them, if the authenticity of the books containing the principles of it could have been disputed.

The later in the history of the Hebrews it is supposed that these books were written, the more difficult would the reception of them have been, on account of the increasing addictedness of the nation to other religions. After the reign of *Manasseh*, who had set up the worship of other gods in the temple itself, when some have supposed that the books ascribed to Moses were first produced, it would have been as easy to have imposed them upon the *Tyrians*, *Egyptians*, or *Chaldeans*, for the writings of their respective legislators, as upon the *Jews*, for the writings of Moses.

Neither was it in the power of *Ezra*, or of *Nehemiah*, to have invented the books of the *Old Testament* after the Babylonish Captivity, though they might correct and arrange them as they now are. They had many enemies, who opposed their measures, and especially that very ungrateful one of obliging the Jews to dismiss their wives that were not of Hebrew extraction, as contrary to the laws of Moses; and in this predicament were some of the leading men of the nation. Besides, the Samaritans, who separated from the Jews on their not being allowed to join with them in building the temple, had copies of the books of Moses, and were as zealous for the observance of the same religion, in all its fundamental articles, as the Jews themselves.

The internal evidence of the genuineness of the historical books of scripture, both of the *Old* and the *New Testament*, is of the strongest kind. The very multiplicity of the names of persons, places, and dates, will alone satisfy any intelligent person, that they are no forgeries. No known forgeries

were ever written in that manner. And after the time of Moses, the accounts that are given of the usual length of men's lives, and of the reigns of kings, correspond exactly with the present course of nature, which is far from being the case with the early fabulous histories of the *Greeks*, *Romans*, and other ancient nations.

It is also a very strong internal evidence of the genuineness of the books of scripture, that the faults of the most considerable persons that are mentioned in them are recorded, as well as their virtues.

Obj. 2. It is said, that if the facts recorded in the *Evangelists* and the *Acts of the Apostles* had been true, all the Jews, and the Gentiles also, would soon have become converts to Christianity.

Ans. 1. Strong prejudices prevent a due attention being given to facts, and to reasoning from them, if it would lead to conclusions that are disagreeable to men; and both Jews and Gentiles were most strongly prejudiced in favour of opinions and practices to which Christianity was hostile.

2. Both *Jews* and *Gentiles* thought that they could account for most of the facts in the gospel history without supposing any divine interposition in the case. For, without denying the truth of the miracles, they ascribed them to the agency of evil spirits, or to magic; believing that, by the use of certain set forms of words, it was in the power of men to compel the assistance of superior beings to do whatever they wished to accomplish.

3. The first preachers of the gospel were Jews, and illiterate; and to such persons as these the learned, especially among the Gentiles, could not be expected to give much attention, whatever they had to propose. Christianity would therefore necessarily be received chiefly by the inquisitive and unprejudiced in the middle classes of men, who are never very numerous, and from them it would require time to become known and attended to by the superior classes.

Allowance being made for the operation of these great impediments, the diffusion of Christianity over the whole of the *Roman* empire in the time of the apostles, and its growing reception till the empire became Christian, attended with the overthrow of the idolatry that had universally prevailed in it, may be said to have been even rapid. A good idea may be formed of all these circumstances from the letters of *Pliny* to the emperor *Trajan*. Though a man of letters, he appears to have known nothing more of the Christians than what he had learned from his examination

of some of them, who had been brought before him as a magistrate; and yet it is evident from what he says, that Christianity had then made an astonishing progress in Bithynia, the province of which he was governor. *

Obj. 3. It is said that the accounts of the same transactions by different writers, as the authors of the books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, and the four *Evangelists*, contradict one another, and therefore that since both cannot be true, perhaps none of them are so.

Ans. All the different accounts of the same transaction in the scripture history agree with respect to every thing of much consequence, such as all writers would equally attend to, and they differ only with respect to such things as the most credible historians of the same transactions of other kinds are always found to differ in, viz. things of less consequence, and which therefore do not engage equal attention. These differences, therefore, are in favour of the truth of the general history, with respect to which all the writers agree; and this is all that the evidence of the *Jewish* and *Christian* religions requires. They prove that the authors did not write in concert, but that the different histories were written by persons wholly independent of each other, who all wrote from their own knowledge of the facts. †

Obj. 4. It is said, that in the Scriptures, actions are ascribed to the Divine Being which we cannot believe to be worthy of him, especially his order to extirpate the *Canaanites*, without excepting even women and children.

Ans. All that we know of God, independently of revelation, is from the observation of the works of nature, the laws of which, and all events resulting from them, we must ascribe ultimately to him. Now in the usual course of nature events as contrary to our common notions of justice and benevolence take place very frequently, and without any reason being given for them, or our being able to assign any; whole cities being sometimes overwhelmed by earthquakes, and countries much more extensive than Palestine ravaged by war. How inconsiderable was the destruction of men by *Joshua* compared to that by *Jenghiz Khan*, and other eastern conquerors! Whereas the reason for the extermination of the *Canaanites* is expressly given. It was on account of their idolatry, and the destructive vices connected with it; and thereby it served as a warning to the *Israelites*, and the whole world, not to give into such practices. Besides, there

* See *supra*, pp. 99, 100.

† See Vol. XX. pp. 9, 10.

can be no doubt, but that the *Canaanites* would have been spared, if they would have abandoned their idolatry. *

Obj. 5. Several opinions which now appear to be ill founded were held by men whom the Scripture represents as inspired. Thus madness is ascribed to the agency of evil spirits, even by Christ himself. And many passages in the *Old Testament* are applied by the writers of the *New* in a manner quite foreign to their original and proper import. Also some of the persons said to have had divine communications, were not good moral characters.

Ans. 1. It may suit the plan of Divine Wisdom to employ men for particular purposes, and qualify them for the part they have to act, without giving them any more knowledge, or virtue, than were necessary for it. If, for example, a prophet was sent to cure a man of blindness, it was not at all necessary that he should know the physical cause of that blindness. He might be under a mistake with respect to the *cause*, and yet at his word the Divine Being might remove the *effect*. The same observation will apply to the case of insanity, or any other.

2. With respect to the application of passages of scripture, no inconvenience of any consequence attended the writers being left to their own judgment with respect to them, and this might be erroneous, too much influenced by the mode of quoting scripture by their countrymen. No mistakes or false reasonings, which only shew that prophets were *men*, can affect their testimony with respect to facts of which they were competent judges.

3. If the Divine Being employ the very worst of men, as, in the usual course of his providence, he evidently does, to execute very important commissions, he may have good reasons for employing men of imperfect virtue to execute others. But in general the prophets sent by God for the moral instruction of men were themselves men of the most exemplary moral character, highly deserving of universal imitation, especially *Moses* and *Jesus*, the founders of the *Jewish* and *Christian* religions, who taught as much by their examples as by their precepts. It is also to be observed, that the faults of distinguished persons mentioned in the scripture are generally severely censured.

Obj. 6. It is said, that if the Christian religion be true, it would have been promulgated in an earlier period, and have been made known to all mankind.

* See Vol. XI. p. 285, Note *; Bp. Watson's *Apology*, ed. 2, 1796, pp. 15—20.

Ans. 1. Since no other advantage, natural or moral, is universal, why should we expect *this* to be so? Are the benefits of good government, of the sciences, or of the arts, universal? It is agreeable to the general plan of Divine Providence, that some men should be more enlightened than others, and that they should be employed to instruct others. Ignorance, and especially a want of that knowledge which would make men virtuous and happy, is certainly a great evil; but it is not the only evil that actually exists; and we may hereafter see that every kind of evil, natural, and even moral, has its use in forming the best system possible, such as will issue in the attainment of the greatest portion of good. However, this speculation has no propriety in this particular inquiry. We must content ourselves with knowing what has actually taken place. Of the reasons why they are appointed, or permitted, we are no competent judges.

2. All that has yet taken place since the creation of man is probably only his state of infancy, which may bear but a small proportion to the whole of his existence in this world. Christianity may yet become universal, and be the means of making mankind virtuous and happy for many thousand years to come.*

* "The grounds of our religion," says Bishop Law, "are in general much better understood, more rationally explained, and properly vindicated; and from what appears at present, we have reason to think, they will be still more and more so:— and that we shall have more and more of the true life and spirit of our religion, as we draw nearer to those times, wherein the word of prophecy has fixed its reign.

"I am far from imagining that *Christianity* is yet come to its mature state; that it is understood in the whole extent, or held in its utmost purity and perfection, by any one church. But, as when it was first preached, men were fit to hear, and profit by it in a competent degree; as that was a proper time to divulge it, in order to improve the world, which it did very considerably; excelling all former dispensations; refining the conceptions, even of those who did not formally receive it; and yet was itself for some while but partially communicated, and imperfectly understood: so now, 'tis of much greater advantage to the world in general; and yet still capable of increase; it waits for its own *fullness*; nor shall mankind receive the proper influence and advantage of it, till their minds be much farther opened and enlarged, their reason more freely exercised, in this great *mystery* of divine love.

"But though the face of *Christianity* be still miserably darkened and deformed; though some nations seem to be in their *childhood* yet, and cannot receive it; and others grow so vicious and abandoned as to be ready to reject it: though in some ages it seems to have been hid in darkness, and sunk under ignorance and superstition; in others, borne down with the torrent of licentiousness and libertinism: yet, we have reason to conclude that upon the whole, its power is still visibly, or invisibly, enlarging over the world; and that it will always go on to do so, till the kingdom of Christ be fully come; till it be *within us*, and known by all, from the least to the greatest; till 'the everlasting gospel' (*Rev. xiv. 6*) go forth, and be so thoroughly understood and embraced, as to bring on 'the fulness of the Gentiles;' and by their means, the restoration of God's own people the *Jews*, as he has often foretold; and so 'the whole earth' (*Is. xi. 9, Hab. xi. 14*) "shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." *Theory of Religion*, pp. 191—194, 196, 197.

A LETTER

TO THE

REVEREND JOHN BLAIR LINN, A.M.*

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Congregation in the City of Philadelphia,

IN DEFENCE OF THE PAMPHLET INTITLED

SOCRATES AND JESUS COMPARED.[*Northumberland, 1803.*]

SIR,

I HAVE received the letter you have been pleased to address to me, in answer to my pamphlet, entitled, "Socrates and Jesus compared," † and truly thank you for it. The reading of your poem on *genius*, when I was at Philadelphia, led me to form a high opinion of your ability, though out of the line of your profession. In this work, which is entirely within it, I am pleased with the zeal you discover for what you deem to be important Christian truth, and also with the respectful manner with which you address me on the subject, and with the candour and modesty with which, as becomes a young man, you generally express yourself; as when you say, "I have probably written too hastily, but I wished that an answer to your pamphlet should appear as soon after it as possible." ‡ You also say, "If the testimony I have brought forward has only served to confirm your assertions, I have miserably failed; and will have no other reward than the consciousness of having laboured in vain in support of what I thought was truth." §

To this merit, Sir, which is the greatest that man can pretend to, you appear to me to be fully entitled. At the same time, without taking the liberty that is generally allowed to old men when they address young ones, and wishing to go

* Who "did not survive Dr. Priestley above six months. He died at Philadelphia in the 27th year of his age." *Mem. of Priestley*, 1806, pp. 804, 806.

† See Vol. XVII. pp. 400—439.

‡ *Letter*, p. 65. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 56. (P.)

into the discussion on perfectly equal terms, I must take the liberty to say that, in my opinion, your suspicion of having been too hasty in this business is better grounded than you seem to have been aware of; as you have not given a just idea of the object of my pamphlet, have not formed a just estimate of the character of *Socrates*, and have advanced what you cannot support with respect to Jesus Christ. All these articles I shall consider in their order.

SECTION I.

Of the Object of my Pamphlet.

You are pleased to say, that “with my comparison between the deaths of Jesus and Socrates, you have no fault to find. It is just and accurate, and a specimen of fair and candid discussion; and that had the whole of the pamphlet appeared to you to have been of the same nature and tendency, you would not have ventured as you have done into the field of controversy, to which,” you add, “you are entirely unaccustomed.”*

Now I am not conscious of any difference between the general principles on which my comparison of these two men is conducted with respect to their *deaths*, and their *lives*; but you seem not to have understood my *object* in the comparison that I instituted; though I thought it would have been sufficiently evident to every intelligent and candid reader. It was to shew that, allowing to *Socrates* every thing that can make for his advantage, (and you allow him to have been “the prince of Heathen philosophers, and to have been a partial luminary in the darkness which then shrouded the world,”) † he was greatly inferior to what even an *Unbeliever* must, if he reflect at all, acknowledge with respect to Jesus, though he should rate him as low as, with any tolerable regard to his history, he possibly can. I therefore confined myself to the accounts of *Xenophon* and *Plato*, who were the encomiasts of *Socrates* for his character, and to the writings of the Evangelists (because we have no other) for that of Jesus. *Unbelievers* consider them both as equally *men*, with certain peculiarities of constitution, education, habits, &c. Let them, then, consider them both in this light, and make

the comparison between them. By this means I thought that something would be gained with respect to the evidences of Christianity.

You, however, thought, that "it was my evident design to lower Jesus Christ from that infinite station" in which you and a certain number of Christians, to which you belong, "suppose him to be entitled, and to elevate a Heathen philosopher to a rank of which he was totally unworthy."*

That I do not consider Jesus in the same light that you do, is true; but it was, I think, no part of my object in this work to enter into that argument. It would not have been to my purpose. You say, "You very cursorily mentioned that the miracles of our Saviour must have given a great force and dignity to his instructions. On the nature and weight of those miracles, I wished that you had dwelt."† But I cannot conceive how it would have been to any good purpose to enlarge on the miracles of Jesus in a comparison of him with *Socrates*, who did not pretend to any. Though I thought it proper just to mention the circumstance, as accounting for the superior dignity of the discourses of Jesus, it would not have been proper to *dwell* upon any thing that *Unbelievers* would not allow. If we argue with men at all, and expect to gain any thing with them, we must argue on some common principles, or come as near to them as we can. Every thing, therefore, that I have enlarged upon in the character and teaching of Jesus is what appears on the face of his history, without taking in the miraculous part of it. You, however, expected, that he should, in the comparison, have been represented as "God equal to the Father." But what could you have expected to gain by this with any *Unbeliever*, who, whatever he might think of the miracles of Jesus, would never allow him to be God? If, therefore, I had, with you, believed him to be so, I should not have brought the sentiment into this argument, but should rather have concealed it.

You likewise say, "I am dissatisfied because you have not sufficiently marked the disparity between *Socrates* and Jesus, and sufficiently noticed the errors of *Socrates* as a Heathen."‡ But it was my object, you now see, to make as light as I reasonably could of the errors of *Socrates*, and to make every due allowance for them, that I might gain the more by the comparison. If it should appear that his errors

* Letter, p. 6. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 17. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 8. (P.)

were more considerable than I had represented them, my argument would have the advantage of being what logicians call *à fortiori*, having allowed to my opponent more than I was obliged to do.

With all the advantage that I have given to Socrates, I have not by any means made him so great a character as *Rollin*; who has written his history pretty much at large, and as I believe the generality of learned Christians make him. Why, then, did you not censure their writings as well as mine? They are much more open to your censure, and much more generally known than my pamphlet is ever likely to be. *Rollin's* history is in almost every person's hands in this country, I find, as well as in England; and it is in all the languages of Europe. It is, indeed, an excellent work, and deserves to be so.

"As to Socrates," *Rollin* says, "it must be allowed that the Pagan world never produced any thing so great and perfect. When we observe to what a height he carries the sublimity of his sentiments, not only in respect to moral virtue, temperance, sobriety, patience in adversity, the love of poverty, and the forgiveness of wrongs, but, what is far more considerable in regard to the divinity, his unity, omnipotence, creation of the world, and providence in the government of it; the immortality of the soul, its ultimate and eternal destiny, the rewards of the good, and the punishment of the wicked; when we consider this train of divine knowledge, we ask our reason whether it is a Pagan who thinks and speaks in this manner, and can scarce persuade ourselves that from so dark and obscure a fund as Paganism, should shine forth such living and such glorious rays of light."* This, Sir, is much higher than I have rated Socrates, and yet *Rollin* was a Christian, and with respect to the doctrine of the *Trinity* as orthodox as yourself.

* *Anc. Hist.* (Edin.) p. 248. (P.) "Pour Socrate, il faut l'avouer, le Paganisme n'a jamais rien eu de plus grand ni de plus parfait. Quand on voit jusqu'où il a porté la sublimité de ses sentimens, non seulement sur les vertus morales, la tempérance, la sobriété, la patience dans les maux, l'amour de la pauvreté, le pardon des injures; mais ce qui est bien plus considérable, sur la Divinité, sur son unité, sur son pouvoir infini, sur la formation du monde, sur la providence qui préside à son gouvernement, sur l'origine de l'ame qui vient de Dieu seul, sur son immortalité sur sa dernière fin et sa destinée éternelle, sur les récompenses des bons et la punition des méchans; quand on envisage toutes ces sublimes connoissances, on se demande à soi-même si c'est donc un Payen qui pense et parle ainsi, et l'on a peine à se persuader que d'un fonds aussi ténébreux qu'est celui du Paganisme puissent sortir des lumières si vives et si brillantes." *Hist. Anc.* (Paris), 4to. 1740, II. p. 712.

On *Rollin's* opinion that *Socrates* was "a believer in the *Divine Unity*," see Vol. XVII. p. 404.

SECTION II.

Of the Moral Character of Socrates.

I NOW proceed to make some observations on what you say of the moral character of *Socrates*, compared with my account of him. "From saying," you observe, "that *Socrates* was a man who from early life not only abstained from vice himself, but one who devoted himself to the promoting of virtue in others, &c. and that both were equally temperate, it is evident that you find no fault with the moral character of *Socrates*; that you suppose him to have been equally temperate with our Saviour; and in the general manner of his life to have borne to him an obvious resemblance. This," you say, you "think is the mildest meaning that my words convey."*

And this, from the accounts of *Xenophon* and *Plato*, may be defended; and it is from their testimony, you say, that you think you can prove his immorality. † But consider, Sir, that I use popular language, and that when we say of any particular person, that he is *free from vice*, we do not mean that his character is absolutely perfect; because it is taken for granted, and therefore does not require to be mentioned, that no human being is absolutely perfect, but only that he is free from gross or obvious vices; and this is the meaning that your candour should have put upon my words.

With respect to the temperance of *Socrates*, I know of no evidence of his intemperance. What you quote from *Herodicus*, through the medium of *Athenæus*, you profess, to lay no stress upon, ‡ any more than you or *Dr. Enfield*, do on the ridicule of *Aristophanes*. § In *Xenophon's Memorabilia*, there are instances of his exhortations to temperance, || as well as to other virtues; and this is a topic that an intemperate man would surely have avoided. Besides, a man, who, like *Socrates*, lives to the age of seventy, in good health, and retaining the perfect use of all his faculties, cannot well

* *Letter*, p. 8. (P.)

† *Ibid*, p. 31. (P.)

‡ *Letter*, p. 50. (P.) On "the tales which that literary scavenger, *Athenæus*, has swept up from the sewers of antiquity," see *Dr. Enfield*, in remarks on *Cumberland's Observer* (No. 77); *Hist. of Phil.* (B. ii. Ch. iv.), 1791, l. p. 162, Note.

§ *Ibid*. p. 54. (P.) See *Enfield*, pp. 167, 168.

|| "He advised those who had no government of themselves," says *Xenophon*, "never to taste of things that tempt a man to eat when he is no longer hungry, and that excite him to drink when his thirst is already quenched.—And he said, between jest and earnest, that he believed it was with such meats as those that *Circe* changed men into swine." *Memorable things of Socrates*, 1722, p. 27.

be supposed to have been intemperate. But let any man live ever so temperately, his enemies will assert the contrary. Did not the *Pharisees* say of Jesus, (*Matt.* xi. 19,) that he was “a man gluttonous and a wine bibber,” as well as “a friend of publicans and sinners”? Had these Pharisees left any written account of Jesus, he would, no doubt, have been represented by them as *Socrates* was by *Herodicus*, or *Aristophanes*.

Of his temperance, in the most extensive sense of the word, respecting all our wants, natural or artificial, *Rollin* says, “He had accustomed himself early to a sober, severe, laborious life, without which it seldom happens that men are capable of discharging the greatest part of the duties of good citizens. It is difficult to carry the contempt of riches, and the love of poverty, farther than he did. He looked upon it as a divine perfection to be in want of nothing, and believed the less we are contented with, the nearer we approach to the Divinity. Seeing the pomp and show displayed by luxury in certain ceremonies, and the infinite quantity of gold and silver employed in them, ‘How many things,’ said he, congratulating himself on his condition, ‘do I not want!’”*

“Neither *Aristophanes*,” (the abbé of *Fraguier* observes,) “in his comedy of the *Clouds*, which is entirely against *Socrates*, nor his vile accusers on his trial, have advanced one word that tends to impeach the purity of his morals; and it is not probable,” he adds, “that such violent enemies as those would have neglected one of the most likely methods to discredit him in the opinion of his judges, if there had been any foundation, or appearance, for the use of it.”†

To what purpose, then, are your quotations from the Scriptures, to prove that “no one except Jesus ever appeared

* *Anc. Hist.* IV. p. 196. (P.) “Il s’étoit accoutumé de bonne heure à une vie sobre, dure, laborieuse, sans laquelle il est rare qu’on soit en état de satisfaire à la plupart des devoirs d’un bon citoyen. Il est difficile de porter plus loin qu’il le fit le mépris des richesses, et l’amour de la pauvreté. Il regardoit comme une perfection divine de n’avoir besoin de rien, et il crôioit qu’on approchoit d’autant plus près de la Divinité qu’on se contentoit de moins de choses. Voyant la pompe et l’appareil que le luxe étaloit dans de certaines cérémonies, et la quantité infinie d’or et d’argent qu’on y portoit, ‘Que de choses,’ disoit-il, en se félicitant lui-même sur son état, ‘que de choses dont je n’ai pas besoin !’” *Quantis non egeo !*” *Hist. Anc.* II. p. 663.

“*Socrates in pompa, cum magna vis auri argenticque ferretur, ‘Quam multa non desidero!’ inquit.*” (*Cic. Tusc. Quæst. L. v.*)” *Ibid.* Note.

† *Anc. Hist.* IV. p. 249. (P.) “L’Abbé *Fraguier* (*Mem. de l’Acad. des Inscript.* IV. 372) remarque, que ni *Aristophane* dans sa comédie des Nuées, qui est toute entière contre *Socrate*, ni les sclérérates qui l’accusèrent en justice, n’ont pas avancé un mot qui tende à ternir la pureté de ses mœurs: et il n’est pas vraisemblable que des ennemis aussi animés qu’étoient ceux-ci, eussent négligé un des moiens les plus capables de decrier *Socrate* dans l’esprit des juges, s’il avoit eu quelque fondement ou quelque apparence.” *Hist. Anc.* II. p. 712.

in the form of a man who was without sin ?” * But allowing Jesus to have been the most perfect of all the human race, which I am willing to do, what would the maintaining of it have availed me in an argument with *Unbelievers*; who would cavil, and find as much fault with *Jesus*, as you do with *Socrates*, balancing, perhaps, the account of the Pharisees with those of the Evangelists ?

If you interpret the Scriptures literally, as when it makes for your purpose you are disposed to do, you must allow that other persons were sinless as well as Jesus. Of *Noah* it is said, (*Gen.* vi. 9,) that he “was a just man, and perfect in his generation;” of *Job*, (i. 1, 8, ii. 3,) that he was “a perfect and an upright man,” and that there was “none like him in the earth;” of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, (*Luke* i. 6,) that “they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” Jesus himself says, (*Luke* xviii. 19,) that there was *none* that was *good* (meaning, no doubt, perfectly so) but “one, that is God.” You may say that he secretly meant, that *as man* he was not perfect, though as God he was so. But how unworthy of Jesus was such miserable equivocation as this! † On this principle I might say of any man, that he was either a mortal or an immortal being, at pleasure, and be justifiable in so doing.

Besides, you allow an advantage to *Socrates* which you disclaim with respect to *Jesus*, without seeming to be aware of the natural consequence of the concession. “The natural propensities of *Socrates*,” you say, “were by his own confession, towards evil, but that he regulated his conduct by the influence of philosophy.” ‡ He, then, had a difficulty to struggle with that *Jesus* had not, and yet he had strength of mind to overcome it, *principle* in him having got the better of natural *inclination*; whereas *Jesus* was by nature prone to no evil, but always inclined to every thing that was good. Where, then, will the *Unbeliever* say, was the great merit of temperance, or of any other virtue, in *Jesus*?

SECTION III.

Of the Principles on which you judge of the Merits of Socrates.

IF I have represented the character of *Socrates* in too advantageous a light, (which if I have done, has been inad-

* *Letter*, p. 30. (P.)

† See Vol. XIII. p. 258.

‡ *Letter*, p. 39. (P.)

vertently,) besides that it is due to every man to judge as favourably of him as we can, it has been from a bias which you ought to forgive, as it was favourable to my argument in defence of Christianity. But you have taken very unfair means to degrade and vilify him.

1. You infer from the *companions* of Socrates, that he *must* have been an immoral man, because they were so. "It is a good old proverb," you observe, "that we can know a man by the company that he keeps; and several of the most intimate of the companions of Socrates,"* you say, "to whom his instructions were principally addressed, were the most impious and dissolute characters in Greece."† Those companions whom you particularly mention were *Critias, Alcibiades, Æschines, Simon, Cleomenes, Aristippus, Aspasia, and Theodota*. You again mention the gay, the fascinating, the versatile, Alcibiades;‡ and speak of *Critias* as "a man, profligate in every respect, and one of those thirty tyrants who subverted and trampled upon the laws and liberties of his country."§ "How different from these," you say, "were the companions of our Saviour! The instructions of both," you acknowledge, "were gratuitous; but the friends and audiences of each were of very different descriptions."||

But are you able, Sir, to produce any evidence that *Socrates* was so far the companion of these men as to approve their conduct, and join in their vicious excesses? The historians by whom you profess to be guided, say the very contrary; viz. that his conversations with them were calculated to teach them virtue, and restrain them from vice. In the *Memorabilia* of *Xenophon*,¶ and the dialogues of *Plato*, you must have seen this. You yourself say, that "they were those to whom his instructions were addressed." But can you suppose that any thing deserving the name of *instruction* could be designed to teach vice rather than virtue?

* *Letter*, p. 52. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 27. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 37. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 50. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 52. (P.)

¶ Who expresses his extreme surprise, "that some could believe that *Socrates* was a debaucher of young men! *Socrates*," he adds, "the most sober, and most chaste of all men, who cheerfully supported both cold and heat; whom no inconvenience, no hardships nor labours could startle, and who had learnt to wish for so little, that though he had scarce any thing, he had always enough! Then how could he teach impiety, injustice, gluttony, impurity, and luxury? And so far was he from doing so, that he reclaimed many persons from those vices, inspiring them with the love of virtue, and putting them in hopes of coming to preferment in the world, provided they would take a little care of themselves. Yet he never promised any man to teach him to be virtuous; but as he made a public profession of virtue, he created in the minds of those who frequented him, the hopes of becoming virtuous by his example." *Memorable Things*, 1722, pp. 7, 8.

Rollin calls *Alcibiades* "the most ardent and fiery of all the Athenians. Socrates, however," he says, "never spared him, and was always ready to calm the sallies of his passion, and to rebuke his pride, which was his great disease." *

As to *Critias*, though he was a pupil of *Socrates* when he was a young man, yet when he was in power, *Socrates* was so far from being a favourite with him, that because he could not be brought into his measures, his life was in imminent danger; and he would certainly have been put to death by him if he had continued in power much longer.

As you seem not, lately at least, to have attended to the history of *Socrates*, I shall quote the account that *Rollin* gives of his behaviour during the reign of the thirty tyrants; that our readers may judge how far his friendship for *Critias*, and his intimacy with him, influenced him with respect to his flagrant conduct.

"The *Athenians* seemed to have lost the very use of speech, not daring to vent the least complaint, lest it should be made a capital crime in them. *Socrates* alone continued intrepid. He consoled the afflicted senate, animated the desponding citizens, and set all men an admirable example of courage and resolution, preserving his liberty, and sustaining his part in the midst of the thirty tyrants, who made all else tremble, but they could never shake the constancy of *Socrates* with their menaces. *Critias*, who had been his pupil, was the first to declare most openly against him, taking offence at the free and bold discourses which he held against the government of the thirty. He went so far as to prohibit his instructing the youth. But *Socrates*, who neither acknowledged his authority, nor feared the violent effects of it, paid no regard to so unjust an order." †

Critias having determined to destroy *Themamenes*, because, though one of the thirty, he could not be brought into all

* *Anc. Hist.* IV. p. 207. (P.) "Le plus vif et le plus fougueux des jeunes gens d' Athènes. Cependant ce philosophe ne l'épargnoit pas, eten toute occasion il étoit attentif à calmer les saillies de ses passions, et à réprimer son orgueil, qui étoit grande maladie." *Hist. Anc.* II. p. 674.

† *Anc. Hist.* IV. p. 66. (P.) "Ils sembloient même avoir perdu jusqu' à l' usage de la voix, n' osant plus faire entendre les moindre plaintes, de peur qu' on ne leur en fit un crime. Socrate seul demeura intrépide. Il consolait les sénateurs affligés. Il animoit les citoyens réduits au désespoir, et donnoit à tous un exemple admirable de courage et de fermeté, conservant sa liberté, et marchant tête levée au milieu de trente tyrans, qui faisoient tout trembler, mais qui ne purent jamais par leurs menaces ébranler la constance de Socrate.

"*Critias*, qui avoit été son disciple, fut celui qui se déclara le plus ouvertement contre lui, choqué des discours libres et hardis qu' il tenoit contre le gouvernement des trente. Il alla jusqu' à lui interdire l' instruction de la jeunesse : mais *Socrate*, qui ne reconnoissoit point son autorité et qui n' en redoutoit point les suites violentes, n' eut aucun égard à une défense si injuste." *Hist. Anc.* II. p. 546.

his measures; "of all the senators only Socrates, whose disciple Theramenes had been, took upon him his defence, and opposed the officers of justice. But his weak endeavours could not deliver him."* You must surely have read this, or something to the same purpose, in several histories of Greece. Yet you consider *Socrates* as one who joined with *Critias* in subverting and trampling upon the laws and liberties of his country. If ever you see Socrates, Sir, as I doubt not you will, you must ask his pardon for this gross and manifest misrepresentation.

There is as little evidence of the acquaintance that *Socrates* had with *Aspasia*, or *Theodota*, leading him into vice, as his friendship for the *men* that you have mentioned. If there had been any evidence of his having had any criminal commerce with them, I doubt not you would have produced it. Besides, as to simple fornication, a vice as it certainly is, and justly condemned on the principles of Christianity, no Heathen considered it in that light. *Greeks* and *Romans*, even the gravest characters among them, mention it without any particular censure, except that of imprudence. It was evidently with great difficulty that the apostle *Paul* could dissuade his Gentile converts from it. † Now, not only candour, but justice, requires that we judge of all men by their own principles, and not by ours.

I thought that I had quoted enough of the interview that *Socrates* had with *Theodota*, and that I had sufficiently censured him for it, ‡ but you enlarge upon it as a favourite topic, as if I had not mentioned it at all; adding, "Does it contain any proof of the stern, unyielding temperance and morality of Socrates?" § It certainly does not; nor could you expect that, as a Heathen, it should; but neither does it afford any evidence of his intemperance, or immorality.

The objection that you make to *Socrates*, the Pharisees, you well know, made to *Jesus*, and on the same principle, calling him [*Matt. xi. 19, Luke vii. 34.*] "a friend of publicans and sinners," because he was, no doubt, (for he does not deny, but justifies it,) frequently seen in their company. But with respect to both, the question is, For what end were they in their company, and were they corrupted by the intercourse they had with them?

* *Anc. Hist.* IV. p. 65. (P.) "De tous les sénateurs, Socrate seul, dont Thérémène avoit reçu les leçons, prit sa défense, et se mit en devoir de s'opposer aux officiers de la justice. Mais ses foibles efforts ne purent délivrer Thérémène." *Hist. Anc.* II. p. 545.

† See, on *Ephes. v. 6*, and 1 *Thess. iv. 3*, Vol. XIV. pp. 15, 281.

‡ See Vol. XVII. pp. 412, 413.

§ *Letter*, p. 48. (P.)

2. You add, as a farther proof of the licentious principles of *Socrates*, and of the Grecian philosophers in general, that “the corruption of Athens increased after them.”* But so, you know, did the corruption of the Jews in general after the time of Jesus, and to a far greater extent; and the divine institutions of *Moses*, though promulgated in the most solemn and illustrious manner, were abandoned by the great body of the *Hebrew* nation soon after the death of *Joshua*.

3. Not content with proving *Socrates* to have been a very immoral man from the company that he kept, you advance, as a farther and unquestionable proof of the same charge, the character of the Heathen world as given by the apostle *Paul* in the first chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*, which you say, “presents a picture of the Heathen world that is by no means overcharged, but strictly true. From those errors which have been only mentioned, *Socrates* was not exempt. Indeed, by your own confession,” you add, “and the account of his biographers, he indulged himself equally with his countrymen.”† But where, Sir, have I confessed this? The thought, I am sure, never occurred to me before, nor any thing I hope so very unreasonable and absurd.

The character that *Paul* has given of the Gentile world you have not quoted. I shall, therefore, do it here, to save our readers the trouble of looking for it. It is as follows: after mentioning their idolatry, and the absurdity and folly of it, he says, (*Rom.* i. 24, 26—32,) “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves. — For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections. For even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men, working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who

* *Letter*, p. 27. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 9. (P.)

knowing the judgment of God, that they *who do* such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

Now, Sir, can you, or any man of common sense, though but superficially acquainted with history, or human nature, believe that it was possible for any human society to subsist, if every individual was of this character? And if any individual escaped the pollution, you must allow that *Socrates* might; and therefore, that your inference to the prejudice of his character has no foundation. Can you believe that *Paul* himself meant to give this representation, as applying to every individual character in the Gentile world, or only meant that the vices he mentions were very common among them? *

Should not only *Paul*, but *Peter*, and all the apostles, say what would authorize your inference with respect to *Socrates*, I could not believe them. Among other crimes, the men must have been all Sodomites, and the women all Sapphos; and the men and women too must have been all murderers. But had this been the case, there would soon have been an end of the whole of the guilty race, and one that they justly merited. But who then, Sir, would *Paul* have found to preach to among them? And yet wherever he came he appears to have found the cities populous, and well policied, Notwithstanding the general character of the *Gentile* world, there were, I doubt not then, and now are, Heathens in whose place I would rather stand at the day of judgment than in that of many nominal Christians. And had I been a Heathen, and in the circumstances of *Plato*, I should have joined in his thanksgiving. He is said, "when on the point of death, to have thanked God for three things, that he had endued him with a rational soul, that he was born a Greek and not a Barbarian, and that he had placed his birth in the life-time of *Socrates*." †

4. You make the same unfair inference with respect to the character of *Socrates* from the cruel and obscene rites of the *Heathen religions*. "It is evident," you say, "that *Socrates*, instead of reproving them (his countrymen) for their idolatry, instead of restraining them in their indulgence of their obscene and ridiculous ceremonies, was himself guilty

* See, on *Rom.* i. 29—32, Vol. XIV. p. 199.

† *Rollin*, IV. p. 206. (P.) "Près de mourir, il louoit et remercioit Dieu de trois choses; de ce qu'il lui avoit donné une ame raisonnable, de ce qu'il l'avoit fait naitre Grec et non pas Barbare, et de ce qu'il avoit placé sa naissance au tems où vivoit Socrate." *Hist. Anc.* II. p. 673. *Rollin* gives this anecdote from *Plutarch*. See *Marius*, *ad fin.*

of the same excesses.”* “You have asserted,” you say, “that Socrates was an idolater, or a worshipper of a multiplicity of gods, and such as were acknowledged by his countrymen, and that he conformed in all respects to the popular modes of worship. In consequence of this I was disappointed that you did not insist upon the errors and immorality into which such a belief must necessarily lead him.”†

Now I did not do it, because I did not believe that the principles of *Socrates* would necessarily lead him into the immoralities you mention; and I am surprised that, young as you are, you should be so ignorant of the nature of the Heathen idolatry, and of the general conduct of many idolaters.

The fact appears evidently enough to have been this, and in the nature of things it could not well have been otherwise; viz. that certain obscene and indecent rites were practised in some of their modes of worship, but that no persons were compelled by the laws to join in them. It was altogether voluntary, and in general only those who were licentiously disposed took advantage of them; the graver citizens at *Athens*, *Rome*, and other places, having nothing to do with them.

One of the disgusting ceremonies to which you probably allude was that of the festival of *Bacchus*, authorized no doubt, by the religion and laws of Athens, and of other states of Greece, in which, after sacrificing goats, the priests and the company made a wild procession, during which they devoured the entrails of the victims quite raw and warm from the slaughter.‡ But do you think that *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Aristotle*, or even that *Alcibiades*, joined in this, though they were at liberty to have done so if they had pleased? The law was satisfied if it was done by any body; and there were always persons enow of low and beastly characters to keep up the custom. This, and other rites of a much worse kind, having been practised time immemorial, (and the prosperity of the state being supposed by all Heathens to depend upon the observance of the rites of their ancestors,) were constantly kept up, but not, Sir, by *all* the citizens. For, as individuals, they were not under any obligation to do it, there being no penalty annexed to the neglect of them; and in consequence of this, these disgusting rites, as well as the cruel one of human sacrifices, grew gradually

* Letter, p. 13. (P.)

† *Ibid.*, p. 10. (P.)

‡ See Vol. II. p. 83; XI. p. 18.

into disuse, without any charge of the violation of the laws, in the civilized states of both *Greece* and *Rome*. If there were any complaints of the more superstitious of the Heathens on the subject, we hear nothing of them.

The *Lupercalia* at *Rome* was a business as offensive to decency and modesty as any thing that was practised in *Greece*, and what is truly remarkable, the observance of this particular custom was thought to have a nearer connexion with the prosperity of the state than any other; * on which account even some Christians were not satisfied with the discontinuance of it. † But according to the law, only two boys, though sons of *Patricians*, ran about the streets naked; and all the women that threw themselves in their way did it voluntarily, and not from any compulsion. And yet your argument requires that *Socrates*, merely because he was a Heathen, and because the Heathens had obscene and disgusting rites, *must* have borne a part in them all.

One of the most sacred rites of the religion of his country, but of a suspicious nature, (though Bishop Warburton had the best opinion of it,) I mean the *Eleusinian mysteries*, ‡ we know that *Socrates* did not sanction by his concurrence; for he was never initiated, though he was censured for not being so. He was not, however, subject to any penalty for his neglect.

You justly say, that, “with the ignorance of the Heathens of the one true God, they could form no proper idea of his perfections. On the other hand, they represented their gods as they were themselves, lewd, violent, sanguinary, and capricious.” § But these, Sir, were only the popular ideas, which were even allowed to be ridiculed on the theatres. That there were such gods as these was no article of any creed, or confession of faith, to be subscribed, or in any other way assented to, by every individual. It is well known that the philosophers in general had no such opinions.

With respect to *Socrates* in particular, you ought to have observed, as you profess to take your account from *Xenophon* and *Plato*, that though he acknowledged the gods of his country, he had by no means the same idea of their *characters*. From the extracts that I gave of his conversations on the subject of religion, || it appears that, if you only conceal

* See Vol. XI. pp. 18, 19.

† See Vol. IX. p. 59, XVII. p. 436.

‡ See Vol. XI. pp. 25, 26; Lord Herbert's *Rel. of Gent.* (Ch. xii.), 1705, pp. 228—230; Potter's *Archæologia* (B. ii. Ch. xx.), 1775, pp. 389—393; *Leland*, C. R. (Pt. i. Ch. viii. ix.) 1768, I. pp. 185—229.

§ *Letter*, p. 9. (P.)

|| See Vol. XVII. pp. 405—407.

the term *gods*, and substitute that of *God* in its place, he had very honourable ideas of the character of the Deity, and that he made an excellent use of them, as tending to restrain men even from secret wickedness, as well as from open crimes.

“Socrates,” you say, “who knew not God as he is, could not teach him to others, and this imperfection must have run through all his discourses, and have blasted all his instructions which had reference to the Deity.”* But you see, if you have read his discourses, that it did not do so. Even Christians may be usefully impressed with what *Socrates* advanced on this subject. Let any unprejudiced person only read my quotations from him, and judge between us.

It is true, as I have observed in several of my publications, that the Heathen philosophers, not directly opposing the superstitions and false religions of their countries, but complying with them as far as the laws required, † would never have made any reformation in the world. Their disciples were only the wealthy and the liberal; and whatever it was that was taught them, it does not appear to have been any thing that directly opposed the established system, and that it had no effect upon the common people. It was reserved for Christianity to produce this great and most desirable change; and the apostles, and the primitive Christians, had the *zeal*, as well as the *knowledge*, that was necessary for the purpose. As the Heathen philosophers had not this knowledge, you could not reasonably expect of them the same zeal; especially as they had no real belief of a future state. Without this, what would the apostles themselves, or any other men, have done? What must they have thrown away their lives for? It was “for the joy that was set before him” that Jesus himself “endured the cross.” *Heb.* xii. 2.

Of one particular crime, and that of a peculiarly heinous nature, viz. adultery, you think that *Socrates* may be reasonably suspected, because he was frequently scolded by his wife *Xantippe*. ‡ But though we hear much of this scolding, there is no evidence whatever that it was on this account. And if this be a sufficient ground of suspicion in the case of *Socrates*, it must be so with respect to all other men who have scolding wives. I fear there are such in Christian

* *Letter*, p. 10. (P.)

‡ *Letter*, p. 40. (P.)

† See Vol. II. p. 81, XVII. p. 410.

countries as well as others, and yet I hope there are but few cases in which the scolded husband is driven to this extreme. You think Xantippe must, on the whole, have been a good wife, on account of the affection she shewed for him at the time of his death; but does it not follow from the same fact, that she thought him, on the whole, to have been a good husband?

5. But what I object to, the most, as most manifestly unfair in your censure of *Socrates*, is your judging him by rules that cannot, in reason or equity, apply to his case. You judge him not by the light, the knowledge, or the maxims, that he had, but by those that he had not, and which he had not the means of acquiring. "In order," you say, "to determine concerning the temperance or morality, or the intemperance and immorality, of *Socrates*, he must be arraigned before the bar of the Gospel; as there is no infallible rule of right but that which is prescribed in the word of God."* This, however, is no better than judging *Hindoos* by the laws of *England*, of which they have no knowledge. And according to the apostle Paul, (*Rom.* ii. 14, 15,) "the Gentiles who have not the law" will not be judged by it, but by that which is "written in their hearts," and with which they must, of course, be acquainted. What could *Socrates* know of the laws of Christ, when he lived near four hundred years before his appearance? Perfect as the rules of Christianity are, he will not be judged by them at the last day, though he is by you here.

6. Not considering the necessary imperfection of the knowledge of *Socrates*, as a mere Heathen, your expectations from his teaching are most unreasonable. "What, Sir," you say, with an air of triumph, "did *Socrates* point out to the Athenians the same Being to whom Jesus directed the faith of his followers? Did the discourses of *Socrates*, like those of Jesus, bring to light life and immortality? Did they declare that God had appointed a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness?" †

In reply to this, it is surely sufficient to say, that *Socrates* had no knowledge of that God, or of that day, nor had he the means of acquiring it; and yet he taught gratuitously, according to his ability and opportunity, as Jesus did according to his; though "this," you say, "is an assertion that I cannot maintain." ‡ I no where said that his instructions were as

* *Letter*, p. 32. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 17. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 18. (P.)

perfect as those of Jesus, but considered him as an idolater, and, contrary to the generally-received opinion, shewed that he had no knowledge of a future state.* I therefore see no call that you had to question me so imperiously as you do on this subject. You will find the answer in the very pamphlet to which you reply.

7. "Socrates," you say, "was chargeable with *bigamy*." † But surely, Sir, you might have spared *this* out of your many articles of accusation; for on the same principle you must condemn *Abraham, Jacob*, and much more *David* and *Solomon*. Were they not chargeable with much more than bigamy? You will say there was not in that time any law of God or of man that forbade it. This also was exactly the case of *Socrates*.

Besides that this story of *Socrates'* marrying *Myrta* (of whom neither *Xenophon* nor *Plato* says any thing at all) is very uncertain, you allow that, if it had taken place, it was in consequence of the permission, and even the express encouragement, of the magistrates of *Athens*, at a time when more citizens were wanted than had been produced in the way of single marriages; and I have allowed that *Socrates* was too much influenced by his regard to positive law in judging of the morality of actions, and have censured him for it, because in this respect he might have judged better. Had he married this *Myrta*, he must have kept her out of the way of *Xantippe*, or she would probably have pulled out her eyes, or have destroyed her if she could. ‡

8. With equal injustice you censure *Socrates* for serving in the wars of his country. "His opinions concerning soldiership and war," you say, "were the same with those unjustifiable ones commonly held in Greece," § and you are confident, that "by the rules of Christ in these instances he is reprehensible." ||

But surely this charge may be admitted without reflecting materially on the moral character of *Socrates*. At this day, in Christian countries, individuals are not allowed to judge of the wars in which their country is engaged, and yet they are required to serve in them. Do you think that all the British who fought against *America* approved of the war? I

* See Vol. XVII. pp. 403, 413—415.

† Letter, p. 41. (P.)

‡ *Rollin* refers to a dissertation of M. Hardion, in which he says he demonstrates that "the second marriage of *Socrates*, and the decree upon bigamy, are supposititious facts." *Anc. Hist.* IV. p. 199. (P.) "Il démontre que le second mariage de *Socrate* et l'ordonnance sur la bigamie, sont des faits supposés." *Hist. Anc.* II. p. 666.

§ Letter, p. 33. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 37. (P.)

know the contrary with respect to some who had commands in it. I did not approve of their conduct, but though Christians, they thought their conduct justifiable. What, then, could you expect of a Heathen in such a case?

You allow, however, one good action of *Socrates* in this business of war, though it is in contradiction to your general maxim, which denies every virtue to every Heathen. For you observe, that “when *Xenophon* was wounded and lay extended on the ground, *Socrates* raised him in his arms, and bore him out of the road of the pursuing enemy.”* He was not then “filled with all wickedness, murder, deceit, malignity,—without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful,” which is part of the character of the Heathen world given by the apostle Paul, *Rom.* i. 29, 31. †

On this subject you are careful to remind me, that “*Xenophon* was one of the thirty thousand who entered as mercenaries into the service of *Cyrus* of Persia,” and you think it evident that “he followed the footsteps of *Socrates* in the fields of battle, as well as in the shades of philosophy.”‡ But if *Xenophon* only followed the footsteps of his master in this expedition, you should have brought some evidence that *Socrates* took the lead in it, at least that he advised, or approved of it. As far, however, as I recollect, history is wholly silent on the subject. It does not appear that *Socrates* ever served in any wars besides those of his country, and in them he only served under others. We do not know that he advised, or approved of any of them.

Besides, were not the *Christian* Swiss as guilty of a breach of morality in this respect as the *Heathen* Greeks? But would it be fair to charge every individual Swiss with the crime of his nation? Few persons, I think, would join you in so indiscriminate a censure.

9. But you say, “If the opinions of men have any influence on their character, *Socrates* was not a moral but an immoral man.”§ I wish, Sir, that opinion had more influence than it has on men’s characters. They would then, in Christian countries, be much better than they are. But as many persons are evidently worse than their known princi-

* Letter, p. 26. (P.)

† *Rollin* says of *Socrates*, that “he bore arms, as did all the people of Athens, but with more pure and elevated motives. He made many campaigns, was present in many actions, and always distinguished himself by his valour and fortitude.” *Anc. Hist.* IV. p. 195. (P.) “Il porta les armes comme le faisoient tous ceux d’Athènes mais avec des motifs plus purs et plus éclairés. Il fit plusieurs campagnes, se trouva à plusieurs actions, et s’y distingua toujours par son courage et sa bravoure.” *Hist. Anc.* II. p. 663.

‡ Letter, p. 33. (P.)

§ *Ibid* p. 32. (P.)

ples, and must, and do, condemn themselves when they think seriously; others, it may be hoped, are better than their principles. But those that you ascribe to *Socrates* were not *his* principles, but those of *his country*, and such as it is probable would not have been first adopted in his time. But they had been of long standing, and it was thought unsafe to make any *innovations* in any thing respecting religion. The same, however, is the case with Christian institutions. Were the articles of the Churches of *England*, or of *Scotland*, to be made for the first time at present, they would, I am confident, be different from what they now are, and yet they are subscribed to by thousands who do not approve of them. If you can apologize for their conduct, (and they are Christians, and in other respects very worthy men,) much more may you for that of *Socrates*, who subscribed to nothing, and only complied with the customs of his country as far as the laws absolutely required, and no farther than he really approved.

SECTION IV.

Of the Dæmon of Socrates.

WITH your opinion of the general character of *Socrates*, as highly immoral, I do not wonder at what you say of him with respect to his *dæmon*. "To the dæmon of *Socrates*," you say, "I can attach no greater importance than to that which belongs to the dictates of a strong and inquisitive mind. I have no doubt but he was pleased with the supposition that he derived his wisdom from heaven. With an intellect of a higher order than most of his countrymen, he thought he could successfully manage an imposition to deceive the artless multitude. I know of nothing, however, that he predicted, but what a wise man might foretell."*

You seem, Sir, to have misconceived the whole business of this *dæmon*, whatever it was. He did not pretend to derive any part of his wisdom (if by *wisdom* be meant the subjects of his public teaching) from this source, nor had he any thing to do with the *artless multitude*, but with men of the same rank and degree of intellect with himself. All that he ascribed to it were hints respecting his conduct and theirs; and these did not respect what they were to *do*, but only

* *Letter*, p. 62. (P.)

what they were *not to do*. Nor are we informed concerning any thing that he can be said to have *predicted*. His own conduct might, no doubt, have been directed by his own good sense, and so might the advices that he gave to his friends. But he declared that those advices did *not* come from himself. He must, therefore, have been either an enthusiast, which you do not suppose, or an impostor with respect to them; and this you think he was. I am inclined to think better of him, and therefore I profess my ignorance on the subject; though I have said that I see nothing unworthy of a divine interposition in any advices that he can be supposed to have given, as they all, it is said, led to proper conduct. *

If you, Sir, pretend to judge of what is proper for the Supreme Being to do in such cases as these, I do not; and therefore I am determined by *evidence*, as in other cases that are in themselves *possible*. There are many things that are recorded of the Divine Being in the Scriptures, which, if they had not been there, it is probable that you yourself would have thought could not have come from him. But being there, we who believe the general authority of the Scriptures, naturally endeavour to find reasons for them, as we do with respect to the works of nature, which we must allow to be the work of God. How many plants and animals should we have thought to be absolutely insignificant, and even noxious, unworthy of their author! and yet having discovered the use of some of them, we are content to wait with patience with respect to others, the uses of which we are unable at present to find out. Let us, Sir, exercise the same humility with respect to whatever is, upon any reasonable authority, ascribed to God.

SECTION V.

Of the Divinity of Jesus.

As it appears that one principal object in your answer to my pamphlet was to maintain the dignity of Jesus, as God equal to the Father, imagining that it was mine to lower his character, I think myself called upon to take some notice of what you have advanced on that subject. "I thought," you say, "the evident design of such a work was to lower Jesus Christ from the infinite station in which a certain number

* See Vol. XVII. pp. 419, 420, 433.

of Christians (to which I belong) suppose him to be entitled.*

Had this been the object of my work, I should certainly have dwelt more upon it; whereas all that you can say is, that, in speaking of Jesus, I speak of him in a manner agreeable to my own opinion, (which, as an honest man, I could not help doing,) but without entering into any *argument*, or advancing any thing that could fairly lead to any discussion about it. My business evidently being with *Unbelievers*, and not with Christians of any class, I thought I could not do less than I did. However, since you invite me, I shall note all that you say on the subject.

“You imagine Jesus,” you say, “to be less than God. I hold him to be God.”† And you even call him, “the most holy and eternal Jehovah.”‡ Let us, then, attend to what you say in *proof* of this. For I shall not proceed any farther in the argument than just to follow your lead. “Christ,” you say, “declared himself equal with God the Father.”§ If he did, and if what he said was true, he must indeed be “the most holy and eternal Jehovah;” but where, and on what occasion, did he make this extraordinary declaration? For extraordinary you must allow it to have been in any person in the form of man. I have attended to all his declarations, but so far am I from finding in them any thing to this purpose, that I find much that is expressly to the contrary; every thing that he says concerning the Father evidently implying his inferiority to him. I shall, for the sake of our readers, recite a considerable number of them, that they may see the *general tenor* of his declarations, which is of much more consequence than any single expression.

“Labour not,” he says, (*John* vi. 27,) “for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed.” What occasion could there be for this *sealing*, (which, no doubt, implies the conferring of some authority,) if it was not the act of a superior? Could he not have come by his own authority, and in *his own name*; another expression implying as much? And yet upon a variety of occasions, he most explicitly disclaims it, as well as any power originating with himself.

“I can of mine own self,” he says (*John* v. 30,) “do nothing. As I hear, I judge,—because I seek not mine own

* *Letter*, p. 6. (P.)

† *Ibid.* (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 30. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 25. (P.)

will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." *Vers.* 36, 37: "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. And the Father himself *who* hath sent me hath borne witness of me." *Ver.* 43: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not." vi. 29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." *Ver.* 38: "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." *Ver.* 57: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." vii. 16: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."* viii. 26: "He that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." *Ver.* 28: "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." *Ver.* 40: "Ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God." *Ver.* 42: "If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth, and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." *Ver.* 54: "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing. It is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say that he is your God."

It is evident from his language on this occasion, that Jesus considered God as a being distinct from himself, and the same with the Father, the God of the Jews, or *Jehovah*; and certainly the pious Jews acknowledged no other than one person in their God. But I proceed to other declarations respecting himself and God.

John x. 18: "No man taketh *my life* from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." † *Ver.* 25: "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." *Vers.* 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 pluck them out of my hands. My Father *who* gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands. I and my Father are one." ‡ *Vers.* 37, 38: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." §

* See Vol. XIII. p. 211.

† See *ibid.* p. 255.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 234.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 255, 256.

John xiii. 31, 32: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." He says to *Philip*, (xiv. 10, 12, 16,) "Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father *who* dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.—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.—I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter." * *Ver.* 24: "The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's *who* sent me." *Ver.* 28: "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because—I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I." † *Ver.* 31: "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do."

John xv. 1: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." ‡ *Ver.* 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." § *Ver.* 15: "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." xvi. 23: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name; he will give it you." || *Ver.* 28: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." ¶ In his intercessory prayer, he says, (xvii. 3,) "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." **

These, Sir, are only a part of the declarations of Jesus concerning himself and his Father, collected from a few chapters in that evangelist who is said to have taught the doctrine of the divinity of Christ more clearly than any other; †† and yet from these I think it is sufficiently appa-

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 314, 315.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 320.

§ See *ibid.* p. 328.

** See *ibid.* pp. 332, 333.

† See *ibid.* pp. 316, 317.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 320, 321.

¶ See *ibid.*

†† All the early Christian writers were of opinion, that the Jews in general were so fully persuaded of their *Messiah* being a man, that even the apostles did not choose to divulge so offensive a doctrine as that of his divinity; that *John*, after the death of the other apostles, was the first who did it; and they are loud in their praises of him for having the courage to do it. This I have shewn at large in my "History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ." [Vol. VI. pp. 428—437.] It is evident, therefore, that, according to them, all the early Christian converts must have been *Unitarians*; and this I have proved that they actually were from a variety of considerations. (P.)

rent, that, so far from declaring himself to be equal to God, he uniformly represented himself as his inferior, as much so as any other prophet sent by God to men could do.

I shall, however, for the farther satisfaction of our readers, add a few passages from the other evangelists. Speaking of the time of his second coming, Jesus says, *Mark* xiii. 32, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."* *Matt.* xx. 23: "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." xxviii. 18: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." †.

If this power was as much *his own* as it was his Father's, (which, if he was God equal to the Father, it must have been,) why does he speak of its being *given* to him? Also, why did he habitually *pray* to the Father, which he did with as much humility and resignation as any of his followers? If he was God, and of course himself the proper object of prayer, why did he not relieve himself? Why, in particular, in his agony in the garden, did he pray, saying, (*Matt.* xxvi. 30,) "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" adding, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt"? ‡ Could he not, in this and every other case, have judged and acted for himself? And especially why, when he was exhausted by his agony, was it necessary that an angel should be sent to strengthen him? When he was apprehended, he said he might have prayed (*Matt.* xxvi. 53) to his Father, and he would send him "legions of angels" for his rescue. What could angels do for God? And were not those angels subject to his own orders, as well as to those of his Father?

After his resurrection, Jesus speaks from the same sense of his inferiority to the Father, that he had always done before his death. To *Mary Magdalene*, to whom he first appeared, he said, (*John* xx. 17,) "I am not yet ascended to 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." § To the apostles he says, on the evening of the same day, (*ver.* 21,) "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you."

Now I would ask any reasonable, unprejudiced person, whether it was natural for a person, conscious that he was himself equal to any being in the universe, even the "one

* See Vol. II. p. 297, XIII. p. 298.

† See *ibid.* pp. 338, 339.

‡ See Vol. XIII. pp. 384, 385.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 371, 372.

eternal Jehovah," the maker and lord of all, to speak and act in this uniform manner, as inferior to a Being to whom he was not inferior, and a dependent on one on whom he was conscious that he was not dependent? For, on your hypothesis, the Father is as dependent on the Son, as the Son is on the Father.

As the language of Jesus respecting his Father implies his inferiority to him, so, in correspondence with it, that of the Father respecting Jesus as evidently implies superiority. Thus in the account of his baptism, we read, *Matt.* iii. 17, "And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Again, at the transfiguration, *Matt.* xvii. 5, "While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him." Lastly, in answer to his prayer in the temple, (*John* xii. 28,) "Father, glorify thy name," there "came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

You yourself, Sir, seem to have forgotten your opinion of the equality of Jesus to his Father; (as many *Trinitarians* who read the Scriptures, and cannot but be more or less impressed with the general tenor of them, are apt to do,) when you say, "The inseparable presence of the Divinity with him, and the unrestrained effusion of the Holy Ghost upon him, preserved him in this world from all the defilement of infectious conversation;"* and, "Such was the man who bled and died for sinners."† This, Sir, is the language of an *Unitarian*. It was certainly improper to speak of the presence of Divinity with any person, or of the effusion of the *Holy Ghost* upon him, when he himself was that Divinity, and could not stand in need of the effusion of any spirit besides his own. With the assistance that you allow to Jesus, you, Sir, or I, or any other man, would have been preserved from the defilement of infectious conversation, as well as he.

You might have said, as many *Trinitarians* do, that while Jesus was in the *form of a man*, on earth, he had divested himself of all divine power. But, absurd as the supposition is, (for how could the Supreme Being deprive himself of any of his powers, since it implies a power of annihilating himself?) you have deprived yourself of this evasion by ascribing the miracles of Jesus to a divine power possessed and

* *Letter*, p. 54. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 58. (P.)

actually exercised by him while he was in the form of a man; for you say, "These miracles declare him to be God. Whose voice, but that of God, ever assumed an equal authority with his? And what voice, excepting that of God, did nature equally obey?"* If, therefore, Jesus had the powers of divinity before his incarnation, he had them afterwards.

Let us, however, advert to this boasted argument for the divinity of Jesus. "Whose voice," you say, "did nature equally obey?" I answer, it equally, as promptly, and as effectually, obeyed the voice of *Moses*, of *Joshua*, of *Peter*, and of *Paul*, as it did that of *Jesus*, when they acted by the same authority that Jesus did.

Jesus himself said to his disciples, (*Luke* xvii. 6,) "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, 'Be thou plucked up by the roots, and be thou planted in the sea,' and it should obey you." He also said, (*John* xiv. 12,) "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 to go unto my Father." And certainly the conferring the gift of the *Holy Spirit* by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, was a miracle of as extraordinary a nature as any that was performed by Jesus; and, as far as appears, this was done by them whenever they pleased; and consequently this gift of speaking languages that men had not learned, seems to have been nearly universal in the Christian church in their time.

All the inference that the persons who saw the miracles of Jesus drew from them, was, that he wrought them not by any power of his own, but by a power derived from God. Thus *Nicodemus* says, *John* iii. 2, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Did Jesus reply to *Nicodemus*, that he was mistaken; for that he wrought the miracles by a power that was properly *his own*? By no means. He acquiesces in the inference of *Nicodemus*, and by so doing, confirms it; and in the same conversation he proceeds to speak as a person sent by God, his messenger, or prophet, and therefore inferior to him; as, *vers.* 16, 17, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

* *Letter*, p. 17. (P.)

The Jews in general made the same natural inference from the miracles of Jesus that *Nicodemus* did. When he raised the widow's son at Nain, it is said (*Luke* vii. 16) of all the people who saw the miracle, that "they glorified God; saying that a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited his people."* They did not infer that Jesus was himself that God, but only a prophet, sent and impowered by him. After some other of the miracles of Jesus, we read, (*Matt.* ix. 8,) "When the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, *who* had given such power unto men." † How different, Sir, are the conclusions that different men draw from the same things! Had you been there, you would have taught them a better logic.

You will probably say that I have slightly passed over, though I have quoted, one declaration of Jesus, that was fully to your purpose, viz. that *he and his Father are one*. But this is, I think, sufficiently answered by himself, when, in his intercessory prayer, he speaks of all his disciples as equally one with the Father and himself. *John* xvii. 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 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." ‡ What then, Sir, becomes of your boasted argument for the divinity of Jesus from this text? Are all the disciples of Jesus equal to the Father? If not, neither can you infer from the union of Jesus with him, that *he* is equal to him.

SECTION VI.

Of the Doctrine of Atonement.

NOT to lose so good an opportunity of professing your faith in all the important articles of orthodoxy, (for I cannot imagine any other sufficient reason for it,) you have introduced into your answer to my pamphlet the doctrine of *atonement*; saying, that "Jesus Christ unfolded the great doctrine

* See Vol. XIII. p. 97.

† See *ibid.* pp. 334, 336.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 103.

of atonement." * A great doctrine, no doubt, Sir, it is, if it be true; but you do not say *where* Jesus has unfolded it. I am, therefore, left to my conjectures with respect to the particular discourses in which you suppose that he unfolded it.

It could hardly be in the parable of the prodigal son, in which the good father represents the Father of us all; for he receives his offending son on his repentance only, without himself or a third person making any satisfaction for him. It does not appear that any common friend so much as interceded in his favour. The paternal affection of the parent made any such satisfaction, or intercession, unnecessary. You will not say that the elder son in this parable represented the Son of God; for he was not friendly to his brother.

Neither, I apprehend, will you say that you find this great doctrine of *atonement* in the parable of the master (*Matt.* xviii. 27) who forgave his servant a debt of ten thousand talents; for that was *freely* forgiven without any person paying the debt for him: "Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." †

Neither can I imagine you will pretend to find this great doctrine of yours either unfolded, or carefully folded up, in the *Lord's prayer*, in which we are taught to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." What rule are *we* to observe with respect to the forgiveness of an offending but penitent brother? Are we to demand any satisfaction or atonement? No. If he only *repent*, we are required to forgive him. *Luke* xvii. 3, 4: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Here, Sir, appears to me to be an unfolding of something directly opposite to your great doctrine of atonement.

I suppose you will urge that Jesus said at the institution of his supper, (*Matt.* xxvi. 28,) "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." And this is all that I think you can find in the Gospels that can be supposed to favour your doctrine. But can this solitary expression be called an *unfolding* of any thing? *Unfolding* means explaining a thing at some length, in order to make it intelligible to those who did not understand it. Besides, this expression is a very obscure one;

* Letter, p. 19. (P.)

† See Vol. XIII. pp. 199, 200.

and as it is on the same occasion on which Jesus says of the bread, "This is my body," which all Protestants allow to be figurative, it may be presumed that this expression concerning his blood is figurative also. Was not the body of Jesus given for the remission of sins, as well as his blood? If all his language on this occasion is to be understood literally, we must admit the doctrine not of *atonement* only, but that of *transubstantiation* also, which is much more clearly expressed than the other. But if the Gospel which was established by the death and resurrection of Christ, (the former being only necessary to the latter,) was the means of reforming the world, and of course of procuring the pardon of sin, which no Christian doubts of, it will sufficiently justify the language of Jesus, which is often highly figurative.*

Jesus never spared the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, the teachers of the law in his time, but always censured them, and sometimes with peculiar severity, for their perversion of it. But can you say that he ever reprov'd them for abandoning this great doctrine of *atonement*, of which it is certain they had no knowledge? No Jew ever did, or does, believe any thing of the kind. Otherwise they would have expected a suffering, and not a conquering and triumphant *Messiah*. They could not learn it from Moses, who represents the Divine Being as proclaiming his name, or character, in the following emphatical terms (*Exod.* xxxiv. 6,7): "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Neither could they learn it from the language of any of the prophets, of which what we find in *Isaiah* lv. 7, is a specimen: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

If we pass from general declarations to particular instances,

* So far was Jesus from having unfolded this great doctrine of *atonement*, that when Christians began to speculate on the subject, and to imagine that the figurative expressions of Scripture must have a literal meaning, they supposed, that since men had by sin put themselves into the power of the Devil, the price of their redemption was paid by God to *him*. This appears so late as in the writings of *Austin*; and the present great doctrine was unknown till after the Reformation, when it was advanced in opposition to the Popish doctrine of *merit*. This I have shewn in my "History of the Corruptions of Christianity." (P.) See Vol. V. pp. 134—137.

in which the repenting sinner pleads with God for pardon, we shall still find nothing like your great doctrine of *atonement*. Thus *David*, repenting of his sins, only says, (*Psalm* xxv. 7,) "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions. According to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord." When he mentions *sacrifice* on this occasion, it is not the atoning sacrifice of the *Messiah*, but something of a very different nature. *Psalm* li. 16, 17: "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it.—The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."*

As it does not appear that either Jesus, or any prophet before him, unfolded the great doctrine of *atonement*, you will perhaps do it in your reply; and you are certainly more directly called upon to reply to this pamphlet than you were to the other, and it will of course be more expected of you.

THE CONCLUSION.

I CONCLUDE with sincerely thanking you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity of declaring my disbelief of the *great doctrines*, as you call them, of the *trinity*, and *atonement*; the former a manifest infringement of the truly great doctrine of the *divine unity*, and the latter a shocking degradation of the character of the one God and Father of all. I, therefore, reject them as nothing less than idolatry and blasphemy.

I do this the more willingly, as I am informed that some of my *orthodox* friends in England imagine that I am returning to the faith in which I was educated. But I now give them what may be called my *dying testimony* to my faith in the proper unity and the perfect placability of the God and Father of all, the God and the Father of Jesus Christ, as well as my God and Father. This may be considered as something better than a dying testimony, being given after the age of seventy, and before my faculties have materially failed me; whereas nothing that is said by a dying man can be of much value.

I scruple not to call the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, as equal to God the Father, *blasphemy*, because any infringe-

* See Vol. XII. p. 85.

ment of the doctrine of the divine unity is always so considered in the Scriptures. There the great JEHOVAH declares, (Isa. xlii. 8, xlvi. 11,) that HE *will not give his glory to another*; and to admit any other to participate in his divine attributes must be giving his glory to another. Indeed, this necessarily implies a deficiency of perfection in him; for why should recourse be had to two beings, or persons, if one had been sufficient? It is usual with *Trinitarians* to say, that the *Father* is the creator, the *Son* the redeemer, and the *Holy Ghost* the comforter. But if the Father can *redeem*, and *comfort*, as well as *create*, the other two were not necessary.

It was on this very principle that the ancient Heathen idolatry was founded. It not being imagined that one being was sufficient for all the purposes of creation and providence, different divinities were assigned to the several parts and provinces of nature. There were "gods of the hills," and other "gods of the valleys,"* and each nation had its peculiar deity. And Christian idolatry proceeded in the same manner, from the worship of Jesus to that of his mother, and others called saints; till the Christian calendar had as many objects to whom prayers were addressed, as that of the Heathens. Attend, then, to the old proverb, *principiis obsta*; and in reformation, do not do any thing by halves, but go back to the original constitution of "one God and Father of all," and "one Lord," the "mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." *Eph. iv. 5*; *1. Tim. ii. 5.* †

Your doctrine of Christ being *the eternal Jehovah*, equal to *God the Father*, would have shocked *Athanasius*, and all the zealous defenders of the orthodoxy of their times. At the Council of *Nice*, and for some time after, they had advanced no farther than the doctrine of the Son being *of the same substance* with the Father. That of his *equality* to him was expressly disclaimed. Of this there is the most abundant evidence. ‡

Had you, Sir, been a Jew, and had advanced what you do in this pamphlet, while the polity of that *people of God* had been in vigour, you would have been stoned as an idolater or a blasphemer, and your metaphysical distinctions, by which you pretend to prove that *three* may be

* *1 Kings xx. 23, 28.* See Vol. XI. pp. 445.

† See Vol. XIV. pp. 126, 127, 276.

‡ See Vol. VI. p. 326.

one, and one three, would not have saved you. Had you, on being interrogated, acknowledged that by the terms *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, you did not mean to denote the same thing by different words, but that there was a real difference between them, and that each of the persons so denominated was possessed of all the attributes of divinity, you would have been condemned as a worshipper of three Gods; and your plea of *mystery* would not have been heard. Be thankful, Sir, that you live in a country in which even idolatry may be professed without danger. The only plea that can avail you at the bar of reason, and of God, is that of the apostle, and of the unbelieving Jews, viz. "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

If you be shocked, as I doubt not you will be, at the manner in which I express myself with respect to your great and favourite doctrine, consider that I must be no less so at your calling a man, though a distinguished prophet, the *most holy and eternal Jehovah*. Against such horrible blasphemy, I have long thought it my duty (*Isa. lviii. 1*) to "cry aloud" and "spare not," but, as far as I could, to "lift up *my* voice like a trumpet." I did it in *England*, and, as I have opportunity, shall do it here. If you be afraid of detracting from the honour of Jesus, I have no less dread of detracting from the honor of *the God and Father of Jesus*; and, with my opinions, you must allow that I ought to shew as much zeal as yourself. But let not this zeal, which I excuse in you, as you ought to do in me, prevent the most cool and temperate discussion of the very important questions between us.

I conclude with expressing what I have often done, that I consider you, and Mr. Miller of New York, as the most promising young ministers that I have heard of in this country. I only fear that in consequence of writing so early, you should so far commit yourself, as to make it difficult to retract any particular opinion, when sufficient reasons may occur to you to abandon it. In the mean time, while you maintain your present faith, it may be an useful exercise to you to go over this controversy along with me; and I am now at leisure to attend to it, provided my health, which has lately sustained several rude shocks, * should continue what

* Mr. Priestley mentions, that during his father's "stay in Philadelphia, in the Spring of 1801, he had a violent attack of fever, which weakened him exceedingly, and from the effects of which he never perfectly recovered." *Continuation*, 8vo. p. 206, 12mo. p. 186.

it is at present. Neither of us can advance any thing materially *new* on the subjects; but it will be new *here*, and therefore it may answer a good end to open the discussion. And free inquiry is all that is necessary to the discovery and establishment of truth.

This is ground that I have frequently gone over; but, on that very account, it will not be disagreeable to go over it once more.

———— Juvat exhaustos iterare labores,
Et sulcata meis percurrere litora remis.*

Sincerely wishing the advancement of the genuine truth of the Gospel,

I remain, Sir,

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

* *Buchanan. (P.)*

A

SECOND LETTER

TO THE

REVEREND JOHN BLAIR LINN, D.D.*

IN REPLY TO HIS DEFENCE

OF THE

Doctrines of the Divinity of Christ and Atonement.

[Northumberland, 1803.]

REV. SIR,

YOUR reply to my Letter answered my expectation in some respects, but not in others. Conviction with respect to any thing of much consequence, I did not expect to produce; but I looked for an acknowledgment of some slight oversights, and more candour with respect to myself and my motives in writing. You do not, however, acknowledge the smallest oversight, and through the whole of your letter you represent me as acting in a very disingenuous manner, using much artifice in the defence of what you suppose I must know to be incapable of defence, and thereby deceiving and misleading my readers.

You call the account that I gave of my object in writing, "an ingenious evasion, to avoid an acknowledgment, which I must otherwise have been forced to make." † "By artfully interweaving certain clauses in a general sentence," with which you charge me, you say, that "an experienced disputant deceives and misleads the unwary." ‡ "I wish," you, say "you had followed a course which was open and direct, and which does not wind like the labyrinth in Crete. I wish your path had been marked by candour, as well as by

* Mr. Priestley, describing his father's declining health from "November, 1803, to the middle of January, 1804," remarks, that "during this period he composed, in a day, his second reply to Dr. Linn." *Continuation*, 8vo. pp. 211, 212, 12mo. pp. 191, 192. See *infra*.

† *Reply*, p. 11. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 96. (P.)

ingenuity, and that you had rather grappled me with the irons of truth, than thrown around me the web of perplexity.* You speak of "the common and mischievous artifices of the Socinians in their small tracts, intended to influence the public mind;" † meaning, no doubt, my own in particular. You suppose in one case, that "I deceive in order that good might be produced;" ‡ but this you very properly say is not justifiable. In short, you assert, that "it may be said of me, that I write against light and better knowledge." §

I do not question your sincerity, or regard to truth, as you do mine; and therefore I must believe that you really entertain these sentiments of me. But then what signifies the respect you profess to have for me, as a *philosopher* and a *scholar*, || when you have this low and despicable opinion of me as a man? And how could you say, "I cannot but express a wish that our free intercourse of opinions which has passed, may rather promote harmony than discord;" when, if I be the person you describe, you would disgrace yourself by any harmony with me?

You say, indeed, that, "in looking over your Letter, you find several passages which will be thought by some improperly harsh;" but you do not say that you think so yourself, and you add, that you meant not by "them to offend me." After, in fact, calling me a knave, only in more decent language, you say, you "hope I shall not take it amiss." ¶ But how could you expect that such treatment would not give offence, and that I should not take it amiss? Having, however been much used to language of this kind, both in England and here, I think I can bear it as well as most persons, let it come from what quarter it will. But I did not expect it from you. Only make the case your own, and suppose that I had represented you as acting the disingenuous part that you ascribe to me, and being conscious, as I am, that you did not deserve it, what would you have felt under the imputation?

It is very possible, however, that notwithstanding all that you have said against me as a controversial writer, you may have no bad opinion of my morals in other respects; so that though I may not be honest as a writer, I may be so in the common transactions of life, and not be destitute of other good qualities. And though I think you uncandid with

* *Reply*, p. 40. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 15. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 86. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 96. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 52. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* (P.)

respect to me, I can excuse the too common feelings and language of controversy, and I do not infer from it any thing unfavourable to your general character, which I doubt not is honourable, and your general conduct exemplary. The *harmony*, therefore, that you speak of, whatever be meant by it, will not meet with any obstacle from me. We have all our infirmities, and, as Christians, should bear with each other. I, as the older man, ought to have the most candour, and make the most allowance for the greater irritability of youth. If you can bear this answer to your letter, you will easily bear any thing that will ever come from me.

You Sir, cannot, in consistency with what you have advanced, believe me; but many persons, who are better acquainted with my character and my writings will, when I say that I hold the conduct you describe in as much detestation as you can. If I know my own heart, I write from a love of truth, and a desire to promote it, and I believe that you do the same, though labouring under prejudices from which my different situation and opportunities of better information have, through the conduct of a kind Providence, delivered me. So at least I think, and for this I am truly thankful, and especially that I have been the instrument in the hands of God of enlightening the minds of many others.

Much as I have written to demonstrate the truth and the importance of Christianity, both with respect to individuals and society, (more I believe than any man living,) you insinuate that my views are hostile to it when you say, "Did you mean to deny the blessed effects of the Gospel of Jesus Christ upon society, and upon human government?"* and when you enlarge as you do on that topic yourself in your Letter to me. Indeed, Sir, I do not want your instructions on this head. Few men living, perhaps none, have had more opportunity of knowing *Unbelievers* of all kinds than myself, or have given more attention to their principles, and the effects of them. This has given me a much stronger impression than you can possibly have of the real value of revelation; because your advantages of this kind cannot have been much more than you have acquired by reading, whereas mine are from an extensive and pretty intimate knowledge of living characters in several parts of the world; and it is this strong impression, the result of personal observation, that has led me to write so much, and in such various forms, in defence of revelation. If you had only seen the

*Reply, p. 35. (P.)

Discourses that I delivered in Philadelphia, * which are all relative to that subject, you must have seen that I do not want your admonitions or instructions upon it.

From a deficiency in point of candour, and I may add of civility, in an address to me, you never mention any of my writings but in language of contempt. "I consider," you say, "your Histories," (meaning those "of the Corruptions of Christianity," and "of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ,") as possessing "no more authority than the Arabian Nights' Entertainments." † As many persons here, I find, as well as in England, are fond of reading Novels and Romances, I wish your readers would, from your account of those Histories of mine, consider them in that light, and think of reading them for amusement, as they do the *Arabian Nights*. They would find in them serious matter, worthy of their attention, and of yours. Works of great labour, as these are, and composed with a serious view, to promote what the author considers to be important truth, let him be ever so much mistaken, deserve to be mentioned with respect. You could not mean any thing but ridicule and contempt when you say, "May I expect from your extensive knowledge you will be able to gratify my curiosity with respect to the Eleusinian mysteries?" ‡ I wish, Sir, that you, or any other person, would gratify mine on that subject.

By way of excuse for declining to enter into a controversy with me on the subjects of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ and the atonement, you say, "There is no common principle on which you and I could argue on those subjects. These are doctrines which can only be discovered by the light of pure revelation; but you, just as it pleases you, or as it answers your purpose, reject or receive what is recorded in revelation." § You also dwell much, and always with a tone of sarcasm, on my having expressed an opinion that the reasoning of the apostle *Paul* was sometimes inconclusive. You also say, "If we add another subject of controversy, it would open too wide a field, and would afford you an opportunity of adroitly extricating yourself from the absurdities into which you have run, by flying to another subject." This, Sir, is but another variation of the charge of artifice and insincerity which you so often bring against me, but it has no just foundation.

* In 1796, and 1797. See Vol. XVI. pp. 14—418.

† *Reply*, p. 90. (P)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 47. (P)

§ *Ibid.* p. 82. (P)

You and I have many principles in common with respect to the doctrines of the divinity of Christ and the atonement. There is not a single passage in the *Old* or the *New Testament* relating to them that I would wish to have expunged. The reasoning of *Paul* to which I object does not affect his authority with respect to any thing that depends upon his own knowledge, or that he declares that he had received in the communications with Jesus with which he was favoured. What I object to in his writings you may see, if you please, in my "Notes on all the Books of Scripture," which are now in the press. There is not a word in any of the *Gospels*, or the *Acts of the Apostles*, to which I do not give implicit credit. Nor do I recollect a single passage of the least moment in all the *New Testament* which I think to be spurious, except that concerning the heavenly witnesses in the first epistle of *John*, which if you admit, I believe you are singular, as it is given up by all the learned in England, and those as orthodox as yourself.* Nor is this a text of any real consequence to you, as several believers in the divinity of Christ have acknowledged. The apostles, and all the other writers in the *New Testament*, I consider as perfectly honest and excellent men, but not as infallible; and you must know that many learned Christians have ceased to defend their inspiration as writers; an hypothesis which candid men allow to be impossible to maintain, and which has given the greatest advantage to Unbelievers.

All that you urge on these subjects, and upon my character as a writer, is only calculated to prejudice your readers against me and my writings, as written with a view to deceive them; and draw them into dangerous errors; the natural inference from which is, that it is most safe for them not to look into them at all. But, Sir, what should I get by the conduct which you ascribe to me, and which, according to you, I must have followed through life, to the close of which I must now be very near? Consequently, I must be in expectation of very soon appearing before my final Judge; with whom the artifice you charge me with will avail nothing. He will, however, be better qualified to decide concerning my character and conduct than you who are so ready to do it, and I hope to find him more candid.†

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 433, 434.

† When I was transcribing this for the press from short hand, in which I always compose, I did not expect to live many weeks. For one whole day, unable to write myself, I employed other persons to write while I dictated. At present my prospects with respect to this life are very uncertain. (P.) See the references *supra*, pp. 219, 221, *Notes* *.

You still maintain, notwithstanding my serious declaration to the contrary, (calling it an artful evasion, but against, I think, every appearance and probability,) that in my *Comparison of Socrates and Jesus*, I meant "an insidious attack upon our Saviour."* You even say, that "it proceeded from a stable and implacable animosity against the divinity of Jesus Christ." † To shew you in what a different light the same thing may be viewed by different persons, I shall give you an extract from a letter which I have lately received from a person in England, and as sincere a Christian as yourself. "I am excited," he says, "and desirous to send you a few lines, to convey my thanks for your *Socrates and Jesus compared*, and my great approbation of it. By the perusal of it I have much profited, as it has led me both to understand and value Christianity more and better. This little work is calculated to do, and certainly will do, much good, if it be attended to." Another correspondent says, "I have read your *Comparison of Jesus and Socrates* with much pleasure. You have placed the great superiority of the character and doctrine of Christ above that of Socrates in a very striking light."

Indeed I cannot help considering your strange misapprehension of my views in this publication as extraordinary as *Don Quixote's* mistaking a windmill for a giant, and a flock of sheep for an army; and I had no more expectation of such an attack upon it as yours is, than that it would involve me in a contest with Bonaparte or the Algerines. I considered myself as writing in the cause of common Christianity, and that, if I succeeded, I should have the thanks of all the friends of it; and in this light my pamphlet was considered by several intelligent Christians in Philadelphia, and some of them as orthodox as yourself.

SECTION I.

Of Socrates.

The greater part of your Letter relates to *Socrates*, and you expect a particular reply to every article in it. But, Sir, contrary to your expectation, where you say, "he must be a credulous opponent who should ever expect to silence you," ‡ I have little more to say about *Socrates*. Being

* Reply, p. 14. (P.)

† Ibid. p. 10. (P.)

‡ Ibid. p. 78. (P.)

satisfied with what I have written, notwithstanding your additional observations on the subject, I now close my defence, and leave your observations to have what weight they may with our readers. I see no good reason for troubling them with what appears to me to be wholly unnecessary. I shall, therefore, only make a few brief remarks.

You lay great stress on the imperfection of my account of the *difference* between *Socrates* and *Jesus*; when I acknowledge all the difference that I find between them in the fullest manner, at the same time that I saw so much of a general resemblance between them, in their devoting themselves to the instruction of their countrymen on the subject of morals, and that gratuitously, which no other Heathen philosopher did, that I thought it well worth while to draw a comparison between them; and this I think is sufficiently to the advantage of *Jesus*. Yet you now “appeal to my own reason and heart whether I have not said unjustly, that the discourses of *Socrates* and *Jesus* have an obvious resemblance.”* Now I should have thought the resemblance sufficient to my purpose, if *Socrates* had been a much less respectable teacher than he was. He was the best that the Heathen world could exhibit, and I was desirous of shewing that, with all his advantages, he was greatly inferior to *Jesus*. Besides, Sir, comparisons have been made between things the most distant, if there was but the smallest resemblance between them, even between the Supreme Being, as the author of all good, and *Satan*, the supposed author of all evil.

Notwithstanding all that you allege by way of apology for underrating the merit of *Socrates*, I do not see why you should urge the argument from the abominable idolatries of his countrymen, or the general character that *Paul* gives of the Heathen world, † if you had not thought that they affected the character of *Socrates* individually; and then they will equally affect the character of every Heathen, as that of *Aristides*, *Phocion*, *Timoleon*, and any the most celebrated for their moral worth in all Greece. Indeed, with respect to virtue in general, according to the best ideas that the Heathens had of it, there is no character known in detail that stands higher than that of *Socrates* himself. And so inconclusive is your argument, that it must surely be obvious to every person but yourself.

You lay as much stress as ever on the attachment of *Socrates* to those whom you call his “chosen companions;”

* *Reply*, p. 37. (P.)

† See *supra*, pp. 198, 199.

but you mention none but such as were his pupils when they were young men; and what tutor may not have unworthy disciples? For his chosen companions, take the following account of *Xenophon*. After a recital of a conversation between *Pericles* and *Alcibiades*, he says, "When these men (*Critias* and *Alcibiades*) took the lead in the commonwealth, they no longer frequented the society of *Socrates*, because it would not have been agreeable to them, as they would have taken it ill to have been reproved by him for their faults, but engaged in the conduct of public affairs, with a view to which only they had applied to *Socrates*. But *Crito*, and *Chærephon*, and *Cherecrates*, and *Simmias*, and *Cebes*, and *Phædo*, and many others, were the familiar friends of *Socrates*; who frequented his society, not as lawyers or orators, but that they might be good and honourable men, and be of service to their families, their domestics, their relations, their friends, the city, and their fellow-citizens. None of these, either while they were young, or advanced in life, did any thing that was reprehensible, nor were they ever charged with it."* Indeed, Sir, you are not sufficiently well read in the history of *Socrates*.

If you had overlooked this passage in the *Memorabilia*, you might have seen who they were that attended *Socrates* in the last scenes of his life; and such were most likely to have been his intimate friends, and among them you find not one of the persons that you have mentioned as his chosen companions. These among, no doubt, many others, were *Crito*, *Phædo*, *Simmias*, *Cebes*, *Echecrates*, *Apollodorus*, and *Plato*, of none of whom do we know any thing disreputable. And why did you lay so much stress on the tyrannical conduct of *Critias*, if you had not meant to insinuate that he had in some measure the concurrence of *Socrates*? For it was not the character of *Critias* that was the subject of our discussion.

As to the dæmon of *Socrates*, on which you urge me so closely, I professed not to have any fixed opinion about it. If I had been asked what I thought of it a short time before the writing of my pamphlet, I should have said, as you do, that it was probably nothing more than his own good sense; but, on considering his character more particularly, I was unwilling to think that such a man would persist through life, and to his dying moments, in telling a lie. And what the Supreme Being might please to do by or with him, or

* *Memorabilia*, L. i. C. ii. p. 47. (P.) Translation, 1722, pp. 19, 20.

any man, neither you nor I can tell. But I never said, as you now quote me, that "God spake to Socrates by a dæmon," which you call, "a glaring deformity of my assertion."* Such an idea never occurred to me. As my opinion on this very unimportant subject is unsettled, it is very possible that I may revert to my former opinion, and yours, about it.

With respect to the authority of *Herodicus*, on which you are disposed to lay great stress, in order to disparage *Socrates*, and on which you challenge me so peremptorily, † I do not think it worth my while to consider it at all, my business being not so much with the personal character of Socrates as with what he taught, whom he taught, and in what manner he taught. And whether Socrates was a little better, or a little worse, than he has been represented, is of little consequence to my object in writing, which I am sorry to find, it is not in my power to make you understand.

As I have now abandoned *Socrates*, you will, of course, triumph in your victory, while I shall proceed as if this unforeseen controversy had never happened, to draw a similar comparison between Jesus and other Heathen moralists, giving them, as I did Socrates, every merit that I fairly can, in order to shew that, with every advantage, their maxims were far inferior to those of the gospel, and their influence far less favourable to the exaltation of the individual character, or the improvement of the condition of society. I shall not be sorry to see you follow me step by step through them all, as you have done with respect to Socrates, and you will have just the same reason to think that the remainder of the work is what you call this first part, viz. an insidious attack on the character of Jesus; and with respect to some of the characters, you may perhaps have more advantage than you have had in the case of Socrates. It will be no object with me to give you less.

SECTION II.

Of the Divinity of Christ.

SECOND thoughts, the old proverb says, are best. I am glad, that you, Sir, have had such thoughts, and that you did not, as you first intended, close your pamphlet with

* *Reply*, p. 75. (P.) See Vol. XVII, p. 433, Note †.

† *Reply*, p. 52. (P.) See *supra*, p. 192.

your *Letter*, but have added an *Appendix* on the only subjects on which I wished for an opportunity of addressing you, or rather our readers, viz. the doctrines of the *divinity of Christ*, and of *atonement*. These are, indeed, subjects of importance. You think them great truths, and I am as well satisfied that they are the most shocking corruptions of Christianity, hindering the reception of it not only with *Jews* and *Mahometans*, but with men of sense in all Christian countries. I therefore think that no rational Christian can employ his time better than in an endeavour to expose them. And as you and your learned friend,* without wishing to proceed with the controversy, have, nevertheless, thought it incumbent on you to produce those arguments which you consider as of the greatest strength in your cause, I shall endeavour to shew our readers the extreme futility, and the most glaring inconsistency, of them; referring for the farther discussion of the subjects to my former publications with respect to them.

You say, "You appear to lay considerable stress on the circumstance that the Jews did not expect their Messiah to be a Divine person, or that he would make atonement for sin. You advert to this three or four times in the pamphlet to which I am replying. To me it appears not a little wonderful that you should love to dwell on a circumstance which furnishes a strong presumption against your opinion;" † urging, that because the Jews were generally mistaken in other things, they probably were so in this. Now I shall endeavour to shew, what you do not seem to be at all aware of, as you have not even adverted to it, in what manner this mistake of the Jews makes for my argument, and against yours.

We agree that the Jews were mistaken in their expectation of a temporal prince in their *Messiah*, and that the apostles themselves were under the same mistake till the day of *Pentecost*. But an obvious consequence of this is, that, having no suspicion of their Master being any thing more than a man, such as *David*, whose descendant he was, had been, nothing that they say before that event could imply that they thought him to be more than a man; and this entirely destroys the force of your boasted argument, from the short exclamation of *Thomas*, "My Lord and my God." For the resurrection of his Master, however unexpected by him, could be no proof to him, or to any person, that he was God. Otherwise, the resurrection of *Lazarus* would prove *him* to

* Probably Mr. Miller. See *supra*, p. 219.

† *Reply*, p. 89. (P.)

be God. It only shewed the power of God in such a miracle; and to this power the resurrection of Jesus was always ascribed by the apostles ever after. To express his satisfaction with respect to the identity of Jesus, and the power of God in raising him from the dead, was all that *Thomas*, by your own concession, could possibly mean. Indeed, his words make no proper sentence. He does not say, and could not, in his state of mind, think, that his Lord and his God was the same person.*

This concession equally invalidates your argument from what Jesus at any time said to the Jews of his being the Son of God. "Do you not know," you say, "that the Jews took up stones to stone Christ himself for saying what they supposed, and rightly supposed, implied that he was God? Do you not know that they frequently charged him with blasphemy? Do you not know that it was under this charge, brought for the very doctrine that I maintain, that they at last actually put him to death?" †

If on these occasions Jesus actually said what would amount to a confession that he was God, is it not extraordinary that his disciples, and especially the apostles, who put entire confidence in all his declarations, and who were predisposed to rejoice in any circumstance that tended to magnify him, did not understand him, but continued in perfect ignorance of his pretensions till the day of *Pentecost*; especially if he had been publicly tried and condemned for asserting his divinity? Could a public sentence of a court of justice, the highest in the country, founded upon a man's own confession, have been unknown to any person in the country, much less to his own disciples, who were so much interested in every thing relating to him?

These, Sir, are strange and most improbable suppositions. Could any one in *Judea*, and especially one so obnoxious as Jesus was to the chief rulers, who wanted nothing but a plausible pretence for putting him to death, have escaped being stoned in any place where he could have been found, after seriously pretending to be God their maker? Consider, besides, the apology that he made for his language, *John* x. 35, 36: "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came," (meaning, probably, magistrates, who are sometimes so called,) "and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of

* See, on *John* xx. 28, Vol. XIII. pp. 378, 379.

† *Reply*, p. 114. (P.)

God?"* Do you think that he used any artifice on this occasion, and that, finding he had gone too far, he wished to explain away what he had really meant, contenting himself with saying that he was only "the Son of God," a declaration which had been made from heaven at his baptism, † and which, therefore, was probably well known to the people in general? This, besides, is a title which the apostle John gives to all the disciples of Christ. *John* iii. 2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

You must surely know, that with the Jews the crime of *blasphemy* was not confined to a man's pretending to be God. No such crime could ever have been thought of. Blasphemy was punishable with death by the laws of *Moses*, but surely this could not have been the meaning of it by him, for it could not have been thought to affect any person that was in his senses. Were not *Stephen* and *Paul* charged with blaspheming; but was their supposed blasphemy their pretending to be God?

Jesus was evidently condemned to die for pretending to be the *Messiah*, which they thought, or affected to think, a blasphemous presumption. That this was the precise meaning of Jesus, is evident from the language of his confession. The question put to him was, (*Matt.* xxvi. 63,) "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God;" not whether he himself was God. And after answering in the affirmative, he added, "Nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven," which, in the opinion of all his judges, was characteristic of the *Messiah*. ‡ Agreeable to this was their accusation of him to *Pilate*, viz. that he made himself "the king of the Jews," and not that he had ever pretended to be God.

Consider also in what manner, and on what grounds the Jews insulted Jesus as he hung on the cross. *Luke* xxiii. 35: "And the people stood beholding, and the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others, let him save himself, if he be Christ the chosen of God." This clearly shews the ground, and the extent, of the charge that was brought against him. For had he ever pretended to be God, and especially if he had been condemned on that account, would not that have been mentioned on this occa-

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 255, 256.

† *Matt.* iii. 17. See Vol. XIII. pp. 26. 27.

‡ See *ibid.* p. 343.

sion as infinitely more presumptuous and blasphemous than merely pretending to be the *Messiah*? He was insulted also by one of the malefactors, who was crucified along with him, but only on the same account. *Ver.* 39: "And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us."

The Jews thought it blasphemous to pretend to forgive sins, thinking it was a power that God had never given to man, and therefore that to pretend to be possessed of it was blasphemous. But Jesus seems to have satisfied his captious audience by working a miracle in vindication of the propriety of his language, and by the words of his answer, which implied that it was only saying in other words that the sick man should be restored to health, and calling himself "the Son of man." *Matt.* ix. 4—6: "And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then sayeth he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine own house."* The phrase *son of man*, whatever be the meaning of it, does not signify God.

You say, "I cannot mistake in saying that you hold with me that no Being except God can forgive sin."† I also say, that no Being except God can work a miracle; but God might empower you or me, either to work a miracle, or to declare a man's sins to be forgiven, a prophet being nothing more than the instrument, or the mouth, of God in the case. Jesus always acknowledged, not only that he could "do nothing of himself," but that the *words that he spake were not his own, but the Father's who sent him*. "As the Father gave me commandment," says he, "so I do."‡

For the same reason, Christ being thought to be the *Immanuel* of *Isaiah*, could not be understood by the Jews, or the disciples of Jesus, to be a prediction that the *Messiah* would be God, an argument on which you lay much stress. § This was the name of a child in the time of *Isaiah*, and though applied to Jesus, could no more be understood to signify that he was God, than that any other person whose name ended in *el*, which signified God, or that contained in it any other known name of God, was therefore God. Names were given by the Jews to denote any extraordinary circum-

* See Vol. XIII. p. 103.

† Reply, p. 104. (P.)

‡ See, on *John* v. 19, vii. 16, xiv. 24, Vol. XIII. pp. 165, 211, 316.

§ Reply, p. 89. (P.)

stance relating to the children themselves, or the times in which they were born. Thus because God had promised to appear in the deliverance of the land of *Judah*, when it was invaded by the kings of *Israel* and *Syria*, this name was given by way of assurance to Ahaz, that God would be with them, and therefore that they had nothing to fear.* *Ishmael* signifies, "God that hears;" *Eli*, "my God;" *Elijah*, "God and Lord;" *Elisha*, "God the saviour," and *Gabriel*, "the power of God;" but was it ever thought that any of these men, or that this angel, was God? Why, then, should the name *Immanuel* imply it?

Dr. Blayney, an English divine as orthodox as yourself, ingenuously gives up this argument for the divinity of Christ, in his note on *Jer.* xxiii. 6, which we translate, "And this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness;" and which he renders, "And this is the name by which Jehovah shall call him, Our righteousness." Upon this he says, "I doubt not but some persons will be offended with me for depriving them by this translation of a favourite argument for proving the divinity of our Saviour from the Old Testament. But I cannot help it. I have done it with no ill design, but purely because I think, and am morally sure, that the text as it stands will not properly admit of any other construction. The LXX. have so translated before me, in an age in which there could not possibly be any bias of prejudice either for or against the before-mentioned doctrine; a doctrine which draws its *decisive* proofs from the New Testament only." From this it is evident that he does not lay the stress that you do on the word *Immanuel*. †

The ignorance of the Jews concerning the divinity of their *Messiah*, also invalidates your argument for it from any person being said to "fall down and worship him;" besides that it is well known that this expression only means stooping so low as to kiss the hem of a person's garment, or, at most, prostration on the ground before him. Otherwise, *David* must be concluded to be God, as well as the Supreme Being to whom he prayed. For after his prayer it is said, (1 *Chron.* xxix. 20,) "And all the congregation blessed the God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king." The worship, therefore, that the angels of God are said to pay to Jesus, on which you lay stress, can mean no more than their acknowledging him to be their superior, not that he was their God.

* See, on *Isaiah* vii. 15 16, Vol. XII. pp. 159, 160.

† See *ibid.* pp. 230, 231, Note ¶.

Since we agree in opinion that the apostles considered Jesus as a mere man, though a distinguished prophet, till the descent of the Spirit on the day of *Pentecost*, I would ask how it appears that, even *after* that event, they thought more highly of him? *Peter*, in his speech on that occasion, calls him (*Acts* ii. 22) only "a man approved of God, by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him," and [ver. 24] "whom God hath raised up." The many converts, therefore, that he made by that speech, must have all been *Unitarians*. For it does not appear that he gave them any information concerning the superior dignity of their Master.* Nor does it appear in all the *Acts of the Apostles*, that this communication was made to any of them. And surely a circumstance of so extraordinary a nature must have excited the greatest attention.

Would not the Jewish rulers, if this had been known to *them*, (and if it had been the opinion of the Christians in general, they could not have been ignorant that it was so,) have been shocked and offended beyond measure at it, as much as if they had heard it from Jesus himself before his death; and would not the whole body of Christians have been exclaimed against, and considered as blasphemers, on that account? But though we well know from this history, all that the unbelieving Jews objected to the Christians in that age, this is never mentioned. They only denied that Jesus was the *Messiah*, and questioned the truth of his resurrection. Would not an opinion of this extraordinary kind have occasioned some discussion and controversy even among the Christians themselves, at least as much as the question about the admission of the Gentiles into their churches; and we see by this that it was no easy matter for the apostles themselves to give them satisfaction with respect to any thing that shocked their prejudices. The new converts, who must have been instructed in the principles of Christianity before they were admitted to baptism, must, if the apostles did not studiously conceal it from them, have been informed of this article of Christian faith; and would none of them have been startled, and have objected to a thing so abhorrent to their previous notions and prejudices? And yet we do not find that it was so much as noticed by any of them. When the eunuch was converted and baptized, all that *Philip* required of him was, (*Acts* viii. 37,) to con-

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 393, 394.

fess that Jesus was "the Son of God," by which was only meant the *Messiah*. *

The doctrine of the divinity of Christ is now the principal objection of all the Jews against Christianity. Why did they not urge it before as well as now, and especially when it was first advanced, and therefore must have struck them more than it can do now? In fact, this prominent objection to Christianity does not appear to have been made to it by any Jew till many years after the age of the apostles. But since that time it has ever been uppermost with them, as it is with all the *Mahometans*, and was so from the time of *Mahomet* himself.

You think that Stephen considered Christ as God, when (*Acts* vii. 59) he called upon *God*, "saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." But if this doctrine was known to *Stephen*, it must have been so to all the Christians, and could he only have given any intimation of his holding it? And what follows from any person seeing Jesus in vision, and, being about to die, requesting him to receive his *last breath*, which was an ancient custom with particular friends? † Besides, the accusation and condemnation of *Stephen* were upon quite other grounds. The charge against him was simply this (*Acts*. vi. 13, 14): "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us." Here is nothing said about his asserting that Jesus was God, which would have appeared to his judges infinitely more blasphemous than any thing that they alleged against him.

If the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was not communicated to the apostles before the day of *Pentecost*, the words of Jesus in his commission to baptize, (*Matt*. xxviii. 19,) on which you lay so much stress, ‡ viz. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," could not imply this. The meaning could only be an initiation into that religion which was the gift of God by Jesus Christ, and confirmed by miraculous powers. For, that the term *Holy Ghost* is, as you say, another name of God, I do not admit.

Hilary, whom you quote as a defender of the highest doctrine of the Trinity, interprets this last as the *Unitarians* do; viz. as signifying a confession "of the Father, of the

* See Vol. XIII. p. 421.

† See *ibid*. p. 415.

‡ *Reply*, p. 103. (P.) See Vol. XIII. p. 385.

Only-begotten, and of the Gift," which very much resembles what *Irenæus* says on the subject. *

You say, that "I cannot, any more than the Jews, give a just, or even a plausible, exposition of the question which Jesus put to the Jews, (*Matt.* xxii. 45,) 'If David called him Lord, how is he his Son?'" † Now really, Sir, I see no difficulty at all in the *Socinian* interpretation of it. All that the Jews expected in their *Messiah* was, that he would resemble *David*, be a temporal prince as he was, and rescue them, as he had done, from the power of their enemies; in which respect they could not suppose him to be superior, or much so, to *David*. On what account he was to be superior to *David*, Jesus does not say; but surely he might be his superior without being God. Jesus himself was greatly superior, on the *Socinian* hypothesis. Did *David* act, as Jesus did, by an immediate commission from God? Did he work the miracles that Jesus did? And is he to return, after being raised from the dead, and ascending to heaven, to judge the world? And yet all this may be done without his being himself God, if he was only authorized and inspired by God to do it. *David* himself will be judged by this son of his, as well as you and I. You see, then, that whatever you may imagine, we find no difficulty at all in the interpretation of this passage. Whether it will appear so to you, does not much concern us. We satisfy ourselves.

You greatly boast of the great number of texts that you could produce in support of your hypothesis, which, you say, "in numerous, direct, and unequivocal passages, assert that Christ is God; and, what is much more to the point, ascribe to him acts and attributes which cannot without blasphemy be arrogated by any creature." ‡ These texts, however, as you have not recited them, I consider as soldiers on a muster list, which never appear in the field. But many persons, without seeing any of the texts themselves, will take your assertion for granted, without any examination at all. In my opinion your direct texts are none, and your plausible ones very few, and all these our readers may find explained in the easiest manner upon Unitarian principles, in my "Familiar Illustration of certain Passages of Scripture," § a small and cheap pamphlet, reprinted in this country by

* "Baptizari jussit in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti: id est in confessione et authoris, et unigeniti et doni." Lib. ii. p. 22. (P.)

† *Reply*, p. 92. (P.) See Vol. XIII. p. 290.

‡ *Reply*, pp. 82, 97.

§ Vol. II. pp. 430—488. See *supra*, p. 5.

Mr. Dobson, together with my "Appeal to the serious and candid Professors of Christianity,"* on the subjects in controversy between us, to which I am glad that you have given me this opportunity of directing our readers; as also to another small pamphlet of mine, entitled "A General View of the Arguments for the Unity of God, and against the Divinity and Pre-existence of Christ, from Reason, from the Scriptures, and from History."†

What offends you particularly is my saying, and I now repeat it, that there is abundant evidence that the opinion of the perfect equality of the Son to the Father was unknown at the Council of *Nice*, and not admitted by *Athanasius* himself. To this you and your learned friend reply by appealing to the *Creed of Athanasius*, and the sentiments of *Hilary*. But if you maintain that this creed, though ascribed to *Athanasius*, was really written by him, you are, I will venture to say, absolutely singular; as it is given up by all who pretend to scholarship in Europe, the most orthodox, as well as others. The *Benedictine* editors of the works of *Athanasius* place this creed among the spurious articles ascribed to him. *Cave*, the most learned in ecclesiastical history of any writer in England, says of this creed, "That this is no genuine work of *Athanasius* is evident; because neither *Athanasius* himself, nor any succeeding writer before *Theodulph* of *Orleans*, makes any mention of it, nor was it received by the church before A. D. 1000, or much noticed till it was produced by the ambassadors of *Gregory IX.*, in A. D. 1233, in a disputation at *Constantinople*, when the authority of *Athanasius* was appealed to." He adds, "That it was probably composed by *Vigilius Tapsensis* in Latin; that it was afterwards translated into Greek, and was long hid in the archives of churches. This," he says, "is the more probable, as *Theodulph* cites this creed from those works ascribed to *Athanasius* which are now certainly known to have been written by *Vigilius*."‡

Very fortunately, my copy of the works of *Athanasius*, which is that of *Paris* A. D. 1627, escaped the Riots of *Birmingham*, and I find in them passages clearly inconsistent with your opinion of the equality of the Son to the Father. In a confession of faith, written on occasion of the Councils of *Ariminum* and *Seleucia*, § he says, "We do not say that the Son

* Vol. II. pp. 381—416.

† *Historia Literaria*, I. p. 196. (P.)

‡ Vol. XVIII. pp. 513—519, 527—535.

§ See Vol. VIII. pp. 357—362.

is unbegotten (*αγενητον*) like the Father, and without origin, (*αναρχον*, *) but that he had his origin from being begotten by the Father; for God is the head of Christ."† He farther says in the same piece, "We piously believe that the omnipotent God and Lord begat his Son voluntarily and spontaneously, (*εκουσιως και εθελοντην*,) believing what he himself says, The Lord created me in the beginning of his ways."‡ Does this, Sir, imply an opinion of the Son's equality to the Father, when it is evident that as, in his opinion, the Father produced the Son of his own mere will, he must have thought that, if he had pleased, he might have had no Son at all? I would advise you and your learned friend to look into my *fabulous* "History of Early Opinions," where you might have found this passage, § and many others of which you seem to have little knowledge or suspicion.

With respect to your boasted authority from *Hilary*, you say, "Now it unfortunately happens, that Hilary was characteristically a zealous defender of the orthodoxy of Athanasius, and the Council of Nice." || And so, Sir, are you, and your authority is as much to the purpose as his. The Council of *Nice* was held A. D. 325; ¶ but *Hilary* flourished in A. D. 354. According to *Baronius*, Hilary was made bishop of Poitiers about A. D. 355. For his opposition to the *Arian* doctrine, which prevailed in the time of *Valens*, he was banished to *Phrygia*, and it was in this exile, which continued five years, that he wrote his work on the Trinity.** How then can his opinion be any proof of the doctrine that prevailed at the time of the Council of Nice?

With equal confidence, and no more truth, you boast of the prevalence of your principles, notwithstanding my endeavours, and those of others, to overturn them. You say, "Your *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* has lately fallen from the gigantic grasp of Horsley, crushed into annihilation;" †† and "your trumpet has been long sounded; but be assured that in this country your trumpet shall never be blown in triumph." ‡‡ You, Sir, appear to be little acquainted with the state of things in *England*. You would never else have said that I had felt the grasp of your champion *Horsley*, but rather that he had felt mine, and that on this account he shrunk from the controversy, refusing even

* The word in my edition is *αυτον*; but the sense evidently requires *αναρχον*, and so the Latin translator understood it. (P.)

† *Opera*, I. p. 879. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 893. (P.)

§ Vol. VI. p. 242.

|| *Reply*, p. 112. (P.)

¶ See Vol. VIII. p. 294.

** *Cave's Historia Literaria*, I. p. 213. (P.)

†† *Reply*, p. 84. (P.)

‡‡ *Ibid.* p. 82. (P.)

to read my "History of Early Opinions."* I am confident that my works are much more read, and with far more effect, than his. It cannot be denied that the number of *Unitarians* in England has been much increased since the commencement of my controversy with him, and, according to my information, they continue to increase far beyond what I ever expected.

In this country there are more *Unitarians* than you seem to be aware of. But, surely you must have known that in the eastern states there are several congregations professedly Unitarian. At *Boston*, my *fabulous* "History of the Corruptions of Christianity," and other works of mine, have been reprinted. In *Philadelphia* the number of Unitarians is not inconsiderable, and if they would unite, and form a society, † they would appear respectable. Even in this place I found some *Unitarians*, and you may suppose their numbers are not lessened since I came hither. There is in this place another *Unitarian* preacher besides myself, and his audience is always pretty large. Judging from present appearances, I have no doubt but there will be a considerable increase of Unitarians in consequence of this controversy, and that all your endeavours to prevent it will only add to what you lament as the mischief that has been done.

I cannot help smiling when you say, that "the doctrine of the Trinity is not incredible, that in it there is nothing impossible, nothing contradictory, and, considering the great end to be answered by it, nothing improbable. The orthodox faith, therefore, I do verily think, is not only truer and safer than yours, but much more easy to be received." ‡ But, Sir, let the two schemes be proposed to a *Jew* or a *Mahometan*, or to any person that is not a Christian. While you maintain that the three persons in your *Trinity*, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Spirit*, have each of them, separately considered, all the attributes of divinity, you certainly believe in *three Gods*, a doctrine which I would not receive on the authority of *Paul*, or of *Jesus* himself. And when you say that these *three*, call them *Persons*, or by whatever name you please, are *one*, it is as evident a contradiction, and an absurdity, as can be imagined; as much so as that the three persons of *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, having each of them all the properties of humanity, are nevertheless not *three* men,

* See Vol. XVIII. p. 298, XIX. p. 12.

† As they have since done. See Vol. XV. p. 490, *Note*.

‡ *Reply*, p. 107. (*P*.)

but *one* man. This, Sir, is not the whale swallowing *Jonah*, but absolutely *Jonah* swallowing the whale.

There cannot possibly be any difference between these two cases. If all the properties of humanity make a man, all the attributes of divinity must make a God; and therefore if three, or three hundred persons, having each of them the properties of humanity, make three or three hundred men, the same number of persons possessed of all the attributes of divinity, must make the same number of Gods. And should you be able to find ever so many texts of scripture from which you should infer ever so clearly that there was this multiplicity of Gods, I should think myself authorized to say, without any examination of them, that there must be a mistake either in the texts, or in the interpretation of them; since the sacred writers could never really mean to teach a doctrine so repugnant to the uniform tenor of their writings; and so evidently contradictory to one on which they always lay the greatest stress, viz. that of the *Divine unity*.

I wish, Sir, you had mentioned any of the *ends* to which you allude as answered by these strange doctrines, equally inconsistent with reason and the Scriptures. Is not the one God and Father of all equal to every thing that is ever ascribed to divinity? Is he not our creator, our preserver, and our redeemer also? And though no man can of his own authority forgive sin, surely God himself can, and this he repeatedly declares that he will do, and without any reference to an atonement or satisfaction. Is not his example in this very respect recommended to us? Are we not required to *forgive as we ourselves are forgiven*? But this leads to another subject, the last that I shall touch upon, and that will be very briefly.

SECTION III.

Of the Doctrine of Atonement.

“AN atoning sacrifice for sin appears to us,” you say, “to have been necessary.”* But, Sir, why necessary if God can forgive sin without it? And we think it would be a degradation of the character of the Deity to require it, and inconsistent with his acknowledged attribute of *mercy*. For what would be left of his moral character but strict *justice*, if for

* *Reply*, p. 128. (P.)

every offence committed against him he received a sufficient satisfaction? And yet the mercy of God is the constant theme of *David*, and all the saints of the *Old Testament*, and those of the *New* too. How many verses in the psalms end, as in a kind of chorus, with "His mercy endureth forever"!*

You appeal † to the authority of *Mosheim* for the history of this opinion. But this weighs nothing with me, who have given much more attention to the progress of this opinion, and that of many others that have a connexion with it, than he appears to have done; and I am confident that neither *Mosheim* himself, if he had been living, nor you or your learned friend, would be able to refute what I have advanced, on the most indisputable authorities, in my history of it. If your doctrine had been universally received, as you maintain that it was, in very early times, how could it have remained a question so late as the time of *Austin*, to whom the satisfaction mentioned in the gospel was made, or that it would have been so generally thought to have been made by God to the Devil, into whose power men had fallen in consequence of sin; ‡ and that though God might have rescued them out of his hands by mere power, he chose to do it according to justice, giving a fair price for what he obtained, and this price was the blood of his Son? Strange and absurd as this scheme now appears to us, it is really more plausible than yours, and more agreeable to the character of the Divine Being, who hereby sets us an example of justice and honesty.

Before your doctrine of *atonement* can be firmly established, you must answer a query originally put by the famous Mr. Penn, the founder of this state, and a zealous *Unitarian*, in his treatise entitled, "The Sandy Foundation shaken," § which is, that if Christ be God equal to the Father, why did he not require satisfaction to be made to himself as well as the Father? He must have been equally offended at the sins of men, and one of his attributes must have been justice as well as mercy. In Mr. Penn's own language, and under his title of *Consequences irreligious and irrational*, "It represents the Son more kind and compassionate than the Father; whereas if both be the same God, then either the Father is as loving as the Son, or the Son is as angry as the Father."

In the days of my ignorance I maintained the doctrine

* See Vol. XVI. p. 482.

† See Vol. V. pp. 136—138.

‡ *Reply*, p. 119. (P.)

§ See Vol. XVI. p. 483.

that you now hold. * I even left the academy with a belief of the doctrine of atonement in a qualified sense. But the first thing that I did after I became a minister, and had leisure, was to collect and write out every text in the *Old* or *New Testament* that bore any relation to this subject; and the result was the clearest conviction, which has remained to this day, that the doctrine of atonement, in every sense of the word, is as contrary to the scripture, as it is to reason. †

My MS. on this subject was shewn by a friend of mine to Dr. Lardner, but without mentioning my name, and he was so much pleased with it, that he requested leave to publish it. To this I made no objection, and accordingly he did it, giving it himself the following title: "The Scripture Doctrine of Remission, which shews that the Death of Christ is no proper Sacrifice, nor Satisfaction for Sin; but that Pardon is dispensed solely on account of Repentance, or a personal Reformation, of the Sinner." The date of the pamphlet is A. D. 1761. After this I was introduced to the Doctor as the author, and from this time I never failed to visit him whenever I went to London. Having undertaken to write the "History of the Corruptions of Christianity," ‡ and of this article among the rest, I applied to him (who was unquestionably better acquainted with the Christian fathers, than, I believe, any person then living) for assistance; but he was then old, and said he could only refer me to some passages of St. Austin, quoted by himself, as to my purpose. The last time that I saw him, I renewed my request, but his faculties had begun to fail him. However, he took down a bundle of pamphlets, and turning them over, shewed me my own; saying, "This contains my opinion." When I told him I was the writer, he shook his head, and said he took me to be Dr. Harwood. About a year after this he died, at the age of eighty-four. § This tract I reprinted, with additions, in "The Theological Repository," and I propose, if I live, to republish it, together with other articles of mine, in that work. ||

Do not boast, Sir, as you are apt to do, that learning and piety are wholly on your side. A more respectable man than Dr. Lardner, or a man more generally respected by all parties, both for his learning and his candour, never lived. It was the perusal of his "Letter on the Logos" that made

* See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 12, 13, 18; VI. pp. 30, 31; XVIII. pp. 37, 40.

† See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 31, 48.

‡ Vol. V.

§ See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 48, 49.

|| See Vol. VII.

me an *Unitarian*, but not till after his death. * For, like yourself, I was pretty tenacious of the faith in which I was originally educated, being first a *Trinitarian*, and then an *Arian*, but since, what is commonly called a *Socinian*, but more properly an *Unitarian*, as distinguished from both *Trinitarians* and *Arians*.

As, from what you say in this second Letter to me, it is not probable that I shall have another opportunity of addressing you and the public on the subject of the controversies in which I have been engaged, I wish to set you right with respect to some particulars of my history and conduct, with which you seem not to be acquainted, and you may give me what degree of credit you please.

You think that I have always had the last word in controversy, so that it is impossible to silence me. Now this has seldom been the case. It was not so in the *Unitarian* controversy in any period of it, except with respect to Bishop Horsley himself. To many others that followed him, I never made any reply; nor did I ever write any defence of my "History of Early Opinions," † confident that it does not want any.

My first tract in controversy was an answer to a most virulent attack upon my principles in general by Mr. Venn, a clergyman of the Church of England. ‡ To this he never replied; but I was so much assailed by many others of the same principles, and of various denominations, that I thought it necessary to write my "Appeal to the serious and candid Professors of Christianity," and though there were not less than ten answers to this in the first month after its publication, I never wrote a direct reply to any of them, but published my "Familiar Illustration of certain Passages of Scripture," as a general answer to all that my adversaries could say. Of the *Appeal*, not less than fifty thousand copies had been printed and dispersed before I left England, § and there were several editions of it, in different parts of England and Scotland, in which I had no concern. It is not speaking with contempt, as you do, of a publication, that will answer it, or prevent its effect.

In the various controversies in which I have been engaged, I have seldom been the assailant; what I wrote having been generally in reply to those who attacked some or other of my publications, especially my "Disquisitions on Matter and

* In 1768. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 99.

† Vols. VI., VII.

‡ See *supra*, p. 19; *infra*; Vol. XIX. p. 344. § See *supra*, pp. 3, 5, 7, Note.

Spirit,* and my "History of the Corruptions of Christianity." In this country I have engaged in no religious controversy but this with you; though Dr. Wharton wrote against me on the same subjects; and though I rejoice in the opportunity that you have given me to make my sentiments more generally known, (wishing to follow the lead of that Providence which embraces the smallest things as well as the greatest, directing both your pen and mine,) I was far from seeking or expecting any such thing.

Though I have been a preacher half a century, I never delivered one sermon that could be called *controversial*, besides that at Philadelphia; and to this I was urged by its being said that in this country I concealed my sentiments, and durst not avow them. I therefore, at the close of my Discourses of the Evidences of Revelation, preached the sermon entitled "Unitarianism explained and defended." † Before and since this all my sermons have been either practical, or in the defence of common Christianity, though I never concealed my opinions in the pulpit when any particular occasion required the mention of them, and especially in my exposition of the Scriptures. ‡

Of four of my opponents in controversy, I gained the friendship of three, before unknown to me; and with the other our former friendship was much increased, at least not at all diminished; § so that my manner of writing in controversy has not been so offensive to others as it is to you. But I never charged any of my opponents, as you do me, with "writing against light and better knowledge." I do not believe that any of them did so. Indeed, very few persons, I hope, are so abandoned as to be capable of it. Strong prejudices, especially those of early education, the force of which I have felt myself, are able to mislead the best understandings, accompanied with the best dispositions; and this Sir, I believe to be your case, and the whole of it.

As an excuse for not continuing this controversy with me, you allege the multiplicity of your ministerial duties. My duty of this kind while I was engaged in all the most important of my controversies, I have reason to think, was more extensive than yours, especially in my catechetical

* Vol. III. pp. 197—384.

† Vol. XVI. pp. 472—489.

‡ Had not Dr. Priestley been accustomed to perform this first duty of a *Christian* teacher, though now unhappily *out of fashion*, he could not have failed to preach *controversial* sermons, while he regarded Christianity as misunderstood and consequently misrepresented by the great majority of Christians.

§ This must be Dr. Price. Mr. Berington was, no doubt, one of the three.

lectures to the different classes of my younger hearers,* in the service of three of the most respectable congregations in England, viz. Leeds, Birmingham, and Hackney, all of which I left in a better condition than I found them, and with such marks of their esteem and affection, as I believe were never exceeded by any congregations to their ministers; as may appear from their addresses to me on our separation.

At the same time that I was engaged in this ministerial duty, and these controversies, I had a secondary object in *philosophy*, † as you have in *poetry*. It is also to be considered that, besides what a minister owes to his particular congregation, there is something due from him to the cause of common Christianity, which is a duty that cannot always be discharged without controversy, as you see in the conduct of many of the most eminent Christian ministers of various denominations, from the earliest times to the present; so that the allegation of your ministerial duty is no valid excuse.

I am, Reverend Sir, with real esteem, overlooking every thing unpleasant in your style of controversy, and with every good wish, especially that you may soon come to the knowledge of the great truths that you now oppose, and which (owing to early and deep-rooted prejudices) cost me much labour to acquire,

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Northumberland, November. 11, 1803.

* I made three classes of the younger part of my congregation; first to the age of ten or twelve, for whose use I composed my "*Catechism for Children and Young Persons*;" the second from ten or twelve to sixteen or eighteen, for whom I composed my "*Scripture Catechism*," [see *infra*,] the sole object of this class being an acquaintance with the Scriptures; and the third class of young persons from the age of sixteen or eighteen to thirty, beyond which I admitted none. For these I composed my *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*. [Vol. II.] These classes were generally very full. At Leeds the young men of the highest class were about forty. They were the same at Birmingham; when that of young women of the same age amounted to fifty. This course of instruction generally continued about three years.

Having been requested to give a more particular account of these catechetical lectures, and of my method of conducting them, for the instruction of others who wished to follow my example, I did it in the Preface to my Discourse on entering on the Office of Pastor to the Congregation at Hackney, printed A. D. 1791. (P.) See Vol. XV. pp. 69, (Note,) 458—461.

† Dr. Priestley's first appearance, as an experimental philosopher was in 1768, when, at the suggestion of Dr. Franklin, he published "*The History and present State of Electricity with original Experiments*." See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 80—83.

"In 1772" he published "a small pamphlet, on the method of impregnating Water with fixed Air," dedicated to the "First Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty." See *ibid.* 100—102.

ADDRESSES

TO

Protestant Dissenters.

1850

1850

A FREE ADDRESS
TO
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

The Lord's Supper;*

And a Letter to the Author of

THE PROTESTANT DISSENTER'S ANSWER TO IT.

—————
This do in remembrance of me. †

JESUS,

—————
[London, 1774.]
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PREFACE.

THE following address was first made to a particular society of Protestant Dissenters; ‡ but, as the occasion of it is by no means particular, it was thought there would be a propriety in making it more general by publication. The Protestant Dissenters, of all denominations, have certainly distinguished themselves by the noble opposition they have made to the progress of superstition, in a great variety of forms; but, like all other reformers from Popery, they have stopped too soon. Like other reformers also, they have departed too far from the principles on which they set out; and, instead of promoting the cause in which they so boldly embarked, they have rather damped that spirit which their own generous example could not fail to inspire. Nay, without considering the inconsistency of their conduct, they have, in a great measure, denied their posterity the use of the necessary means of farther reformation, by restricting that freedom of inquiry, for which they had been such strenuous advocates, when it answered their own purpose.

The views of man are always confined; and when our limited and partial ends are gained, we often can conceive no farther use of the means which were necessary to gain them. When a law, rule, or maxim of any kind favours ourselves, we can easily enter into the reasons of it, and readily approve

* First published in 1768. "The Second Edition, with Improvements," 1769.

† "Quantum est in rebus iuane!" from *Persius*, was the motto to the first and second Editions.

‡ At Leeds. See Vol. I. *Mémoires*, 96; XV. pp. 17—19.

it; but when that is no longer the case, and our adversary begins to avail himself of it, we wish the law abrogated, and, in that state of mind, can generally find reasons enow why it should be so.

Those great men who began the reformation from Popery, and those great men, also, who would have carried it farther than the imperfect state to which it has been brought in the Church of England, were, each of them, fully sensible of certain abuses, but of a certain number only. Indeed it would have been miraculous if, educated as they were, they could have been sensible of them all. We, who think we can improve upon their plan, have our *ne plus ultra* somewhere. Those reformers, therefore, of course, fancied that, were those particular abuses rectified, every thing would be right; and every advance farther than their own ideas of perfection, must have appeared to them as really an error and an abuse, as those which they had reformed: and it is certain that, in all cases, there are two extremes for one just medium. It is likewise true, that the ardour of reformation may justly be supposed to carry men too far, and that mankind do frequently pass from one extreme to the opposite. Those reformers, therefore, having gained every thing they thought desirable, had the same motives to oppose all farther reformation, which the persons they dissented from had to oppose them; and being now in the same situation, they would naturally adopt their maxims, in order, like them, to discourage all innovations.

This may serve as an apology for the conduct of those great worthies whose labours and whose risks we now enjoy, and whose human infirmities we ought therefore to bear with. But the same indulgence cannot be claimed by their successors, men who have no extraordinary merit to plead for it; but who, with the common herd of mankind, are content to be just as wise as their parents and instructors were before them. These are no more to us than the heads of the church, immediately before the Reformation, were to the first reformers. They acquiesce in a system handed down from their ancestors; we think we can improve upon that system: and there is no argument which they can allege against our attempts to improve upon it, but what hath been long ago urged against the similar attempts of those very persons on whose authority they themselves build their faith; persons with whom those arguments had no manner of weight, and whom, for that very reason, they as Protestants profess to applaud. In whatever respects we may perceive that the system in

which we have been educated retains any tincture of the errors and superstitions of Popery, and deviates from the genuine simplicity of the gospel, let us shew the vigour and spirit of our ancestors in reforming it. Like them, let us shew that we also can think for ourselves; and with the same freedom and zeal for the common cause, let us endeavour to enlighten the minds of others. Let us treat every subject of religion as we would do those of philosophy. Whenever any opinion is freely canvassed in open daylight, it will be easy to see on which side the truth lies; and may the truth equally prevail against a blind attachment to old opinions on the one hand, and as unjustifiable a fondness for innovation, on the other.

To me, I cannot help saying, it appears, that the present state of Christianity is rather critical, and very much requires to be looked into by all its real friends and sincere advocates. Men of good sense, and of cultivated minds in other respects, cannot but be aware of many things which are evidently absurd in the prevailing tenets of the far greater part of Christians; and while no real friend of Christianity has the courage to shew them, that the things they dislike and object to, do not belong to that religion, it can be no wonder that they conceive a prejudice against the whole scheme, and become secret, if not open and avowed infidels. That this is the case at this day, not with the unthinking and the profligate only, but with many persons of reading, of reflection, and of the most irreproachable conduct in life, is well known. It is also apparent, that the number of such persons is daily increasing; and unless some remedy be applied to the growing evil, we shall, in time, be in the condition of our neighbours the *Papists*, with whom the thinking men, in the church as well as among the laity, are generally infidels,* and all the unthinking are bigots.

Let us, then, sit down to a serious and impartial examination of the objections of Deists to Christianity, and by no means treat them with that contempt and insolence which they have too often met with, and which they are very far from deserving. But before we attempt the vindication of any thing, let us first consider, whether we have any occasion to vindicate it at all; that is, whether it really belong to our religion; or whether it have only been generally supposed to belong to it; for some of our defenders of Christianity,

* Dr. Priestley was confirmed in this opinion on his foreign tour, in 1774. See Vol. 1. *Memoirs*, 118; XV. p. 366.

in consequence of attempting too much, appear to me to have done nothing. It will be in vain to offer any vindication of our religion, till it be cleared of such incumbrances as would render any scheme indefensible: and I am rather apprehensive, that the prejudices of the bulk of Christians, of *Protestants*, and even of the *Protestant Dissenters*, in favour of vulgar errors, are so strong, that the times are not yet quite ripe for a completely rational defence of Christianity.

It will easily be perceived, that these reflections were not suggested by the subject of the following short treatise only. I own I had farther views. But in this instance I would willingly give an example of what, I apprehend, would be the most advantageous and successful manner of treating prejudices of long standing; which is, first, to exhibit the genuine scripture doctrine upon the subject, and then to trace the corruptions of it in an historical manner; accounting for them as well as we can, and assigning the reasons for the present prevailing opinions. I am persuaded there are persons enow, who, if they were properly encouraged, would be ready to pursue such a plan as this, with respect to several important articles.

It is the more to our purpose to begin with this subject of the *Lord's Supper*, as it affords a striking instance of the very great stress which the generality of serious Christians may lay upon an opinion, or a practice, which has clearly no manner of foundation in the gospel itself, but is most evidently a corruption of it. Let it not, therefore, be taken for granted, that every thing must be a part of Christianity which is very generally and most firmly believed to be so, and which is even considered as of the utmost importance in the scheme.

It is from no low party prejudices, that I think there is more to be expected from *Dissenters*, and Dissenting Ministers, than from Clergymen of the Church of England, in disquisitions of this kind. They may, indeed, suggest improvements, but we only have it in our power to carry them into execution. Where a great number of persons are so joined together that they must act in concert, and every individual must wait the motions of the whole body, the work of reformation must necessarily go on very slowly, if it be not totally obstructed; but the progress of it may be very rapid, where, as with us, every single society may improve their sentiments and discipline as much as they please, without troubling themselves, in the least, about the

opinions or practices of others. Having subscribed to no articles of faith, which we either openly reject, or artfully explain away, we cannot be charged with inconsistency or prevarication when we call in question received opinions; and enjoying no emolument or advantage of any kind, as the price of subscription, there is no shadow of a claim upon us to refund or relinquish any thing, when we renounce whatever we apprehend to be an error; so long as we profess the Christian religion, according as we understand it, which is all that our societies expect from us. It is readily acknowledged, that there are many things unfavourable in our situation; but let us, for that reason, make the most of what is favourable in it, and exert ourselves, in proportion to what God and the world may justly expect from us.

I do not pretend to say, that there is any thing materially new in the sentiments of this treatise, or very different from the opinion of the excellent Bishop Hoadley on the subject; * but the manner of treating it may have some advantage; and, considering the present prevailing opinions and practices relating to it, it is apparent, that another call of men's attention to this subject is not superfluous, and that enough has not been yet said upon it. The only advantage of any other nature that I can pretend to have over the good bishop is, that my circumstances do not oblige me to embarrass *my plain account* of this institution, by an attempt to accommodate it to an established mode of administration, that is, throughout, evidently founded on that very different and superstitious idea of it which I am professedly combating. †

The quotations I have had occasion to make from the fathers are copied, with little or no variation, from Lord King's "Constitution of the Primitive Church;" and therefore I have not made any reference to their own works, as I should have done, if I had examined them, or pretended to examine them myself.

* In his "Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," published *anonymously*, 1735; a sixth edition, 1761.

† See *Plain Account*, pp. 100—124, where the gross superstition encouraged by the *Communion Service* is adroitly explained away by Bishop Hoadley in conformity with the following conclusion of his Preface:

"I have here endeavoured to represent one of our Lord's *Institutions*, in its original *simplicity*; and if what I have done shall prove at all successful in removing any *error*, or *superstition*, from this part of *Christianity*, I shall esteem my pains well bestowed. The best *preservative* against the chief attempts of *Unbelievers*, I am persuaded, is to shew the *religion of Christ* to the world, as He left it: and the greatest service to *Christianity*, is to remove from it whatever hinders it from being seen as it really is in itself. Nor can I think any time more truly *seasonable* to guard against *superstition* of any sort, than when *Infidelity* is making its effort; which is ever seen to draw its main strength from the extravagancies and weaknesses of *Christians*, and not from the declarations of *Christ*, or his *Apostles*."

A FREE ADDRESS, &c.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHERN,

OBSERVING that very few, in proportion to the largeness of many of our societies, attend the *Lord's Supper*, I cannot help thinking that the neglect is owing to some general mistake concerning the proper nature and design of the institution; and I am willing to hope, that a plain and serious Address on the subject, may be a means of correcting the mistake, and induce you to reform this practice. I beg, therefore, your candid attention, while, with no more freedom than one Christian may always take with another, I endeavour to obviate the prejudices you may possibly have entertained relating to this subject. And I rejoice, that many of the societies to whom I am addressing myself, have distinguished themselves by their generous freedom in inquiring into the abuses and corruptions which have crept into Christianity, and by encouraging their ministers to shew them the way in such necessary examinations.

Without any farther introduction, I shall briefly lay before you an account of the nature and design of the *Lord's Supper*, as it may be collected from the evangelists, and from *St. Paul*; and, after this, I shall point out some of the gross abuses which have been introduced into this institution; and, at the same time, give you the best account I can collect of the causes and manner of their introduction.

SECTION I.

Of the Nature and Design of the Lord's Supper.

To give you the more entire satisfaction upon this subject, I shall fairly recite to you every thing that I find in the *New Testament* relating to it, even with the repetitions of the different evangelists. This will not take up much room, and as I shall also endeavour to take in every other consideration that can throw light upon the subject, you will by this means see, that nothing is overlooked or concealed from you.

Matthew, the first of the evangelists, and who was an eye-

witness of what he relates, says, (xxvi. 26—30,) that, as our Saviour and his apostles were eating the last passover, "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." That is, let this wine bring to your remembrance my death and sufferings. As this event completes the scheme by which sinful men are to be reformed, and restored to the Divine favour, my blood may be said (in allusion to the sacrifices under the law) to be shed for the remission of sins. "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."

Mark, who was not an eye-witness, but had his relation from those who were present at the transaction; though it is probable, he had not seen the Gospel of *Matthew*, * yet gives an account of this institution, (xiv. 22—26,) which is very nearly, the same with his. "And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them; and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many: Verily, I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives."

Had we had no other accounts of the *Lord's Supper* than these two, we could not possibly have inferred, that there was any religious institution intended. It would have appeared to have been a thing that was transacted between our Saviour and his apostles, previous to his death, but by no means to have been any thing that was to be repeated, even by them, much less by us, and all other Christians to the end of the world.

The account of *Luke*, who also had his relation from

* When the first edition of this treatise was published, [1768,] I had not seen Dr. Lardner's "History of the Writers of the New Testament." (P.) See "The question considered whether any of the first three Evangelists had seen the Gospels of the others before he wrote," *Lardner*, VI. pp. 223—233.

In his *first* edition, (1768,) Dr. Priestley had said, "Mark, who was not an eye-witness, but had his relation from others, seems to have copied this account of Matthew, which he certainly had seen. You will perceive that the two accounts are almost the same, word for word."

others, advances one step farther (xxii. 14—20): “And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it to them; saying, This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

In this account we find an injunction to the apostles, at least, to repeat this rite. Our Lord says, “This do in remembrance of me;” and doing it that once only, and in his presence, could not be said to be in remembrance of him.

In the book of *Acts*, (ii. 46,) we have the first hint, that receiving the Lord’s Supper was a practice in the Christian church. It is there said, that, after the day of pentecost, the disciples, “continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” But as the account of *eating their meat* is connected with that of their *breaking bread*, we are not quite sure that the *Lord’s Supper* is referred to in this passage.

Lastly, it is in the writings of *St. Paul* that we first distinctly find, that the celebration of the *Lord’s Supper* was an established rite in the Christian church; that it was not confined to the apostles, or the apostolic age; but was to be continued till Christ’s second coming. *St. Paul* seems to have had his relation from our Lord himself in vision, and he was led to treat of the institution by some gross abuses which had crept into the manner of celebrating it; and therefore he is the more particular in his account of it.

But the first mention *St. Paul* makes of this institution, is with a view to shew an inconsistency in the conduct of some primitive Christians; who, at the same time that they joined in the celebration of it, made no scruple of partaking of the feasts which accompanied Heathen sacrifices; the partaking of the *Lord’s Supper* being a declaration of their being Christians, and the other of their being Heathens. *1 Cor.* x. 14, 16, 17, 20, 21: “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.—The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not

the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.—The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot partake of the Lord's table, and the table of devils." The whole meaning of this passage, therefore, is, that joining in idolatrous worship is the same thing as renouncing Christianity.

But the fuller and more circumstantial account which *St. Paul* gives of the *Lord's Supper*, was designed to correct a gross mistake and preposterous practice of the Greeks at Corinth relating to this ordinance. As this rite consisted of eating and drinking in remembrance, or in honour of Christ, the *Corinthians* seem to have taken it to have been something like the feasts they had been used to hold in honour of their former gods, on which occasions it was usual to eat and drink to excess; for it must be observed, that all the feasts of the *Greeks* and *Romans* were in honour of their gods, and of a religious nature: even stage plays were an appendage to the feasts of *Bacchus*. Now the Greeks, notwithstanding they termed all the rest of the world barbarians, knew nothing of the politeness and good manners of modern times. It is well known, that they seldom made their social entertainments at a common expense, on account of the quarrels they were apt to fall into about the distribution of the victuals; but most commonly met in some public room, whither every man brought his own provision; and, all eating separately, they might converse together, but could have no pretence for quarrelling with any body. It is also well known, that the *Corinthians* were, of all the Greeks, the most remarkable for their luxury and effeminacy; and it seems that in this manner of holding their common entertainments, they celebrated the *Lord's Supper*; as *St. Paul* observes (1 *Cor.* xi. 20—30): "When ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper: for, in eating, every one taketh before another" (that is, before the rest be come) "his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What! Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? I praise you not. For I have received

of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you ; that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread ; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body, which is broken for you ; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped ; saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood ; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew *forth* the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily," (that is, in the scandalous manner in which the *Corinthians* did it,) "shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." That is, they are guilty of abusing and profaning this ordinance, and the bread and wine in it, which represent the body and blood of Christ. "But let a man examine himself," that is, let him examine his real views and motives, and consider that he comes to this supper as to a remembrance of Christ, and not as to a common feast ; "and so let him eat of *this* bread and drink of *this* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation" (or, as it ought to have been rendered, *judgment*) "to himself ;" that is, he is guilty of a practice which, if he reflect, he cannot but condemn as wrong and preposterous ; "not discerning the Lord's body ;" not distinguishing the Lord's Supper from a common feast. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep ;" that is, for this reason God visited them with extraordinary sickness, which sometimes terminated in death. But even this judgment, for so scandalous an enormity, was only a fatherly chastisement of God, in order to correct this abuse. They were not condemned everlastingly for it ; for the apostle adds, [*ver.* 32,] "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." He concludes his admonition with this advice ; [*vers.* 33, 34 ;] "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another ; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home ; that ye come not together unto condemnation ; and the rest will I set in order when I come."

All the censure that St. *Paul* passes upon unworthy communicants, I would observe by the way, relates wholly to such a manner of receiving this ordinance as is no where practised at this day in any Christian country. His censures, therefore, are evidently such as no Christians at this day can justly apply to themselves.

You have now, my brethren, seen all that the Scriptures say concerning this rite of the *Lord's Supper*. How little is it, in comparison of what men have made of it!

Customs, or stated actions in memory of remarkable occurrences, have prevailed in all ages, and in all nations of the world. It is a dictate of nature, in order to keep alive a joyful remembrance of interesting events. The Divine Being himself gave countenance to it on several occasions in the course of the Jewish history; particularly by the appointment of the feast of the *passover*, in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from the destruction that came upon the Egyptians. Now, it was during the celebration of this very feast, and perhaps in allusion to it, (though we have no particular authority for this,) that Christ appointed his disciples to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him; probably choosing this most natural, cheerful, and social of all human actions, as a fit emblem of the cheerful and benevolent nature of his religion; and perhaps too, not without a view to his being recollected whenever, upon other occasions, we eat bread and drink wine; that so a grateful remembrance of the greatest benefactor of the human race, might be connected with the most common and familiar actions of our lives, and thereby habitually influence our thoughts and conversation. Alas! how has this easy and cheerful institution been debased by human superstition!

If, at the close of this representation, I be asked, *What is the Lord's Supper?* I answer, It is a solemn, but cheerful rite, in remembrance of Christ, and of what he has done and suffered for the benefit of mankind. Like other customs, which stand as records of past events, it preserves the memory of the most important of all transactions to the end of the world, even till Christ's second coming. Customs are, in many cases, the most useful records of events, as they keep alive the remembrance of them in the minds of all persons concerned in them. This custom of celebrating the *Lord's Supper* may, therefore, be considered as a proof of the most important facts relating to Christianity. If they be not true, how could this custom have arisen? Nay, this custom is the only record that Christ expressly appointed, of his death and sufferings. We no where find that he gave any orders to his disciples to write his life, and he wrote nothing himself. These histories, however, though not expressly enjoined, were provided for us in the common course of Divine Providence; and very thankful ought we to be for them;

since, without written histories, customs are apt to be perverted, and to degenerate from their original design.

If I be asked, what is the *advantage* of celebrating this rite; I answer, It is of the same nature as that which results from repeating any custom, in commemoration of any other important event; of the same nature with the celebration of the *passover*, for instance, among the Jews. It tends to perpetuate the memory of the transaction recorded by it, and to cherish a grateful and joyful sense of it. In this case, the custom tends to perpetuate the memory of the death of Christ, and to cherish our veneration and love for him. It inflames our gratitude to so great a benefactor, and, consequently, our zeal to fulfil all his commands.

The celebration of the *Lord's Supper* being, more especially, a commemoration of his *death*, it serves to remind us that we are the disciples of a crucified Master, and is therefore a means of fortifying our minds, and preparing them for every degree of hardship and persecution to which we may be exposed in the profession of Christianity. It reminds us that we "are not of this world," even as our Lord was not of it, and (*servants* not being "greater than their Lord") that we have no right to expect better treatment from the world than he met with from it. By this means it serves to keep up in our minds a constant view to the great object and end of our Christian profession, viz. *the expectation of a future life*, and to cherish the mortification to the world, and that heavenly-mindedness, which are eminently useful in fitting us for it.

On these occasions, then, more especially, let us reflect, that if in the hour of temptation we deny Christ, "he will also deny us;" that if in circumstances of reproach we be ashamed either of the profession of his gospel, or of that strictness and propriety of conduct to which it obliges us, *he also will be ashamed of us* in that great day when he shall come "in his own glory, in that of his Father, and of his holy angels;" but that if we steadily and uniformly *confess him before men*, by an unblameable life and conversation, and by proper fortitude in bearing the trials to which we may be exposed for the sake of his truth and of a good conscience, *he also will confess us before his heavenly Father and the holy angels*; so that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him, and be glorified together."

Lastly, the celebration of the *Lord's Supper* being the joint action of several persons, it strengthens our affection to the common cause, to one another, and to all who are engaged in it. If you expect more than this, with respect to your-

selves or others, your expectations are unreasonable, enthusiastic, and sure to be disappointed.

If I be asked, *by whom* this rite must be celebrated; I answer, by all professing Christians who are arrived at years of discretion, and whose lives are such as give no just reason to question their sincerity. In nothing that I have read to you, (and I have read to you every thing that relates to it in the *New Testament*,) can you find any other qualification required; and therefore, what right have Christians at this day to insist upon any other? The utmost that can fairly be inferred, by any just consequence from the nature of this ordinance, is, that since the custom is peculiar to Christians, it may be considered as an open declaration of a man's Christianity. The language of it will then be this: *By joining in this solemn action in remembrance of Christ, I declare myself a Christian, and resolve, by the grace of God, to live and die as becomes a Christian;* for a resolution to behave as becomes a Christian, is the necessary consequence of an honest man's declaring himself to be one. A previous declaration of a man's being a Christian, made either to the minister, or to the congregation, is by no means necessary, but may be expedient with respect to those persons who may be suspected of a design to impose upon them. Were the nature of the institution universally understood, and no imposition intended, this action itself would be the declaration, and a more significant and solemn one than any other.

It is not, my brethren, a declaration of any extraordinary degree of sanctity that you make when you attend the *Lord's Supper*. It is professing no more than you do whenever you say you are Christians. At the most, it is only a more solemn declaration of the same thing. If other persons, who have entertained different notions of the *Lord's Supper*, will imagine that you profess more, you are not answerable for their superstition. But let me seriously admonish you, that you are answerable for your own: and one of the most effectual methods of curing superstition in others, is to shew that we are not influenced by it ourselves. While men of known sense and understanding, and, at the same time, men of uprightness and integrity, refrain from the *Lord's Supper*, the common people will imagine, that those men of sense have a very high idea of the sanctity of this ordinance, that they do not think themselves good enough to come to it, and therefore dare not do it. Let your practice, my brethren, satisfy all such persons that they are mistaken. This may make them begin to reflect, and help them to discover their own mistakes about it: otherwise you are guilty of

confirming the superstition of numbers who, by a contrary conduct of yours, might come to think more rationally, first in this, and afterwards in other things too.

Let it be considered also, that the only opinion which is declared by receiving the *Lord's Supper*, is, that Christ is a teacher sent from God; that is, it is a profession of a man's being simply a Christian, and not of his attachment to any particular sect or denomination of Christians. There could, therefore, be no reason, originally, why a man should refuse to make this declaration in any place, or upon any occasion; that is, why he should scruple to join in this ordinance with any set of persons professing Christianity. But since the receiving of the *Lord's Supper* along with any particular sect of Christians, is generally considered as a declaration of a man's belonging to that sect, and embracing the peculiar tenets of it; this kind of communion will, by many, be deemed a criminal compliance, and inconsistent with his general principles and conduct: and a person of strict integrity, and who has a proper regard to the sentiments and even prejudices of others, will not only consider what is the *proper* language of his actions, but what will, *in fact*, be the language of them in the opinion of others. It is the *received* acceptance of actions, as well as of words, that ought to be regarded by those who use them. Besides, it becomes every person who has a just regard for the honour of religion, to bear his testimony against so base a prostitution of its rites, as making them a qualification for a civil office; and there is no doing this to any purpose, but by refusing to comply with those terms, whatever be the consequence.

Notwithstanding the *Lord's Supper* be properly a profession of a man's being simply a Christian; Christianity in general, and this institution of it in particular, may be so corrupted, that a sincere Christian ought in conscience to refrain from joining in the celebration of it. In the Church of Rome, the service is so conducted, that I believe it is impossible to communicate without being guilty of idolatry. A Protestant, therefore, might as well burn incense to an idol, as receive the eucharist at the hands of a Romish priest.

You say, must not the minister, or the congregation, inquire into the life and conduct of a person, before he be admitted to communion with them? * I answer, that every Christian society hath a clear right to refuse admission to those whom they believe not to be Christians, and those

* In the first and second Editions was the following sentence: "I answer, frankly, that I find no such authority committed to any minister, or congregation. Men

whose conduct is such, as gives just reason to question their sincerity, though in words they profess themselves such; as also, those who are guilty of such vices as are a scandal to human society, and which, according to the judgment of *St. Paul*, will justify excommunication: but let it be noted, that, according to the practice of the primitive church, no person was excluded from the Lord's Supper who was not formally excommunicated, and at the same time excluded from their public assemblies, as well as the *Lord's Supper*; being considered as persons unfit for their society or company. Since the consequence of excommunication was exclusion from their religious assemblies altogether, I do not see that they had any idea of the Lord's Supper being more sacred, solemn, or awful than any other part of the service. The idea of such a difference in those ordinances, as could lead them to think there might be a propriety in attending upon the one, and not upon the other, may, therefore, be concluded to have been of later origin, and consequently to have arisen from something else than the genuine principles of Christianity. It was a long time before there was any such idea as excommunication from the *Lord's Supper* only.

If I be asked, whether it be not hazardous for a person of a dubious or indifferent character, to receive the Lord's Supper; I answer, you may judge for yourselves, by considering, that receiving the Lord's Supper is the same thing as standing up in the face of the world, and saying, I am a Christian. This declaration, certainly, implies an obligation to live as becomes a Christian; and therefore, if the person who makes it be a bad man, he will be more inexcusable than if he had not been a Christian, and could not have made that declaration; but if a man be, in fact, a Christian, the obligation to a Christian-like behaviour is much the same, whether he declare his belief of Christianity before the world, or not. The one is only a more solemn or *formal* thing than the other, but precisely of the same nature. They differ only in this, that in one case I express my sentiments by an *action*, or ceremony, and in the other by *words* bearing the very same construction. It cannot be said that they differ so much as a common assertion, and an oath; which, however, are both, in a manner, of equal obligation upon an honest man. Besides, coming in

are directed to *examine themselves*, (though then only with regard to their views in receiving it, in order to distinguish this ordinance from a common meal,) but the minister is not directed to examine them; and we must not go beyond our commission."

a constant way to a place of Christian worship may be called a declaration of a man's being a Christian, and therefore lays him under the same obligation. You, therefore, who are afraid to receive the *Lord's Supper*, have the same reason to be afraid to attend public and Christian worship, provided you really join in it. Both actions are declarations of your being Christians, and of your obligation to live as becomes such; and the one is just as hazardous as the other.

If there had been any thing particularly hazardous in receiving the *Lord's Supper*, more than in joining in other religious exercises; I cannot help thinking that our Lord would, himself, have given some intimation of it, at the time of the institution. But nothing of this kind occurs. I also cannot think, that, if the apostle *Paul* had solemnly warned the *Corinthians* of this danger, when he first preached the gospel among them, and, no doubt, administered the Lord's Supper too, they could ever have fallen into that very indecent and irreverent method of conducting the service. Nay, I cannot conceive how this abuse could have arisen, if the primitive manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper had not made it something more like a cheerful entertainment, than it doth among any sect of Christians that I am acquainted with at present. But our more decent and frugal method is better calculated to prevent abuse.

If I be asked, whether particular *preparation* be not necessary to receiving the Lord's Supper; I answer freely, that I apprehend nothing more is necessary, than to coming to public worship in an ordinary way. This act of religion only requires that serious and composed state of mind, which is a temper that a good man (who never indulges himself in criminal excesses) habitually carries about with him; and supposes only that due sense of the nature of what we are about, which may always be recollected at once, without particular preparation. And it is well known, that the primitive Christians of the first centuries received the Lord's Supper every Lord's-day, as a part of their common worship.

Some argue the propriety of preparation for the *Lord's Supper*, from its analogy to the Jewish passover, of the preparation for which we read, *John* xix. 14. But this is the only place in which "the preparation of the passover" is mentioned; and as *Mark* (xv. 42) calls the same day the *preparation of the Sabbath*, it probably referred to this, and not to the *passover*. Besides, that day did not precede the day on which the passover was eaten. Our Lord had eaten it the day before.

SECTION II.

The Qualifications of Communicants more particularly considered.

ABOUT the time of the first planting of Christianity, the grossest vices were exceedingly prevalent in all the Gentile world; and according to the testimony of *Josephus*, the Jews were not less abandoned. The picture that St. Paul draws of them both, towards the beginning of his epistle to the *Romans*, is indeed shocking.*

Now it can hardly be supposed, that when persons of these characters, and who had formed these habits, embraced Christianity, (upon the conviction that Christ was a teacher sent from God,) their hearts and lives were instantly, that is, miraculously, changed. An excellent parable of our Saviour leads us rather to consider the reception of Christianity as the receiving of seed into the ground, which requires time and cultivation before it bring forth fruit. Agreeably to this, Dr. Lardner supposes, that when sinners were exhorted to *believe and be saved*, the meaning was, that, in consequence of embracing Christianity, they would be instructed in the true way of salvation; and that, by attending to its great motives, and habitually observing its precepts, they would in time attain to salvation; † and not that they would immediately obtain the true gospel salvation, or have their sins actually forgiven, so as that they would have been received into heaven, if they had died the moment after their being converted and baptized.

The precepts and motives of the gospel are of themselves sufficient (with the usual blessing of God upon our endeavours) to engage men to forsake their vices, and to practise virtue. Indeed the contrary supposition would be a reflection on the wisdom of God, representing him as having provided a means not adequate to the end he proposed to gain by it. If all the conversions were, strictly speaking, miraculous, and the change of heart and life which followed the conversion, miraculous too, the Divine wisdom (which we so much admire, both in adapting the evidences of the gospel to the minds of men, and in adapting its precepts and motives to

* See *supra*, pp. 198, 199. † See his Sermon on *Acts* xvi. 31, *Works*, X. p. 228.

work upon their hearts) would have been in vain. Where would be the wisdom of adapting the organization of a seed to the soil in which it is sown, if, after all, it could not grow without such a divine interposition as would have produced the same effect without any such previous fitness of the one to the other?

If, therefore, there be any such thing as the wisdom of God in the works of nature and providence; and if, consequently, the motives of the gospel produce a change in the hearts and lives of men, by their natural fitness to answer that purpose, it must always (except God were pleased to work a miracle similar to healing the sick or raising the dead) have been a gradual thing. And if, upon a man's professing to believe in Christ, and consequently to reform his conduct, he was admitted to Christian baptism and the *Lord's Supper*, (which I think none will deny,) many persons must have been admitted members of the Christian church in a very imperfect moral state; and, as in the parable above-mentioned, many would relapse into their former vices; though their being incorporated into a regular body, or church, of Christians, would be a great means of confirming them in their Christian faith and practice.

Now it appears to me, that no man was refused admission into the Christian church, if he professed faith and repentance, and if nothing in his conduct at that time gave just reason to suspect his sincerity; and also that no person was cut off from the society by excommunication, till his conduct, notwithstanding regular admonitions, was notoriously inconsistent with his profession, and generally such as was a scandal to the Christian name. According to the rule of our Saviour, *Matt. xviii. 15, 18*, an offence that finally ended in excommunication, was originally a sin (*εαν ἀμαρτησῃ*) of one person against another;* but, considering the great patience and forbearance which our Lord always recommended to his disciples, we cannot suppose but that it must have been some gross injury; and it must have shewn a bad disposition indeed, to persist in such injurious conduct, in spite of all remonstrances, private and public, and in contempt of the greatest church censure. The Christians at Jerusalem, indeed, made some difficulty of admitting *St. Paul* to their society, but not on account of any scruples about his moral character. Having been a notorious persecutor, they were "afraid of him, and believed not

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 198, 202.

that he was a disciple," but suspected him to be a spy. *Acts ix. 26.*

That this was the state of the Christian church in the times of the apostles, appears from their writings. They address the members of those churches to whom their epistles are directed, as *Saints* and the *peculiar people of God*, because, by embracing Christianity, they professed themselves to be such. Many of them, no doubt, were truly such; and, in a judgment of charity, the majority might be supposed to be such. But at the same time it cannot be denied, that the frequent admonitions and severe reproofs which the apostles gave them, demonstrate, that *all* the members of their societies were far from deserving the same character, and also that many of them had but a very imperfect knowledge of Christianity; and yet they are not said to have been exposed to any particular hazard in consequence of their continuing in Christian communion, and none are mentioned as being excommunicated, except in cases of very flagrant offences.

In the church of Corinth, of the members of which the Apostle Paul says that they were "sanctified," and "called to be saints" *there was so much "envying, and strife, and division," that he says, "are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" that is, as other men, or *Gentiles*, and not as Christians. (1 *Cor.* iii. 3.) "Brother *went* to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers" (vi. 6); nay they *wronged and defrauded even their brethren* (ver. 8). Speaking of his intended visit to them, he says, (2 *Cor.* xii. 20, 21,) "I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would;—lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, and lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many *who* have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they have committed." † Yet we do not find that any of them were ordered to be excommunicated, except the *incestuous person* who had married his father's wife; ‡ which was a crime, as the apostle says, "not so much as named among the *Gentiles*;" and those with whom they were cautioned "not to eat," were persons guilty of very gross vices. *Ver.* 10: "If any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner."

* 1 *Cor.* i. 2. See Vol. XIV. p. 58, Note §.

‡ 1 *Cor.* ii. 1, 5, 13. See Vol. XIV. pp. 71—73.

† See Vol. XIV. p. 192.

The ideas conveyed by all these terms are not equally offensive. Covetousness, for instance, seems to be less obnoxious than several of the rest; but when we see that these characters are ranked together, and the meaning of most of the terms is obvious, as that of *fornicator*, *idolater*, and *drunkard*, we may reasonably conclude, that the rest are to be understood as of such a *degree* of the vice, as to be pretty equally notorious and scandalous. An exceedingly covetous man, and especially one whose greediness of gain leads him to fraud and injustice, is as much a marked character, and as hateful a one, as a fornicator, an idolater, or drunkard.

When *St. Paul* was at Rome, he observed, (*Phil.* i. 15, 16,) that there were some persons in that city who preached “Christ of envy and strife,” and “of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to *his* bonds,” perhaps intending to excite his envy and jealousy, or to draw upon him the resentment of the governing powers, by their officiousness in publishing the gospel. But since the apostle says he even *rejoiced* at this, we may certainly conclude that he connived at it, and did not cause those insincere preachers to be excommunicated.

In the same epistle, (iii. 18, 19,) he admonishes the *Philippians* not to *walk* as *many* did, of whom he had frequently warned them, who, though Christians in name, (and probably in church communion,) were “enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end *was* destruction, whose God *was* their belly, whose glory *was* in their shame, *who minded* earthly things.”*

When the same apostle admonished the Christians at Colosse (*Col.* iii. 5, 7—9) to “mortify *their members that were of the earth*, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry;” and to “put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy,” with “filthy communication,” and not to “lie one to another;” vices in which he says they had “sometime walked;” † it seems evident that he supposed they were not entirely free from them at the time that he wrote. Many other instances might be produced to the same purpose, but the quotations would be tedious. ‡

In all the seven churches of Asia, there were many things much amiss. In the church of *Sardis*, which is not repre-

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 318, 319.

† See *ibid.* p. 337.

‡ See particularly 1 *Thess.* iv. 6; 1 *Tim.* vi. 3—5; *Tit.* i. 10; *James* i. 21, 26; 1 *Peter* ii. 1, 11; 2 *Peter* i. 9; 3 *John* 9, 10, and *Jude* 11. (P.)

sented as in the worst situation, it is only said, (*Rev.* iii. 4,) that there were "a few names" that had "not defiled their garments," and that were worthy to *walk with Christ*, and yet the rest are not said to have been improper members of a Christian society, nor are any of them ordered to be excluded.

We certainly, therefore, ought to make a difference between those who may be permitted to communicate with a Christian church, and those who will finally be admitted into heaven; and our real opinion with respect to the latter ought not to be our rule with respect to the former.

I would only observe farther, that it is hardly possible to suppose that the primitive Christian churches in general consisted of persons whose characters answer to our idea of *holy* and *sanctified*, when even an *elder* was required (*1 Tim.* iii. 3) to be "not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, not a brawler or covetous;" and "the deacons" [*ver.* 8] "to be not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre." * In giving directions to appoint such an order of men, (men of the first character and eminence in any of our societies,) I dare say it would be thought-altogether needless even to mention such disqualifications as these.

In *Clemens's* epistle to the *Corinthians*, we find that the spirit of faction which subsisted in St. Paul's time, had greatly increased, notwithstanding his admonitions. The people had formed a party against their ministers; and, allowing sufficiently for exaggeration in the style of *Clemens*, who wrote to them upon the occasion, we cannot but, from his epistle, conceive a very unfavourable idea of their general temper and character. †

Considering the state of the *Gentile* world with respect to virtue, I do not wonder that there were these disorders in the primitive Christian churches. It required some time for the genuine spirit of Christianity to insinuate itself into

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 130, 131.

† See the following extract from Bishop Wake's translation of that epistle, *Cap.* iii. [ed. 4, 1737, pp. 3, 4]:

"All honour and enlargement was given unto you.—From hence came emulation, and envy, and strife, and sedition, persecution and disorder, war and captivity. So they who were of no renown lifted up themselves against the honourable, those of no reputation against those that were in respect; the foolish against the wise, the young men against the aged. Therefore righteousness and peace are departed from you, because every one hath forsaken the fear of God, and is grown blind in his faith; nor walketh by the rule of God's commandments, nor liveth as is fitting in Christ. But every one follows his own wicked lusts, having taken up an unjust and wicked envy, by which, first, death entered into the world." (*P.*)

them; and I think we may find, by the epistles of *Ignatius*, and other later writings, that a better disposition generally prevailed some time afterwards, and continued till the purity of the Christian faith and discipline became corrupted.

Many persons, I believe, are influenced in their ideas concerning the proper members of Christian societies, by superstitious, and what we may call *monkish* notions of virtue and sanctity; from which the minds of few persons are entirely free; and by which they are influenced more than they will acknowledge, and indeed more than they are themselves aware of; notions that lead us to conceive very falsely concerning a truly Christian temper and conduct, and which are, in many respects, unfavourable to real virtue.

The leading idea in this kind of superstition is, that men recommend themselves to the favour of God by what gives pain and mortification to themselves. It may be traced in the maxims and conduct of the *Pharisees* and *Essenes* among the Jews,* and in the endless variety of austerities devised by different sects of Christians. We see it no less influence the conduct of many *Mahometans*, and various tribes of Heathens, particularly those who profess the religion of the *Brachmans* of Indostan.† But there is nothing of this in the spirit of the Christian religion; and nothing in the precepts or example of Christ gives the least countenance to it.

As the founders of all other religions, I believe, have distinguished themselves by the invention of some whimsical mortification, the singularity of the Christian religion in this respect is so remarkable, and so consonant to reason, that it almost amounts to a proof of its divinity. Christian virtue is an active and cheerful thing, and requires no pain or mortification, except what is necessary to break the force of bad habits, and to discontinue any sinful practices we may have been accustomed to, in order to cease to do evil and learn to do well; whereas the austerities referred to above, terminate in afflicting the body, without contributing at all to the improvement of the mind.

The doctrines of the gospel are eminently calculated to enforce the practice of virtue, especially by the revelation of a future life, to which we shall be raised at the second coming of Christ; who will render to every man according to his works. A firm belief of, and an habitual attention to, these

* See *Joseph. Antiq.* B. xviii. Ch. i. Sect. ii. iii. v.

† See Vol. XVII. pp. 244—254.

important truths, tend to give us a superiority of mind to this world, enable us to forego all the pleasures and advantages of this life, when they cannot be obtained with a good conscience, and make us to fear none of the things that we can suffer in the practise of our duty; knowing that our reward is great in heaven, and that we shall be more than recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

The operation of these principles is evident, and I believe would be much more generally efficacious, if men were not discouraged from attempting the Christian character at all, by the idea of its being something above their reach, something that requires such constant and severe spiritual exercises, as are almost inconsistent with the usual pursuits, and a tolerable enjoyment of life.

It is but an imperfect character that those who give the most attention to the principles of Christianity can attain, and we are but in a progress towards perfection; and though it behoves every man to cultivate the *virtues of the heart* with the utmost care, and by every exercise that is really adapted to promote them, because the virtues of the heart are the only ones that are of value in the sight of God, and indeed the best foundation and security for a good life; yet they are only those that may be called the *virtues of the life*, of which human, and even Christian societies can properly take notice. If we go beyond this, we have no sufficient *data* or evidence to proceed upon, and are in danger of obstructing the progress of virtue rather than promoting it.

Any person, therefore, who supports what we call a *decent character* in life, and who, if he were interrogated, would profess faith in Christ and obedience to the gospel, is a proper member of the Christian church on earth; the discipline, exercises, and various advantages of which are calculated to perfect his character, and, by degrees, to fit him for being a proper member of the church of the first-born written in heaven.

From the whole I conclude, that, if a person, at the time that he proposes himself to church communion, really intends to live as becomes a Christian, he need not have any scruple about joining in the ordinance, though he should question, or even believe, that if he should then die, he would not be fit to enter into heaven; and that his fellow-christians, if they see no reason to question his sincerity at the time, have no authority to refuse him, though they have the same idea of his state.

If we go upon other principles, and estimate a man's fitness

to be received into church communion by his fitness for heaven, it appears to me, that no man who hath the least doubt about his salvation ought to communicate. For, as the apostle argues in a similar case, (*Rom. xiv. 23.*) "He that doubteth is damned, if he eat." * Wherever religion or morality is concerned, we certainly ought not to act without the full conviction of our minds; and should refrain from acting at all, if we have any doubt concerning the propriety of our conduct; more especially in this case, where there is supposed to be very great hazard in communicating, and none at all in not communicating.

The very idea of the nature and design of the *Lord's Supper*, as it is understood by the *orthodox* Dissenters, appears to me to be utterly inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity. If we judge of the fitness of a person for church communion by his fitness for heaven, every candidate declares, in the face of the world, that he thinks himself a favourite of God, and ripe for future glory; and the church, in considering whether they shall receive him or not, are judges of his everlasting state; which implies such a degree of assurance on one side, and encourages such a spirit of haughtiness and censoriousness on the other, as appear to me not to belong to Christians, who should be clothed with humility, and judge nothing before the time; and who should least of all usurp the office of Christ, to whom that kind of judgment is committed.

If the righteous disclaim their good works at the day of judgment, can it be supposed that they will plead and proclaim them here? I should therefore think, that, to act upon this principle, and at the same time preserve any appearance of the humility of Christians, no person should, directly or indirectly, propose himself for church communion. Others should propose it to him, and if he did consent, it should be with great reluctance. For, of the two, it would be rather more decent for others to say, "Sir, we think you to be a child of God, and fit for heaven, as well as ourselves," and for him to be persuaded by them to think so well of himself, than that he should first pay himself that compliment, and then convince them that it was just.

That the idea of such a tribunal and such pretensions should have occurred to any but *Pharisees*, would surprise me, if I did not imagine that I could account for it by the history of the corruptions of Christianity. †

* See Vol. XIV. p. 254.

† See Vol. V. pp. 255, 256.

SECTION III.

Observations on the Lord's Supper being called a Sign, or Seal of the Covenant of Grace.

SOME divines have affected to call the *Lord's Supper* "a sign and seal of the covenant of grace." If by a *sign* of the covenant of grace, be meant nothing more than a *memorial* of the blessings of the gospel, I can have no objection to the term, because I suppose that this rite was expressly instituted for that purpose. When we do any thing *in remembrance of Christ*, we do it in order to take occasion from it to recollect what Christ has done and suffered for us, that he might accomplish the gracious scheme of our salvation, or our deliverance from sin and misery. Our Lord, also, calls the bread his body, and the wine his blood, apparently with a view to our recollecting, in a more especial manner, the last and most perfect instance of his love, in giving his body to be crucified, and his blood to be shed for us.

But I do not see in what sense the *Lord's Supper* can, with propriety, be called a *seal* of the new covenant, or that the Scriptures will authorize what I take to be generally understood by it. It is possible, that when divines call the Lord's Supper a seal of the new covenant, they may mean, that it was intended as an *assurance* on God's part, that he would actually confer all the blessings promised by Christ in the gospel. There is no doubt but that God *will* confer these blessings, and fully confirm every thing that our Lord has assured us he will do. Of this he has given us ample assurance, [*Acts xvii. 31.*] "in that he hath raised him from the dead." As the apostle Paul says, (*Rom. i. 4.*) he was declared to be the Son of God with power,—by the resurrection from the dead;* and *Peter* says, (*1 Epist. i. 3.*) that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead:"† and many other texts might be produced to the same purpose.

The resurrection of Christ, therefore, was properly the *seal* of the new covenant. That this rite of the *Lord's Supper* was *intended* to be that assurance, I see no evidence whatever. "This do in remembrance of me" (which words were expressly designed to inform us concerning the nature and

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 196. 197.

† See *ibid.* p. 401.

use of the institution) does not convey that idea; and the words, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood," [*Luke* xxii. 19, 20,] appear to me to have been added, in order to express on what account we are to remember him, viz. as having, by his death, accomplished the scheme of our salvation. If it were true, that the death of Christ was the seal of the covenant of grace, the Lord's Supper could only be *the memorial of the seal*, and not the *seal itself*.

When God appointed the rainbow to be a token, or assurance, that he would no more destroy the world by a flood, this use of it was declared in the clearest and strongest manner, *Gen.* ix. 12, 13: "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth," &c.*

Also at the institution of the rite of circumcision, the Divine Being, after reciting all the promises of the *Abrahamic* covenant, says to that patriarch, (*Gen.* xvii. 10, 11,) "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised—and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."† Appointments of tokens similar to these, occur in various other parts of the Jewish history, but we find nothing like this in the institution of the *Lord's Supper*.

It may be said, that the Divine Being seals or confirms to us the blessings of the gospel, while we are partaking of the *Lord's Supper*, or in consequence of our partaking of it. In other words, that, by means of this rite, God, by his especial presence, applies the benefits of the gospel, giving the worthy communicants an assurance and foretaste of the blessings of it. This I take to be the meaning of the authors of the *Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, when they say that in the sacraments, "by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers;" and that, in the Lord's Supper, "the worthy receivers are—by faith made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."‡

* See Vol. XI. p. 57.

† See *ibid.* pp. 75, 76.

‡ See "The humble Advice of the Assemblée of Divines now [1648] by authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster, concerning a Shorter Catechisme; with the Proofs thereof at large out of the Scriptures, presented by them lately to both Houses of Parliament," 1658, pp. 34–36.

But this, I apprehend, is much more than the Scriptures or experience will warrant, and the expectation of any thing of this kind I call enthusiastic, and sure to be disappointed. Eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Christ, doth not convey any such meaning. Indeed, if it were fact, that all the benefits of the new covenant were actually *sealed* and *applied*, as well as *represented* to worthy communicants, in the act, or in consequence of the act of communion, they would have such an assurance of the pardon of their sins, and of their title to heaven, as, I imagine, few persons will pretend to; and I imagine that few persons would believe them, if they should pretend to it.

Some persons may choose to make use of the language above-mentioned in a qualified sense, meaning, that their faith in Christ and all Christian virtues are rendered much more lively by the peculiar presence of the spirit of God in this ordinance. I am far from denying the influence of the spirit of God upon the minds of men, according to some established law, or rule, (that we may not suppose it to be, in the proper sense of the word, *miraculous*,) but I see not a shadow of authority, from the Scriptures, for expecting this presence at the *Lord's Supper*, more than in any other Christian ordinance.

The presence of Christ, whatever may be meant by it, is expressly promised, [*Matt. xviii. 20.*] "where two or three are gathered together in *his* name;" but it is not said, that they were to be assembled for the purpose of celebrating the *Lord's Supper*. On the contrary, I believe it is generally understood to refer to their meeting for the purpose of social prayer; and in no place whatever is there any promise made of the particular presence of God, or of Christ, in the Lord's Supper.

It is true, that the action of eating or drinking may be intended to represent our receiving and obeying the gospel of Christ, and consequently our being entitled to the blessings of it; but still this is no more than a *figurative action*, and cannot amount to more than expressing our faith in Christ, our resolution to obey his gospel, and our hope of receiving the rewards of it, in *words*; and I appeal to the experience of the most sincere Christian if he has not found every devotional feeling as lively in the exercise of prayer, as in the act, or in consequence, of receiving the bread and wine at the *Lord's Supper*.

It will not be said, on any scripture authority, that the prayers that are usually made before, or after the celebration

of this ordinance, have any peculiar advantages annexed to them.

The danger of communicating unworthily, cannot, in the nature of things, arise, except either from the indecent manner of administering and attending upon it, or the insincerity of the promises and resolutions that are implied in it, which equally affects *prayer* and partaking of the *Lord's Supper*. They are each an *explicit* or *implicit* resolution to live as becomes the gospel; and the Divine displeasure is as expressly denounced against the hypocritical worshipper, as against the unworthy communicant: nay, there are frequent declarations of the indignation with which God hears those who draw nigh to him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him; whereas we should probably never have heard of any danger of communicating unworthily, if it had not been for the scandalous abuse of this rite by the *Corinthians*.*

In no other case, therefore, have we the least authority to conclude, that this danger is of a different nature from that which arises from insincerity in prayer; and far are we from having any reason to suppose it to be greater. The one, consequently, will require just as much preparation and forethought as the other. I wish that more attention were given to both, but by no means to the one more than the other.

It is the expectation of the above-mentioned divine communications of the pardon of sin, or at least of some extraordinary supernatural influence or impressions, that, I say, is enthusiastic; and it is the expectation of some particular judgment upon unworthy communicants, more than what will fall upon insincere worshippers, that I call a superstitious fear. Dissenters, I believe, have a higher idea of the spiritual benefits of this ordinance, (though they may expect less from it as a mere *opus operatum*,) and they have more dread of the danger of attending upon it in a state of mind improper for receiving it, than the generality of the members of the Church of England; and this appears to me to be the principal reason why it is less generally attended by us. This state of things was the cause of my addressing the *Dissenters* on the subject.

* "The great uneasiness of honest Christians, upon this head," says *Hoadley*, "appears to have been founded, not upon their *actual* partaking of the Lord's Supper *unworthily*, or in a manner unsuitable to its design, without *discerning* and considering the end of it, with which alone *St. Paul* concerns himself; but upon some other sort of notions not relating to this; and the dread of partaking unworthily, in some sense, which, though unknown to *St. Paul*, and found out since his time, yet is pretended to be built entirely upon *his* doctrine laid down in this place." *Plain Account*, p. 76.

SECTION IV.

A brief History of the Corruptions of the Christian Doctrine and Practice relating to the Lord's Supper.

IN order to explain thoroughly the chief doubts and scruples which many good Christians entertain relating to this subject, I shall, in the second place, briefly point out some of the gross abuses which have been introduced into this institution: but I shall only enumerate a few, the remains of which subsist in many Christian churches since the Reformation from Popery, and are found even among us *Dissenters*.

The first new idea which was superadded to the original notion of the Lord's Supper, was that of its being a *sacrament*, or an oath to be true to a leader. For the word *sacrament* is not to be found in the Scriptures, but was afterwards borrowed from the Latin tongue, in which it signified the oath which a Roman soldier took to his general. Thus in the first century, *Pliny* reports, that the Christians were "wont to meet together before it was light, and to bind themselves by a sacrament."* This, I would observe, is but a small deviation from the original idea of the *Lord's Supper*; and though it be not the same with the true idea of it, as before explained, yet it cannot be said to be contrary to it. Afterwards the word *sacrament* came to be used by Christian writers in a very loose manner, for every thing that was looked upon to be solemn, or mysterious; and, indeed, as bishop Hoadley observes, "for almost every thing relating to religion."†

The next idea which was added to the primitive notion of the *Lord's Supper*, was of a much more alarming nature, and

* *Lardner*, VII. p. 292, *Note*. See Vol. IV. pp. 515, 533; V. p. 232.

† "The name of this *rite*, which has most prevailed, and put the others almost out of common use, is that of latest date and lowest authority, in the strict sense in which it is now used: viz. the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, and, most commonly, the *Sacrament*, without the addition of any other word: agreeably to which the partaking of it is called, receiving the *Sacrament*. And it many times so happens in religious matters, that obscure expressions get the better of the plain and simple ones; and the most modern banish out of use the most ancient.

"The word soon came to be used by the Latin writers of the Christian church (*Tertullian* and *St. Cyprian* particularly) for almost every thing under the *Old Testament* that bore any similitude to things under the *New*; and for almost every thing relating to religion, under the *New*: and this to such an excess, that *St. Cyprian* speaks of the many and great sacraments of the *Lord's prayer*." *Plain Account*, ed. 6, 1761, pp. 177, 178. See Vol. V. pp. 232, 233.

had a long train of the worst of consequences. This was the considering of this institution as a *mystery*. And, indeed, the Christians affected, very early, to call this rite one of the mysteries of our holy religion. By the term mystery was meant, originally, the more secret parts of the Heathen worship, to which select persons only were admitted, and those under an oath of secrecy. Those mysteries were also called *initiations*; those who were initiated were supposed to be pure and holy; while those who were not initiated, were considered as impure and profane; and by these mysteries the Heathens were more attached to their religion, than by any other circumstance whatever. This made the first Christians (many of whom were first converted from Heathenism, and who could not, all at once, divest themselves of their fondness for pomp and mystery) wish to have something of this nature, which was so striking and captivating, in the Christian religion; and the rite of the *Lord's Supper* soon struck them as what might easily answer this purpose.*

When this new idea was introduced, they, in consequence of it, began to exclude all who did not partake of the ordinance, from being present at the celebration of it. Those who did not communicate, were not even allowed to know the method and manner in which it was administered. *Tertullian*, who wrote at the end of the second century, defends this practice by the maxims of Heathenism. "Pious initiations," he says, "drive away the profane; and it is of the very nature of mysteries to be concealed, as those of Ceres in Samothrace."† After the introduction of the ideas of mysteries and initiations, it was an easy advance to suppose, with *Justin Martyr* and *Irenæus*, who also wrote in the second century, that there was a divine virtue in the elements of bread and wine.‡

A divine virtue being now supposed to accompany the administration of the *Lord's Supper*, and the Divine Being himself thought to be in a more especial manner present upon this occasion, there arose a custom in *France* or *Africa*, and some other places, of the communicants making their *offerings* to God; presenting, according to their abilities, bread, or wine, or the like, as the first-fruits of their increase; "it being our duty," as *Irenæus* says, "to offer unto God the first-fruits of his creatures." And this early writer applies a maxim of the Jewish law upon this occasion; for he adds, as *Moses* says, "Thou shalt not appear before the Lord

* See Vol. V. p. 233.

† See *ibid.*

‡ See *ibid.* p. 234.

empty ;' not," says he, "as if God wanted these things, but to shew our fruitfulness and gratitude unto him." *Cyprian*, who wrote in the third century, severely blames the rich matrons for their scanty oblations at these times: "Thou art rich and wealthy," says he, "and dost thou think duly to celebrate the Lord's Supper, when thou refuseth to give? Thou, who comest to the sacrament without a sacrifice, what part canst thou have from the sacrifice which the poor offer up?" These oblations were employed in the relief of the poor, and other uses of the church; * and it seems probable, that a sufficient quantity of that bread and wine was presented to the minister who officiated, to be used for the sacramental elements. In *Justin Martyr*, we find mention of a collection for the poor, made after the administration of the *Lord's Supper*. "This," he says, "was committed to the care of the bishop, who relieved therewith the orphans, and the widows, the sick, distressed prisoners, travellers, strangers, and, *in a word*, all that had need thereof." † Whether this collection was of the same nature with the offering before the administration, is not certain; however, this offering before administration remains in *the Church of England* to this day; ‡ and a collection, not only for the elements, but also for the poor (which is, in the Scriptures,

* See Vol. V. p. 239. † See Reeves's *Apologies*, (lxxxviii.) I. pp. 126, 127.

‡ In "the Offertory," which consists of "sentences" selected from the Bible, to be repeated "one or more" by the priest at "his discretion."

It is farther enjoined, "that whilst these sentences are in reading, the deacons, churchwardens, or other fit person, shall receive the alms for the poor, and other devotions of the people, in a decent bason, and reverently bring it to the priest, who shall humbly present and place it upon the holy table." *Order for the Administration*.

"Dr. Hickee, in his Preface against *the Rights*, (pp. 52, 53,) tells us," says Mr. Reeves, "That in the alterations made in the office for administering the Lord's Supper, in King Edwards VI.'s service-book, the Rubrick was left out, which commanded the minister to set the bread and wine upon the altar, as an offering; but this Rubrick was restored in the office for the Church of Scotland, [1637,] and likewise in the office of the holy communion of our present liturgy, established by the act of Uniformity, after the Restauration."

"Having justly censured the general neglect of this act, and the great indecency of having the bread and wine placed upon our Lord's table by the clerk, sexton, or perhaps some *unfitter* person: he adds, 'That this practice of the *officiating* priest's setting the bread and wine, in the sight of the people, with reverence, upon the holy table, was so inviolably observed in ancient times, that they had in their churches a *buffet* or side-board on the right or left hand of the altar, upon which a priest or deacon set the bread and wine, from whence they were carried by the deacon or priest, when there were two, to the *officiating* priest, who reverently placed them as an offering on the Lord's table.'

"This side-board for the elements and holy vessel was called in the *Greek* church, *Προθεσις*, in the Latin church, *Paratorium*, and in Italy, *Credenza*, in France, *Credence*. And this ancient *Credenza* or side-table was made one article against Archbishop Laud." *Apologies*, I. pp. 116, 117, *Note*.

said to be the same thing as giving to the Lord,) is never omitted upon this occasion among the *Dissenters*.*

This opinion of a divine virtue, and the presence of the Divine Being in the sacrament, and of the communicants having, consequently, a more immediate intercourse with God upon this occasion, would necessarily make it appear a very solemn and awful thing to communicate; because it was an appearing before God. They would naturally apply to this purpose a saying that was current among the Jews, and which we find in Moses, [*Exod.* xxxiii. 20,] that “no man can see God and live;” man being a sinful creature, and God infinitely holy. They would also apply to this purpose the parable of our Saviour concerning the wedding supper; and consider the person who had not on the wedding garment, as representing an unworthy communicant. In short, as was very natural, the greater they supposed to be the honour and advantage of communicating worthily, the greater would they suppose to be the penalty and danger of communicating unworthily. Upon this, then, the terms of church-communion began to be more strict; and a greater purity of heart and life than was before required, was now thought absolutely necessary. “It does not belong to every one,” says *Origen*, who wrote in the third century, “to eat of this bread, and drink of this cup. They must both have been baptized, believe the articles of the Christian faith, and, accordingly, live holy and pious lives.” This was exactly agreeable to the maxims of the Heathens, who speak in the highest terms of the purity and happiness of the initiated. †

This advance being made, a taste for eloquence, and an abuse of the figurative language of the Scriptures, concurred to carry the corruption of this institution to a degree which would have exceeded the bounds of credibility, had it not remained in the Church of *Rome* at this day, as a monument of the utmost extravagance of the human imagination. The *Greek* writers were always fond of very high strains of eloquence; and, exaggerating the figurative language of our Saviour, “This is my body,” expressed themselves in such a manner, that the people in general came to believe, that

* These *collections* are, I believe, generally made “among the Dissenters,” as in the Church of England, for the poor, exclusively. Dr. Priestley preferred other occasions to collect for the poor, and by his advice to the congregation at Hackney, soon after his settlement as their minister in 1791, the customary collections after the communion were discontinued.

† See Potter's *Antiquities of Greece*, 1775, I. (ch. xx.) p. 390. (P.)

Christ himself was, in reality, some way or other, in the sacrament; and, at last, that the elements were his body and blood. Indeed, many pretty early writers speak of an union of the sacramental elements to the body of Christ, like to that of the human being united to the divine in his person. This change of the elements was supposed to be effected by the thanksgiving-prayer before the administration; from which the whole service came to be called *the eucharist*; which, in Greek, signifies *the thanksgiving*. Hence *Origen* calls the sacramental elements, "the food that is sanctified by the word of God and prayer;" and, "that is hallowed by the word of God and prayer." And *Irenæus* writes, that "when the bread and wine receive the word of God, they then become the eucharist of the body and blood of Christ." In general, this action was termed *the consecration of the elements*; and both this term, and the idea annexed to it, still remain in the Church of England; the priest, when he pronounces the words, THIS IS MY BODY, in what is called "the prayer of consecration," taking care, according to the directions of the *Rubric*, "to lay his hand upon all the bread;" and upon pronouncing the words, THIS IS MY BLOOD, "laying his hand upon every vessel (be it chalice or flagon) in which there is any wine to be consecrated."* If, in the course of the service, they find they had not consecrated enough, they consecrate more before they use it, repeating the same words over it, as over the first. †

Notwithstanding the idea of consecration, and other ideas connected with it, (which appeared pretty early,) it was not till about the tenth century, ‡ that the extravagant doctrine of *transubstantiation* was fully introduced; § and though the strongest language in which this doctrine can be expressed, had been long used in the church, it was not without great debate and altercation, that the language was admitted to be no figure of speech, but literally expressive of the truth of the case. The ambition of the clergy helped forward this, as well as every other error of the Church of Rome. In those ignorant and superstitious ages, the clergy were glad of the opportunity of augmenting the respect which people had to their characters, by assuming the sole privilege of performing

* See "The Order of the Administration."

† "If the consecrated bread and wine be all spent before all have communicated, the priest is to consecrate more according to the form before prescribed." *Ibid.*

‡ "The blackest and most ignorant of all the ages of the Church." *Burnet* (Art. xxviii.), 1720, p. 311.

§ See Vol. V. pp. 252, 253; IX. pp. 262—266.

the greatest and most important action that men could possibly aspire to; namely, that of converting the elements of bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ.

This doctrine of *transubstantiation*, and, indeed, the ideas which introduced it, before the doctrine itself was fully established, had some ludicrous, but other very shocking consequences. The consecrated bread, being the real body of Christ, not the least crumb of it must be lost, or applied to any other use. Hence the custom of making the sacramental bread in the form of small, light wafers, which might be taken into the mouth at once, without breaking or crumbling; * and lest any of the consecrated wine, which was now become the real blood of Christ, should be lost, by wetting the beards of the communicants, they were, for some time, made to suck it through a quill; but the more general custom was, to dip the bread in the wine, and so take both together. At last, considering that the sacramental bread was *the whole body* of Christ, and that a whole body contains the blood, the wine appeared unnecessary; and hence they denied the cup entirely to the laity, who could not partake of it without some loss, or abuse. In the Church of England, the minister consecrates only so much of the elements as is deemed sufficient for the communicants; and the rest, as bishop Burnet says, *they consume*; a practice which, while it is designed to prevent an irreverent and superstitious use of the elements, † tends, in some measure, to promote superstition.

But the worst consequence of this doctrine of transubstantiation was the *adoration of the elements*, and the carrying of the *host*, or sacrifice, (that is, the consecrated bread, which was now so called,) in procession. And, as it was imagined that it was God himself who was thus eaten and carried about, all persons must kneel, in adoration, as they received him, or as he passed by them in the streets. ‡ Moreover, this sacrament, being considered as a real sacrifice, viz. the offering up of the Son to the Father, whoever procured the

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

† "When the sacrament is over, we do, in imitation of the practice of some of the ancients, consume what is left, that there may be no occasion given either to superstition or irreverence. And for the *sick* or the *prisoners*, we think it a greater mean to quicken their devotion, as well as it is a closer adherence to the words of the institution, to consecrate in their presence." *Expos.* (Art. xxviii.), p. 316.

"If any of the bread and wine remain unconsecrated, the curate shall have it to his own use; but if any remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the church, but the priest, and such other of the communicants as he shall then call unto him, shall, immediately after the blessing, reverently eat and drink the same." *Order*, &c.

‡ See Vol. V. pp. 257, 258.

celebration of a mass, (as this sacrament came to be called, from the form of dismissing the people at the conclusion of it,) was thought to procure a new piece of honour to be done to God; for the sake of which, he would be reconciled to all who were concerned in it, whether they were living or in purgatory; while the minister who made this sacrifice, performed a true act of priesthood, and reconciled sinners to God.

Thus the celebration of the mass, for the dead or the living, came to be considered as the most meritorious of all religious actions; great endowments were made for this purpose only, and it became quite a trade; many of the priests having no other subsistence but what they got by this means, saying a certain number of masses, at certain hours in the day or night, at a fixed price. For this purpose, many altars were erected to different saints in every church, and many masses were said all day long, by different persons, at every altar. In short, almost the whole of the Roman Catholic religion now consists in these masses; * and what we mean by social worship, distinct from communion, is a thing, in a manner, unknown among them. Hence, also, this institution, which, originally and properly, was a social act, came to be celebrated in private; and the consecrated bread was always carried to sick and dying persons in particular, as a necessary means of reconciling them to God, and procuring the pardon of their sins before they left the world.

When the abuses of this institution were advanced thus far, and the receiving of the consecrated elements was considered as conveying the pardon of sin; confession to a priest was made to precede the celebration of mass, in Roman Catholic countries; and among them, when a man has confessed to a priest, and received mass, he has no doubt of his salvation, whatever his crimes have been.

Absurd as this doctrine of *transubstantiation* appears, and horrid as are its consequences, it was the great bulwark of the Popish cause at the time of the Reformation; and it is a fact, that, in no part of the controversy, were the Reformers more puzzled by the Popish disputants; and this was the last error that *Cranmer*, *Ridley*, † and many others of the most eminent champions of the Reformation, relinquished. The reason was, that this was one of the earliest corruptions of Christianity; things that savour very strongly of it, appear in the writings of the first centuries; and, so long as any

* On the *dry masses*, see Vol. V. p. 259.

† See Vol. V. pp. 263, 264, Note ||.

regard was paid to the *fathers*, and arguments were allowed to be fetched from them in public disputations, the advantage could not but lie on the side of Popery: nor did the Reformers ever get clear of this great difficulty and embarrassment, till *Chillingworth* boldly declared, “the Bible only is the religion of Protestants.” *Luther*, bold as he was in other things, was content to go a middle way in this; and admitted what he called *consubstantiation*, or that both the elements of real bread and wine, and also the body and blood of Christ, were, in some manner, present in the sacrament.*

And when it was thought by all the Reformers, that the receiving the sacrament did not absolve from sin, it was still generally imagined, that men ought to be holy and absolved before they received it. Hence, the forms of “general” confession and “absolution” came to precede the receiving of the elements in *the Church of England*; † and by *Dissenters*, the receiving of the sacrament was considered as a kind of *receiving Christ*, in some mystical, though not a proper and carnal sense. And, so long as there remains a notion of any peculiar presence of Christ in the sacrament, and, consequently, the idea of some extraordinary virtue being communicated by it, it is no wonder that a long train of awful ideas accompany every thought about the *Lord’s Supper*, and that it is approached by us with an undue and superstitious reverence.

Indeed, I do not see how this superstition can be rooted out, so long as the *Thirty-nine Articles* are considered as the standard of faith in the Church of England, and the *Assembly’s Catechism* among so many Dissenters. In *article xxv.* of the Church of England, it is said, that “sacraments ordained by Christ be not only badges, or tokens, of Christian men’s profession; but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace and God’s will towards us; by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.”

In the *Assembly’s* [Shorter] Catechism, a sacrament is defined to be “an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers. The Lord’s Supper,” in particular, is said to be “a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ’s appointment, his death is shewed forth, and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and

* See Vol. V. pp. 263, 264, Note †.

† See the “Order of Administration.”

carnal manner, but by faith, partakers of his body and blood, with all its benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace." Agreeably to these ideas, it is there said, that "it is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves, of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves."

Bishop Burnet (the most rational, and I shall not be misunderstood if I say *too rational* an expositor of the Articles of the Church of England) plainly countenances a superstitious regard to the sacraments. He says, that the *Lord's Supper*,* "is above the nature of an anniversary, or memorial feast;" and "we do not doubt, but that Christ, who instituted those sacraments, does still accompany them with a particular presence in them, and a blessing upon them; so that we, coming to them with minds well prepared,—do certainly receive, in and with them, particular largesses of the favour and bounty of God.—A sacrament," he says, "is an institution of Christ, in which some material thing is sanctified, by the use of some form, or words, in and by which federal acts of this religion do pass on both sides; on ours, by stipulation, profession or vows; and on God's by his secret assistances." To these "federal acts," he afterwards says, "a conveyance of divine grace is tied;" † and his whole account of the sacrament is in the same strain.

Many *Dissenters* have gone deeper into this superstition than the divines of *the Church of England*. At least their greater backwardness to attend the *Lord's Supper*, seems to discover more of a superstitious dread of it. The terms of admission are also more strict among them, which seems to argue the same thing. Retaining fewer rites and ceremonies, they have made so much the more of them. For this I may appeal to almost every thing the Dissenters have written on this subject, even to Mr. Henry's treatise on the sacrament, (which, I believe, is more read than any other, and of which I think I have seen the *eleventh* edition,) and more especially to that chapter in it which is intitled "Sights to be seen at the Lord's table."

Hence it is, that an account of what is called persons' *experience* in religion, as an evidence of their being in a state of grace, and having a title to heaven, is required in some

* "The phrase 'communion of the body and blood of Christ.'" Burnet.

† *Expos.* p. 332. (*P.*) *Art.* xxv., 1720, pp. 244, 245.

of our congregations, before they can be admitted to communion. Hence something of the idea of the *validity of the administration* of this ordinance by a regular minister, and the notion of the necessity of *ordination*, previous to his performing this service; which, to our shame be it spoken, remains among most of us; * as if this rite required some extraordinary powers, which could only be conferred in a supernatural manner, by the imposition of hands in the ceremony of ordination; and was of a different nature from other ministerial functions, which ministers are, without scruple, allowed to perform before they are ordained. † All this is but a small deviation from maxims evidently Popish.

Lastly, from the same source it is that we have days set apart for solemn *preparation* before the receiving of the *Lord's Supper*, among all our denominations. ‡ It is not denied, but that these days may be spent to good purpose; but care should be taken, that they be not made a handle for superstition: for, I am free to say, that these days of preparation for the Lord's Supper are nothing more than the remains of Popery. Indeed, it was impossible that there should have been any such thing in primitive-times, when the Lord's Supper was received every Lord's day, as a part of their common worship. From this superstitious regard to the Lord's Supper, and the air of solemnity and mystery which still remains about it, we often find societies of sensible and thinking men, possessed of minds free from other vulgar prejudices, to be very large; and yet the number of *communicants* very small; a thing which I would willingly contribute to rectify.

* Since this very just complaint was first uttered, in 1768, "the necessity," and even the expediency, "of ordination" has been more and more disputed among the Dissenters improperly called *Presbyterian*. They still, I fear, encourage "the idea of the *validity of the administration* of this ordinance by a regular minister."

I could easily name a congregation, whose practice is, I apprehend, by no means singular, but from whom a worthier example might be expected, where, should their "regular minister" be absent on the customary Sunday, their *Communion* is always omitted; as if any individual among them, who had an audible voice, could not, with a New Testament in his hand, immediately become a *Minister* fully equal to such a purpose.

I suspect, indeed, that the minister's Prayer over the *elements*, is calculated to encourage unscriptural notions; that even "Sacramental Addresses," however excellent in themselves, and assistant to private devotion, have, too often, the same effect, and that religious conversation among the communicants, such as Mr. T. F. Palmer once introduced at Montrose, were that method attainable in the present *secularized* state of *Christian* societies, would give the most correct representation of a primitive Christian communion. *Antiquam exquirite matrem.*

† Thus a *Minister* has, sometimes, grown old as an *Assistant*, till being elected to what is called the *pastoral* office, he must be *ordained*, before he can preside at the *Communion*, as if to feed the people with knowledge and understanding were an inferior part of a *pastor's* occupation.

‡ These *preparations* are, I believe, now chiefly, if not entirely, confined to *Independents* and *Baptists*.

SECTION V.

The Conclusion, and practical Exhortation.

PERMIT me now, my brethren, to intreat you to shew your regard to genuine Christianity; and, at the same time, your freedom from superstition, by joining, as often as you conveniently can, in receiving the *Lord's Supper*.

If you be Christians, and not ashamed of being thought such, (as, indeed, your stated attendance upon Christian worship declares,) permit me to call upon you to stand forth and declare yourselves Christians, by this solemn act, appointed for that purpose.

If you be Christians, you will pay a sacred regard to all the injunctions of your Lord and Master. Considering what he has done for you, particularly in bringing "life and immortality to light by his gospel," you must be ready to comply with more rigorous commands than this; even though the reasons of them were far less obvious than those of this institution have been shewn to be.

If you be Christians, you cannot but reverence and respect Jesus Christ, and entertain in your minds a very high idea of the benefits accruing to you, and to all mankind, by his life and death. Take, then, this opportunity, of the celebration of this social and cheerful rite, of recollecting those benefits, of cherishing in your minds a grateful sense of them, and of rejoicing in the glorious prospect of immortal life, which the gospel of Christ opens to you.

If you be Christians, you necessarily acknowledge yourselves to lie under peculiar obligations to a virtuous life. I call upon you to own, and, in some measure, to strengthen this obligation, by a more public profession of Christianity; and let it be a motive with you to a stricter watch over your thoughts, words, and actions; that in nothing you may act unworthily of the gospel of God, whereof you make profession.

The partaking of the *Lord's Supper* may properly be ranked among the means of virtue, being excellently adapted to promote the trues pirit of Christianity; as is very evident from things of a similar nature. Is not the spirit of patriotism inspired and propagated by the celebration of festivals, in commemoration of patriotic exploits, and great deliverances from arbitrary power, as on the fifth of November in this

country? This is very justly represented in the account which Moses gives of the institution of the passover among the Jews, *Exod. xii. 24—27*: “And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee, and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.” It is easy to be conceived, what an effect the annual celebration of this rite must have had to transmit, to the latest posterity, the memory of this interposition of the Divine Being in favour of the Jews. Must not then our zeal in the cause of Christianity, for the same reason, be increased by the celebration of this festal rite? And have we not all of us occasion for every means of virtue which the Divine Being has wisely and kindly provided for us, in order to counteract the magic influences of this world? To refrain from this institution, therefore, when there are no superstitious notions to deter you from it, must argue either a disbelief of Christianity; a great indifference about it; a contempt for the means appointed by Christ himself (who is head over all things to his church) to promote the spirit of it; or a confidence that you have not the same occasion for all those means of virtue, that are necessary for others.

Do you affect to despise this rite, because sensible things are made use of in it to answer moral and spiritual purposes? But does not the Divine Being, in this very circumstance, consider our frame, and that he has made us to be strongly affected with sensible things? The eating of a lamb in the *Jewish passover*, and other customs among the Jews, were certainly admirable in this view; and have not we a variety of similar customs in use among ourselves, the force of which you must be sensible you yourselves feel, if you will reflect a little, and endeavour to recollect your own sensations? And there is no one action whatever, of which so much use has been made, by all nations, and in all ages, for the purpose of commemorating joyful events, as this of eating and drinking. Annual entertainments for this end are without number. Why then do you neglect this rite, when it is, probably, the very thing which you yourselves would have thought of, if you had been desired to point out a method of remembering our deliverance from the greatest evils to which human na-

ture is exposed. It is inconsistent to abstain from the *Lord's Supper*, both because it is made too solemn and too awful a thing by some, and also because it is, in its own nature, an agreeable and cheerful institution. Can you find no medium between the riot and drunkenness with which the *Corinthians* formerly celebrated this feast,* and the gloom and horror which the doctrine of *transubstantiation* hath thrown about it?

God forbid that I should recommend this ordinance to you, as instrumental in procuring the pardon of sin, or as a necessary means of salvation. On the contrary, if any opinion would authorise our excluding a person from the *Lord's Supper*, it would be this, which leads to so gross and dangerous an abuse of it. I would only recommend the custom as appointed by Christ to all his followers, and clearly understood to be so by the apostles, who promoted it in the earliest times of Christianity. It is a custom which, I think, we cannot object to, unless we see some good reason to think that the apostles themselves might misapprehend our Lord's meaning, and have fallen into a mistake in this case; and I do not see how this can be supposed.

I would not, however, be understood to censure any man, or body of men, who from a principle of conscience refrain from celebrating this institution; as the *Quakers*, or others who may think this to be no institution of Christ.† With that persuasion, they certainly ought not to communicate; and it would be the height of uncharitableness to think that they could not be virtuous men, and even good Christians, without it.

I do not greatly condemn you who do believe the *Lord's Supper* to be an institution of Christ, and yet have hitherto neglected to receive it, or may continue the omission for some time after being convinced that it is your duty to receive it, in consequence of your being satisfied, that there is nothing in it that ought to discourage you. I can easily make allowance for the influence of early prejudices upon the human mind; and am sensible how far the rectification of a man's judgment must precede the reformation of his conduct, in such a case as this. Habits, founded on prejudices of long standing, do not easily, or soon give way to mere mental conviction.

* See, on 1 *Cor.* xi. 21, Vol. XIV. p. 97.

† See Barclay's *Apology* (*Prop.* xiii. Sect vi.—xi.), 1780, pp. 465—485; *Frend's* "Animadversions on the Elements of Christian Theology," by Bishop Pretyman, 1800, (*Lct.* x.) pp. 73—76.

But permit me, in great seriousness, to admonish you, that a long neglect to join in the celebration of the *Lord's Supper*, after being fully convinced that it is the command of Christ, and therefore of indispensable obligation upon all Christians, cannot but be considered as a criminal neglect of a known duty, and a disregard of one of the precepts of Christianity. In this case it is evident that, in one sense, at least, you refuse to *confess Christ before men*.

I by no means think harshly of those persons whose sentiments may, after all, be totally different from mine in this respect; and who may pay, what I cannot help calling, an undue and superstitious regard to this ordinance. It cannot be supposed, that all the errors and abuses of Popery, which were accumulating and gathering strength during a course of fifteen hundred years, should be rectified in the space of two or three centuries. The expectation would be unreasonable, and what nothing that we know of human nature, and of the history of mankind, would warrant. Some kinds of errors are so intimately connected with truth, and some kinds of superstition with real virtue, that no separation can be attempted, without equal danger to both. It is better, therefore, in this case, according to our Saviour's excellent advice, to let a few tares grow up with the wheat, (if they be of such a nature as to suffer the wheat to grow along with them,) than endanger the rooting up of the wheat and them together.

I hope, my brethren, that this is not your case, and that many of you, at least, are so far advanced in a just freedom of thinking in matters of religion, that you may drop a superstitious regard to the *Lord's Supper*, without losing your reverence for real vital religion. But while we, in the first place, take care to preserve inviolate the strictest regard to vital and practical religion, (which is the only thing that is *fundamental* in it,) let us not wholly neglect taking some pains to free ourselves, more and more, from antichristian errors, till we leave no "mark of the beast" remaining upon us. For I am afraid that even we, who think ourselves the farthest advanced in our reformation from Popery, have still a great deal of that immense and complicated system of faith, of practice, of habits, and of prejudices adhering to us; and while so much zeal is shewn against the outward profession of Popery by others, let us not be wholly inattentive to the remains of it secretly lurking within ourselves.

An undue regard to this institution, is the greatest stronghold of superstition now remaining among *Dissenters*. The

members of the Established Church, fettered as they are with prescribed forms of worship, ecclesiastical canons, confessions, and articles of faith, together with the rest of a whole system of hierarchy, are to be pitied, and not much to be blamed, for their making so little progress in the great work of a farther reformation from Popery; but as for us Dissenters, we have no excuse, if, unencumbered as we are with such a load of superstitious observances, and having no bias upon our judgments or consciences, we do not take advantage of our happy situation, to rescue our minds more and more from a subjection to slavish prejudices. Enjoying the singular privilege of letting our judgment direct our practice, let our sentiments be free, and our conduct, in all respects, rational and manly.

Very sorry should I be if, by this easy representation of the institution of the *Lord's Supper*, I should, all the while, prove to be defeating my own purpose; which is to persuade you to the observance of it; yet I own, that a very little knowledge of human nature may justly give me some reason to apprehend such a consequence. Things that are difficult of access often raise a desire superior to the difficulty. We naturally imagine, that what is not easy to be obtained is worth obtaining; and, having once got that idea, the difficulty vanishes. Nay the idea of difficulty only serves to enhance the imaginary value of the object, and make us the more eager and determined in our pursuit; while things that are easy of access, are neglected because they are so. What is cheaply purchased, we think is not worth the purchase; and therefore we do not think it worth our while to give ourselves any trouble about it.

Things that are mysterious and incomprehensible, have the same natural advantage over the mind of man, and especially vulgar and uninstructed minds which are peculiarly apt to be dazzled with what appears great, awful, and above their comprehension. The more mysterious and wonderful a thing appears to be, the more closely doth it engage our attention. If any thing like an idea can be formed of it, we are delighted, as being masters of a secret not easily accessible to others; and, on that account, grow the more strongly attached to it; while things that are easy and intelligible, are slighted, as common, and not worth the trouble of a thought. The final cause of this part of our constitution is obvious; for hereby we are made to attend more closely to things that are difficult of comprehension; and so, by degrees, we acquire a just knowledge of them; whereas, if it

had been the nature of man to fly from things mysterious and unintelligible, we should always have remained in ignorance. But then, you see, from this very circumstance, that the proper design of this natural propensity to things mysterious and difficult, was to promote a rational investigation of their nature and properties, and not that we should acquiesce in them, and remain enraptured with them, while they were mysterious. All that is of real value to us is the truth; and the plainer and more intelligible it is made, the better and more useful it is. Do not, then, my brethren, despise Christianity because it is made a rational and intelligible religion. Do not despise the few positive institutions of it, because their nature and uses are easy to be understood. Do not throw off the yoke of Christ because it is easy, and refuse his burthens because they are light.

To conclude. Let us bless God, that while speculative truth is a thing that is often difficult to be attained, all the great practical truths of religion are so plain, that *he that runs may read them*. Amidst all the diversity of opinions which has prevailed in the Christian world, all sects and parties agree in the great duties of human life. They equally know what it is that the Lord our God requires of us, in order to live and die in his favour, so as to secure a happy immortality. And notwithstanding some sects do, in words, subvert the foundations of all virtue, they have always some *salvo*, whereby they preserve a regard to it, and, in reality, enforce it. Such a foundation has the God of nature laid for the practice of virtue in our hearts, that it is hardly in the power of any error in our heads to erase it.

You have now, my brethren, seen what, according to my best judgment, is the true state of this case. You have seen the plain and simple account which the *Evangelists* and *St. Paul* give us of the institution of the *Lord's Supper*. To this let us adhere. You have also seen what have been the additions and inventions of men with respect to it.* These, let us nobly dare to reject; and henceforth, "stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free."

* "Let it be our business," says Mr. Frend, in his well-timed, but probably unacceptable and unavailing counsel to that highly prosperous *Church-Statesman*, Bishop Prettyman, "let it be our business to attend more to the spirit, than the form of the institution; and as long as you think it necessary to adhere to the rite, be careful, my Lord, to preserve it from abuse; let it be the sign of a Saviour's love to mankind, not the badge of a party." *Animadversions*, p. 76.

A LETTER

TO THE

Author of the *Protestant Dissenter's Answer*

TO THE

FREE ADDRESS

ON THE

SUBJECT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

REVEREND SIR,*

I THINK myself obliged to you for the pains you have taken to write and publish your nine letters in answer to my "Address to Protestant Dissenters on the Subject of the Lord's Supper," of which, in a polite card sent along with them, you beg my "candid acceptance as a token of real respect." I thank you because you have led me, as you will see, to correct some mistakes, and to amend some expressions which had inadvertently escaped me, and more especially to make such *additions* † to what I had written as appear to me to be favourable to my original and professed design in writing. You must, however, excuse me when I say, that I think your manner of writing is by no means uniformly candid, or respectful.

A fair and liberal critic will consider the real meaning of an author; and while he animadverts upon that, with the degree of severity which he thinks the nature of the subject requires, he will overlook every thing else, and attribute slight inconsistencies to inadvertence; unless he think them to be such contradictions as those persons only are apt to run into who have not truth for their object. In general you seem not to question my sincerity, in what I write; but in one place, you insinuate, that my expressions are "designedly calculated to convey false and injurious ideas." ‡

* In some of the advertisements the author of this treatise is said to be a *minister* in London. (P.)

† This *Letter* was first annexed, in 1770, to "Additions to the Address." See *Mon. Rev.* XLIII. p. 164. These additions are included in this 3d edition.

‡ *Answer*, p. 104. (P.)

To me, Sir, you appear through your whole performance to have erred greatly on the head of fairness. Indeed there is hardly any thing that you pretend is wanting in my treatise, but what you yourself actually find in it, though not in the very place where you expected it, or not expressed in such a manner as you could have wished; but I shall not trouble you, or the public, with a minute reply; especially since you confess a dread of my “abilities to discover faults in your writing, and to turn many parts of it into ridicule.”*

The only view I have in writing to you is to observe, that you and I do not really differ in our sentiments on this subject so much as the world may imagine, from reading what each of us has written. In your whole chapter concerning the advantages that arise from celebrating the *Lord's Supper*, there are but few that you yourself have not found in my treatise; and the rest I have no objection to. As far as they are peculiar to the Lord's Supper, I think they are sufficiently implied in what I have written; however, I never meant to exclude them.

When you say, that you do not “imagine that God is in any other sense present in the sacrament, than he is with good men in general, in attending his institutions; and that you do not pretend to a more immediate intercourse with him upon that occasion, than in other exercises of devotion,”† you say all that I ever meant to contend for; but I do not agree with you in thinking that the persons I censure do not imagine, or pretend to, more than this. The writers of the *Assembly's Catechism* certainly meant more, when they asserted that, by giving and receiving bread and wine,—the worthy receivers are,—by faith, made partakers of *Christ's* body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; and that “by *these* sensible signs Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.”‡

Bishop Burnet, also, certainly meant more than you do, when he said with respect to the sacraments, “that Christ—does still accompany them with a particular presence in them, and a blessing upon them; so that we, coming to them with minds well prepared,—do certainly receive, in and with them, particular largesses of the favour and bounty of God.”§

* *Answer*, p. 132. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 104. (P.)

‡ See *supra*, p. 274.

§ See *supra*, p. 285.

If something more was not imagined to be done on God's part, as well as on ours, in receiving the *Lord's Supper*, than in other religious exercises, how came it to be considered as so much more hazardous to communicate than to pray; when in prayer we frequently make as solemn professions of obedience to Christ as we possibly can make, consequently make ourselves as culpable if we do not live up to them; and when we expect the Divine presence and blessing in proportion to our sincerity and real devotion? All the difference is, that, in one case we make the profession by an *outward sign*; and in the other by *express words*, bearing the very same construction.

You yourself, in more than one place, make the guilt of communicating unworthily to consist in "professing a falsehood" and "declaring what is not true."* If then the guilt, and consequently the danger of communicating unworthily consist in declaring what is not true, it does not consist in the mere *manner* in which the declaration is made; for words and actions may express the very same thing; so that you perfectly agree with me in taking away all real distinction (that is, with respect to *guilt* and *danger*) between this ordinance of the *Lord's Supper*, and any other, in which the same or similar declarations are made, particularly prayer.

Few general prayers, I believe, are made without confession of sin, and profession of repentance and reformation of heart and life. If, therefore, men be not sincere in these declarations, they ought not to make them; and it should be considered as a thing equally dangerous to make them in the form of solemn prayer, or in the form of receiving the *Lord's Supper*; and if we could prevent it, the man who cannot make the declaration *to live as becomes a Christian*, ought no more to be permitted to join in public prayer, in which the minister makes that declaration in the name of all the people, than to join in the celebration of the *Lord's Supper*.

I agree with you, that there is great danger in both, for it is trifling with, and insulting the greatest and best of Beings (but one who will forgive this, and every other offence not persisted in); but I cannot agree with you, in thinking that there is more hazard in one than in the other. † I do not see that, upon your own principles, there can be the least difference in these cases; and yet I appeal to any person who is acquainted with the opinions and prejudices of the *Dissenters*,

* *Answer*, pp. 44, 46. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 123. (P.)

whether it is not generally imagined by them, that there is a very great difference in these cases.

Is it not notorious that many persons not only join in public prayer, but even pray themselves, with great solemnity and fervour, both in public and private, and yet dare not receive the *Lord's Supper*, though they earnestly wish to do it? Whence came the idea and custom of what is called *fencing the table* in Scotland, any more than fencing the public prayers of the church?

No person, I imagine, ever meant, that the Divine Being was actually more present in one place than in another, or with any person at one time more than another; but by the Divine presence we mean his operations and influence. And in this sense, certainly, many persons do imagine that God is more present with good men in the celebration of the *Lord's Supper*, than on any other occasion.

I do not think that you and I differ much with respect to the guilt and hazard of communicating unworthily, which it has been my principal object to set in a clear light; and as to what I fancy will prove to be the only thing in which we differ materially, you agree with me,* that it cannot be expected I should consider any doctrine as taught in the *Lord's Supper*, which I do not believe to be a doctrine of Scripture. Now I own that I am far from thinking, with you, that it is a doctrine of the Scriptures, that the blessings which God bestows upon us are "purchased of him by his Son's death."† On the contrary, I believe that *they are all freely given to us of God*, and that God is so far from being the receiver on this occasion, that the Scriptures represent him as the giver. *Rom. viii. 32*: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

But I fancy you will agree with me, that it would not be worth our while to take occasion, from this subject of the *Lord's Supper*, to enter into a particular discussion of the doctrine of *atonement*, though I earnestly wish that pious and learned men would consider that subject impartially and fully. Our sentiments on this subject are allowed, on all hands, to be the foundation of very different *hypotheses* concerning the whole scheme of Christianity, and it has not been so thoroughly canvassed as I could wish. Permit me, Sir, to recommend to your attention what has been written in the *Theological Repository* on that subject by a person who

* *Answer*, p. 16. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 35. (P.)

signs CLEMENS,* and examine it, not with a view to find little inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the composition, but to consider the spirit and force of his arguments.

If you be a young man, I shall not so much despair of a change in your sentiments as you do with respect to me, and though I am not an old man, it is possible that, at your age, I thought as you now do on this subject. I did so after I was a preacher. How this will affect your conjectures with respect to the motives of the change in my sentiments, I leave you to judge as you please. I think such allusions to my education and private history, as both you and Mr. Venn † have recourse to, are too personal, and very improperly thrown out before the public.

I shall only say with respect to your conjectures, (concerning which you bid me *ask myself*, ‡) that every man, believing that he has formed his own sentiments impartially, and upon just views of things, must have some different hypothesis to account for the false judgments of others. In my case, you think that *pique* and *resentment* had the chief influence. But let us “judge nothing before the time,—for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ,” when *the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed*. I hope that I shall endeavour so to judge, and so to act, as not to “be ashamed before him at his coming.”

That there is much real difference of opinion among Christian ministers is evident; and I have no doubt, but that this, as well as all other seeming evils, will appear to have answered a good purpose; in many cases, I am convinced, that there is much less difference than is imagined, from the different phraseology we adopt. Many Dissenting Ministers, availing themselves of mere verbal distinctions, especially with respect to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, not only secure the reputation and other advantages of orthodoxy; but studiously throw an odium upon others, as *heterodox*, whose sentiments they know to be, in reality, not at all different from their own.

There are circumstances in which it will, doubtless, be prudent and right for a man to conceal his sentiments, if he can do it without dissimulation; but I have always chosen to lean rather to the other extreme; and had all who think as I do in matters of religion, acted with scrupulous integrity and honesty, I am convinced it would have been much better for

* One of Dr. Priestley's signatures in the three first Volumes.

† See *infra*.

‡ *Answer*, p. 97. (P.)

the interest of truth and of virtue too; though I am far from thinking that those who have acted on different maxims have not had the best intentions.

I do not think, as you insinuate with respect to me, that you have *designedly* misrepresented the sentiments of the *Dissenters* concerning the *Lord's Supper*; but I suppose that you, thinking pretty rationally on this subject yourself, imagine that others do so too, and also, that the phraseology you have been accustomed to, is expressive of such rational sentiments. Whereas I think that the phraseology in use among us, with respect to this subject, is not consistent with rational or scriptural principles, but took its rise from notions that are irrational, unscriptural, and superstitious; notions which you and I equally disclaim, but which we take very different methods to exterminate. You deny the existence of the superstition, and would accommodate the phraseology to reason. I would combat the superstitious principle itself, and discontinue the phraseology that is grounded upon it. I would even disuse a *scriptural phrase*, if I had no hope of making it generally understood, in a sense agreeable to reason and the true meaning of the sacred writers.

As you seem desirous of entering into a fair discussion of the merits of the question, concerning *the nature and use of the Lord's Supper*, and to undertake what Mr. Venn entered upon, under great disadvantage, and what he would pursue under much greater; you can have no objection to my requesting your attention to what I have advanced in the *Additions*,* and also to the following queries, calculated, as I think, to bring the dispute to a *fair issue*; and I beg you would not think yourself obliged to accommodate what you may write for the future to any thing you have already written. Of this I have set you an example myself.

1. When we are commanded to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ, is it not the same thing as if we were enjoined to take that opportunity of recollecting what Christ has done and suffered for us, that is, what we *believe* that he has done and suffered for us?

2. Is not a command of this nature a call upon every person who is convinced that Christ *deserves* to be thus remembered and obeyed, to remember him in this manner?

3. Are not all persons included in this description, who, if they were interrogated, would say they were Christians?

4. Is not every thing that can be advanced concerning the

* See *supra*, p. 293, Note.

proper qualifications of communicants, to be deduced by way of *inference*, from the consideration of what is implied in the declaration of a man's being a Christian?

5. Is it possible that this declaration should contain more than a present resolution to live as becomes a Christian?

6. Doth not all the *guilt*, and consequently all the *danger*, of communicating unworthily, arise from this declaration not being sincere; that is, from a person not really intending to live as becomes a Christian at the time that he makes it?

7. Is it not customary to make declarations similar to this in prayer?

8. If the declarations be made with the same seriousness, are not the guilt and danger of insincerity the same in both cases?

9. If there be any difference, is not the guilt of acting in an unchristian manner, after a solemn *verbal declaration* of the contrary, more aggravated than after an *action* that is only *construed to imply* that declaration; since a person may say, that he could eat and drink in remembrance of Christ, and recollect, with gratitude and pleasure, what he had done for mankind, without making any promise, at that particular time, of living as becomes a Christian? It is no where expressly said in the Scriptures, that we do make such a promise at that particular time; and the only mention that is made of communicating *unworthily* is in a case where the guilt is not said to have consisted in the insincerity of any declaration, but in the improper and indecent manner in which the rite was performed.

10. Admitting that the above-mentioned promise is always implied, ought we to make any difference with respect to the qualifications of the persons who may be permitted or encouraged to join in prayer, and in the celebration of the *Lord's Supper*? The primitive Christians made no difference in these cases.

11. Since we pray, or are exhorted to pray, much more frequently than we communicate, should not the warnings against the guilt of insincerity in the former case be more frequent and more earnest than in the latter?

12. If the preceding questions be answered in the affirmative, is it not evident that those persons who join in prayer, in which they profess obedience to the gospel, and yet dare not receive the *Lord's Supper*, are influenced by principles that are justly called superstitious?

13. Is not the custom of solemn preparation, previous to receiving the *Lord's Supper*, a proof that it has been placed

in too high a rank of importance, with respect to prayer, and other religious exercises?

14. Is not the opinion of the unfitness of a person who has preached and prayed in public many years, (but who has not been ordained,) to administer either baptism or the *Lord's Supper*,* a proof of the existence of some superstitious notion concerning the sacraments?

15. Is not the unwillingness of many *Dissenters* to receive the bread and wine except from the hands of the minister himself,† and sometimes of *their own minister*, a confirmation of the same charge of superstition?

16. Is not the custom of requiring an account of a person's *experience* in religion, before he be admitted to communicate, when the same person is admitted to pray in public,‡ a proof of the same superstition?

17. Is it not for the interest of truth, of Christianity, and of virtue, that these superstitious notions be traced to their source, and exploded?

For my own part, I am fully persuaded, that all this superstition had the same source with almost every other corruption of Christian doctrine and discipline, having been introduced by converts from other religions; and that though a great part of this, as well as of other abuses; is now rectified, a great deal yet remains to be done; and I doubt not but, by one instrument or other, Christ will at length "thoroughly purge his floor" of them all, and that all the *chaff, hay, and stubble*, that have been built upon the "foundation of the apostles and prophets," will be utterly consumed.

You, Sir, think that my treatise on the *Lord's Supper* has "a very dangerous tendency in a practical view,"§ and, thinking in that manner, you do well to caution your readers against it. On the contrary, I think that the tendency of

* See *supra*, p. 286, Note.

† Such, when Dr. Priestley wrote, was, probably, the mode generally practised in the congregations misnamed *Presbyterian*, as I have frequently witnessed, by Mr. Worthington, at the late *Meeting-house*, Salters' Hall. "The bread and wine" are, now, at least in some congregations, carried round, by senior communicants. These have been denominated *Elders*; though the deviation from the modes of primitive Christianity, tolerated, if not approved, by modern Christians, can afford them no occasion for the performance of any duty enjoined on *Elders* in the *New Testament*.

‡ There is, I believe, no such *admission* of "a person to pray in public before he be admitted to communicate," among *Independents* and *Particular Baptists*, the only Nonconformists, I apprehend, who continue to require an *experience*. Among the English *Presbyterians*, except where the *communion* is open to all of the congregation who choose to partake of it, a person is "admitted to communicate" solely at the will of the *Pastor*; but among them no one except "a regular minister, is admitted" or, at least, encouraged "to pray in public," or, indeed, to perform any other religious service. See *supra*, p. 286, Note.

§ *Answer (Pref.)*, p. 7.

my treatise is to restore to its primitive purity and use, an institution calculated to unite Christians together under Christ their common head; and I meant to assist in throwing down that superstitious barrier which, in a great measure, forbids its being approached, or made use of at all.*

As my views, I am conscious, are *upright*, and I believe *just*, I hope I shall not have written without some success; and I shall think success in any attempts to restore the genuine purity of Christian faith or practice to be a much nobler object than any other subject of literary pursuit.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

LEEDS, May 16, 1770.

* Mr. Frend invites Bishop Prettyman to examine "whether the last supper of our Saviour in Jerusalem binds the present race to imitate any part of his conduct at that supper." The arguments of "many persons" who "think it unnecessary" are thus stated:

"Our Saviour's blessing of the bread and wine took place at the passover-supper, and introduced only a peculiar mode of blessing the bread and wine at that supper: if the supper itself then is abolished, a peculiarity in the mode of celebrating that supper must also be necessarily abolished. Again, the instituter of every rite intended to last for a great length of time, is peculiar in his commands upon that subject. Thus in the institution of the passover-supper, *Moses* is very careful to instruct the Jews in the mode of its celebration, and gives very precise orders for its perpetual observation. The blessing of the bread and wine is recorded only as an incident by the historians of our Saviour's life; the command to do the same at any other time is not mentioned by the two historians who sat at table with him; and of the other two historians one only mentions the command.

"The command recorded is very simple; 'Do ye this in remembrance of me;' and if we combine the actions of our Saviour when he spoke these words with the actions of the apostles, who were eating at that time, the position that the command referred only to persons eating the passover-supper seems to be strengthened. 'Do ye the same thing, when I am gone; and when ye eat this supper, remember me in the blessing of the bread and the wine.' If this is a well-founded argument, much light is thrown on St. *Paul's* account of this supper, the celebration of which would naturally cease on the destruction of Jerusalem, when Christian societies were firmly established, and the Jewish rites fallen into disuse. Again, in the ordaining of this rite, our Saviour speaks only to his apostles; 'Do ye this: and does not extend the command to the future Christian world.

"But what weighs more with me, and deserves some attention from every inquirer, is the very remarkable omission in one of the four Gospels, not only of the command, but of every circumstance relative to the bread and the cup; and the singularity of this omission seems greater on considering the character of the writer. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and at this very supper he laid his head near to the Lord's bosom: he outlived all the other apostles, and did not publish his Gospel, composed evidently for the use of the Gentile Christians, till after the destruction of Jerusalem: he also alone records the washing of the feet of the disciples, which, according to the words of our Saviour, was an example given to them to follow. The supposed perpetuity of the Lord's Supper rests on these words in *Luke*; 'Do ye this in remembrance of me: a command as absolute is given in *John*; 'I have set you an example, that what I have done, ye should do also: yet no one obeys this latter command, and there is no dispute on the perpetuity of the rite of feet-washing.

"I have stated, my Lord," concludes Mr. Frend, "some arguments, which, if they do not overthrow the necessity of continuing the rite, teach us at least to moderate our censures against those who, from principle, abstain from celebrating the Lord's Supper." *Animadversions*, pp. 73—76. See *supra*, p. 289.

CONSIDERATIONS *

ON

Differences of Opinion among Christians,

WITH A

LETTER TO THE REV. MR. VENN,

IN ANSWER TO HIS

Full and Free Examination of the Address to Protestant Dissenters,

ON THE

SUBJECT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.†

As deceivers, and yet true.

PAUL.

[London, 1769.]

SECTION I.

Of latent Insincerity and direct Prevarication.

HAVING, in my Letter to Mr. Venn, advanced as much as I think sufficient, by way of reply to his *Examination* of my treatise, I was not willing to omit this opportunity of addressing to the public a few general considerations, relating to *differences of opinion among Christians*. If the nature and spirit of his pamphlet be considered, there are but few persons, I imagine, who will think an answer addressed to him only, in the least necessary, or expected from me. Indeed, I never considered the answering of Mr. Venn as my principal object; but I thought it afforded me a fair occasion of exposing the gross misrepresentations and unworthy cavilling which not Mr. Venn only, but too many others, scruple not

* Annexed to the "Letters to the Rev. Mr. Burn," in 1790. See Vol. XIX. p. 344. The Author then made a few verbal corrections, with a different arrangement of the Sections. These will be followed in this edition.

† "With some Strictures on the Treatise itself. To which is added, a Proof of the incomparable Excellency of the Orthodox System, considered in a practical View. By Henry Venn, A.M. Vicar of Huddersfield, and Chaplain to the Earl of Buchan." See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 97; *Mon. Rev.* XLI. (1769), p. 225.

Mr. Venn was also the author of "The compleat Duty of Man," designed to correct the *Anti-Evangelical* tendency which *Calvinists* have imputed to that celebrated work, "the whole Duty of Man." See *ibid.* XXX. (1764), p. 317.

to make use of, in order to render those who differ from them in some speculative points, odious to their fellow-christians.

This is not a complaint of mine only, or confined to the present occasion. Numbers of the faithful servants of Christ have been greatly injured, and have had their usefulness impeded, by the same ungenerous and unjust treatment. It has been the case, more or less, in all ages; and I am sorry to see such a prospect of the continuance of it in time to come.

How many worthy ministers of the gospel, who have taken great pains to understand Christianity, and are seriously disposed to promote both the knowledge and the practice of it, to the utmost of their power, have their hands, as it were, tied up, by those who busy themselves in *spying out their Christian liberty!* Many of them are so circumstanced, that should they endeavour to serve the interests of Christianity and of mankind, in the way which they should think best adapted to answer the purpose; such a clamour, they cannot but foresee, would be raised, and so furious an opposition would immediately be made to them, that they are convinced they should do more harm than good by the attempt. There are but few whose advantageous situation, ability, and firmness of mind, concur to enable them successfully to encounter the difficulties they would hereby involve themselves in; so that, being incapacitated for doing all the good they are desirous of doing, they are content to do the little they can do, in as quiet and inoffensive a manner as possible; following the prudent advice of our Lord, who admonishes us, *not to cast our pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again, and rent us.**

That the interests of practical Christianity should sustain so great a loss, is a thing truly to be lamented; and though such is the state of things in this world, that these "offences will come," and we are, therefore, to lay our account with meeting with them, we cannot help saying, with our Saviour, who foretold them, [*Luke xvii. 1,*] "Woe unto *them* through whom they come;" that is, to those who are the *criminal cause* of them.

Far am I from censuring those persons who are merely *misled*, or those who, in consequence of having been misled themselves, endeavour to mislead others. Every allowance should be made for all those who offend through *ignorance*; though they be carried away, even to the most violent acts

* *Matt. vii. 6* See Vol. XIII. pp. 87, 88.

of persecution, by "a zeal" that is merely "not according to knowledge." [*Rom. x. 2.*] But the woe of Christ will certainly fall with its whole weight upon those who make a handle of the prejudices of mankind, to gratify their own pride, or promote their own worldly interests and ambition; and who labour to inflame those prejudices with a view to making them subservient to such base purposes. Nor will those escape animadversion who are, *in part* only, actuated by such unworthy motives; and who, though they may think the cause they are engaged in a just and good one, yet prosecute it with more ardour and vehemence, than a pure regard to the goodness of it would have excited in them.

Very few of the actions of men have, I believe, one simple cause. We are generally influenced by a variety of motives in whatever we do. It, therefore, behoves us the more carefully to distinguish the influences to which we are subject, and under which we really act. God forbid that I should take upon me to condemn any individual of his creatures. Himself only knows our hearts, and he will render unto every man according to his works. But the general *nature* of our motives, the kind, or class, to which they are reducible, may in some measure be known by the manner in which they operate. And the most distinct of all, in their nature and effects, are those which have the interest of *this world*, and those which have that of *another*, for their object.

The man whose sole spring of action is a *concern for lost souls*, and a care to preserve the purity of that gospel which alone teaches the most effectual method of their recovery from *the power of sin and Satan unto God*, will feel an ardour of mind, that will prompt him strenuously to oppose all those whom he considers as obstructing his benevolent designs. An ardour of mind will likewise be felt by the man whose sole object is the advancement of his reputation, his party, or his fortune; but this *ardour* cannot be supposed to operate in the very same manner in both cases, so as that they cannot be distinguished by an attentive observer. There will certainly be some difference in the choice of *means* to promote these several ends. We should naturally expect more fairness, more candour, more meekness, and more generosity, from the *Christian*, than from the mere *man of this world*. The passions of the latter would, also, be apt to run into personal animosity, envy, jealousy, hatred, and malice; whereas the utmost zeal of the former would not only ever appear to be consistent with, but would be greatly productive of, the most disinterested benevolence, and the most affec-

tionate brotherly love. By this rule we may, in some measure, "try the spirits whether they be of God." But let the utmost diffidence and candour accompany every judgment we form, remembering that "we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."

When persons expressly avow the motives of their conduct, not to acquiesce in their declarations has the appearance of questioning their veracity; because it is taken for granted; that every man must know the principles of his own conduct. But the human mind is so complex a thing, that there is great room for self-deception; especially in cases where the passions and affections are strong, and when they occasion *similar emotions*, as well as produce *similar effects*. In this case a bystander may be a better judge than a man's self. A zeal for our *opinions*, and a zeal for our party, on the advancement of which our own personal reputation and influence depend, are necessarily connected, and reciprocally promote one another. For the same reason, a dislike of *opinions* has an affinity with the dislike of *those who hold them*, as men who are embarked in an interest opposite to ours, and whose credit and authority obstruct our own. Also, all the emotions of mind that are excited by the same objects, how different soever they be originally, by frequent association mix together, so that the parts of that *complex feeling* which results from their union, are no longer distinguishable. When two persons who have had frequent intercourse, have been a long time at variance, and the subjects of their contentions have been numerous; can either of them analyze the sudden emotion they will feel upon an unexpected meeting, and by which they may be instigated to some instant and violent act?

We often begin to act with one motive, but, as we proceed, we come insensibly within the influence of others; so that, in some cases, the habit shall continue, though the original motive have no force at all; and yet it may be impossible to say, in what part of this progress the influence of one motive ceased, and that of another began; the change of character being insensible, and altogether imperceptible.

For my own part, I have no doubt, but that the leading men among the *Methodists* were influenced, originally, by none but the best of all motives, a generous concern for the souls of men. Nothing else, I think, can account for their conduct, as they were then circumstanced. But finding themselves, by degrees, at the head of a large body of people, and in the possession of considerable power and influence,

they must not have been *men*, if they had not felt the natural love of power gratified in such a situation; and they must have been *more than men*, if their subsequent conduct had not been, more or less, influenced by it; and if they had not acted in many cases, just as the heads of any other party would have acted. I am far from meaning to insinuate by this, that their original motive is become extinct. I hope it is still the *leading* one with them; but it becomes every man to distrust himself, and carefully to examine his own heart. Otherwise, as I believe may have been the case with many persecutors, we may begin with the love of God, or a regard to his glory, and end with the most diabolical dispositions.

These observations may throw some light on the seemingly different accounts that *Paul* gives of his own character and conduct, before he was converted to Christianity. Before the chief priests and council of the Jews, he declared, (*Acts* xxiii. 1,) that he had "lived in all good conscience before God until *that day*;"* and before *Agrippa*, (xxvi. 9,) that he "thought with *himself* that *he* ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" whereas, writing to *Timothy*, he says (1 *Epis.* i. 13, 15,) that he had been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," and *the chief of sinners*, though, at the same time, he adds, he "did it ignorantly, in unbelief."† They may also serve to illustrate the following passage in the prophet *Jeremiah*, xvii. 9, 10: (and as the words are those of God himself, they ought to command a general and very serious attention; and more especially should they alarm every man who imagines himself to be actuated by religious motives, when he is instigated to any act of violence against another; whether it be to the injury of his person, his fortune, his reputation, or his interest:) "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart; I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

The application of this doctrine may be made both by those who seem enraged at others, for holding opinions which they think damnable; and by those who insult and laugh at others, for opinions which they think to be merely ridiculous and absurd. In many cases, I am satisfied, that the pure *love of truth* is, on both sides, absorbed in passions of a very different nature. I could overlook every thing in a man who, I thought, meant nothing but my everlasting welfare; or to in-

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 486, 487.

† See Vol. XIV. p. 124.

form me of any thing that I was ignorant of, and desirous of knowing; but those persons who have these pretences in their mouths only, when they are far from their hearts (though they may deceive themselves, as well as others), are by no means entitled to so favourable a reception.

It behoves us, however, carefully to distinguish between this *latent insincerity*, under the influence of which men deceive themselves, and that *direct prevarication*, with which those who are engaged in debate, are too ready to charge one another; as if their adversaries *knowingly* concealed or opposed the truth. This is a crime of so heinous a nature, that I should be very unwilling to impute it to any person whatever. It is possible, indeed, that, in the heat of controversy, when the eyes of the public are upon a person, and he is afraid of appearing in a disadvantageous light, he may use a little sophistry, in order to seem to have the better of an argument; but for a man voluntarily to undertake the defence of error, and knowingly to pervert the Scriptures, in order to make them favour his purpose; and especially to persist through life in avowing sentiments which he really believes to be false; argues the heart to be so void of all principle of rectitude; it is such an insult upon the God of truth, and such a contempt of his judgments, that I think human nature could never become so depraved as to be capable of it; and that no situation in human life could supply a sufficient temptation for such conduct.

If a man do but *suspect* that he is engaged in a cause that will not bear examination, he is naturally disposed to be silent; or if, confiding in his skill in disputation, he should be tempted to challenge another to oppugn it, it would be in conversation only; and it must manifest a degree of temerity, equal to madness, to proceed to *write* in such a case, when he could take no advantage either of his own presence of mind, or of the weakness and embarrassment of his adversary. There are such well-known instances of the force of prejudice, that I had rather ascribe any opinion, how absurd soever, or any defence, how weak soever, in a man, how sensible and intelligent soever in other respects, to *wrong judgment*, than to a *bad heart*. I can hardly imagine any case in which, exclusive of all consideration of candour and charity, the chance would not be in favour of the former.

If this remark be just, with what caution and tenderness should we censure any person, with respect to a point of mere *speculation*? To abuse any one because he does not see things so clearly as I may think I do myself, is cruel with

respect to him, and has a much worse aspect with regard to God, who made us both, and who has placed us in our different situations for seeing, judging, and acting. How should I be affected at the great day of judgment, to be convinced of the integrity, and perhaps the right judgment, also, of an adversary, whom I should have treated in so illiberal and insulting a manner!

SECTION II.

Of the Source of Bigotry and Persecution.

IT is unhappy, in some respects, that Christians are divided into so many sects and parties. This circumstance, however, was certainly *foreseen*, and therefore wisely *permitted* by that great and good Being who governs all things; and it will, I doubt not, notwithstanding several intermediate ill effects, contribute, at last, to the firmer establishment and the greater efficacy of the Christian scheme. In the mean time, let it be our joint care to obviate and lessen those necessary intermediate and temporary evils which result from our differences of opinion.

Let every question in debate be proposed to the freest examination; and, without indecent passion, or personal animosity, (which are equally a disgrace to us as men, or as Christians,) let us weigh the merits of every cause; and, without concealment or reserve, advance every thing that occurs to us in support of our respective opinions. If the pure *love of truth* influence us, we shall, in this way, much sooner find it. And, especially, being each of us conscious of the uprightness of our own intentions, let us not easily admit a doubt of the sincerity of others.

Let those who maintain that the mere holding of any opinions (without regard to the *motives* and *state of mind* through which men may have been led to form them) will necessarily exclude them from the favour of God, be particularly careful; with respect to the premises from which they draw so alarming a conclusion. Of all the tenets that can be the subject of debate, *this* has the most dreadful practical consequences. This belief lays such hold on the mind, and is apt to excite such a horror of the reprobated opinions, as, in the frail state of humanity, is with difficulty brought to be consistent with any esteem or love of the persons who hold them; and, from the *affinity of our passions*, it is, in too many minds, capable of degeneratig into absolute hatred, rancour, and the diaboli-

cal spirit of persecution. Such persons are apt to be so transported with zeal, that they will even "do evil that good may come," and destroy the bodies of some, to promote, as they fancy, the good of the souls of others. Indeed, no other opinions than such as these can, with the least plausibility, be alleged in favour of persecution; and we find, in fact, that those have ever been the most violent persecutors, who have thought salvation and the favour of God appropriated to themselves. Where, therefore, such an opinion as this has unhappily been formed, we must guard ourselves against the effects of it, as we would against those of absolute insanity in the persons we conversed with; and we should use every method we can think of to bring them from so fatal a turn of thinking, to a sober state of mind.

On the contrary, if we can be so happy as to believe, that there are no errors but what men may be so circumstanced as to be *innocently* betrayed into; that any mistake of the head is very consistent with rectitude of heart; and that all differences in modes of worship may be only the different methods by which different men (who are equally "the offspring of God") are endeavouring to honour and obey their common Parent; our differences of opinion would have no tendency to lessen our mutual love and esteem. In this state of mind, most of our differences would be in a fair way of being terminated; and all that could remain would do no more than furnish an easy and agreeable exercise for the Christian virtues of candour and moderation. Different parties in religion would then only afford room for a generous and friendly emulation, which of them should most advance the cause of truth, and recommend their several professions, by the most benevolent and exemplary conduct. Every man would speak or write with more or less warmth, in proportion to the apprehended importance of his subject; but this could never be so great, as to afford the least colour or pretence for the violence of those who imagine that they are opposing "damnable heresies;" and could hardly ever betray them into any indecency or intemperance of language. Their anger would be most in danger of getting the better of their meekness and their pity, when they were attacked with the *pride* and *fury* that is peculiar to those who fancy themselves to be the only favourites of heaven, and all the rest of the world to be reprobate from God and goodness.

Those persons who think that their salvation depends upon holding their present opinions, must necessarily enter-

tain the greatest dread of *free inquiry*. They must think it to be a hazarding of their eternal welfare to listen to any arguments, or read any books, that savour of *heresy*. It must appear to them in the same light as listening to any other *temptation*, whereby they should be in danger of being seduced to their everlasting destruction. This temper of mind cannot but be a foundation for the most deplorable bigotry, obstinacy, and ignorance. Whereas those persons who have not that idea of the importance of their present sentiments, preserve a state of mind proper for the discussion of them. If they be wrong, as their minds are under no strong bias, they are within the reach of conviction, and thus are in the way to grow wiser and better as long as they live.

SECTION III.

Of the practical Tendency of different Systems of Doctrine.

MUCH has been said concerning the *practical tendency* of particular opinions in religion; but, in general, this has been done with little accuracy, whereas it is a subject that deserves the nicest attention of philosophers and divines; requiring an intimate knowledge of the human passions and affections, and of the various influences to which men are exposed in life. As to what Mr. Venn has thought proper to call "a Proof of the incomparable Excellence of the Orthodox System considered in a practical View,"* I do not so much as pretend to examine it at all; and he or his friends may, if they please, consider this as a confession that I am not able to refute what he has advanced upon that subject. I shall only, in this place, suggest a few *general observations*; and may possibly, upon some other occasion, enter into a more particular discussion of this truly curious and useful subject of inquiry.

All that can be done to influence men's *moral conduct* is, in the first place, to present to their minds sufficient *motives of hope or fear*; and, in the next place, in order to make that course of actions, to which these motives lead, pleasing and easy, so as to form a *habit*, and engage the heart and affections; we must give them such ideas of the Divine Being, of their fellow-creatures, of themselves, &c. (that is, of all the beings and things with whom they have any connexion, and

* See *supra*, p. 302, Note †.

whom their duty respects) as will make them appear to be the proper objects of those dispositions and affections which we are required to exercise towards them.

The great objects of hope and fear, which Christianity presents to mankind, are the joys and torments of a *future life*. It is the conviction of the insufficiency and instability of every thing on this side the grave; it is a regard to a *treasure in heaven, which neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and which thieves cannot break through and steal*; it is the firm belief and expectation of the "great recompence of reward," that awaits our perseverance in well-doing, "at the resurrection of the just:" these, I say, are the considerations that raise the hearts of men above this world, and place them beyond the influence of its pleasures or pains; so that they can neither be seduced by the one, nor deterred by the other, from "keeping the commandments of God." These great and leading motives to virtue, these considerations, whereby we come habitually to look upon ourselves as *citizens of heaven*, and only "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," must be nearly the same in all the forms of the Christian religion; and, in proportion to the degree in which we give our attention to them, and thereby strengthen our faith in them, they must influence us all alike.

All the difference, therefore, with respect to the practical influence of any particular opinions, can only be occasioned by the different views with which they present us, of those *persons* and *things* that are objects of our duty. I shall give a brief illustration of this in the idea that is exhibited of the Divine Being, according to what are generally called the *rational* and the *orthodox* systems.

According to all systems, God, our creator, preserver, and moral governor, is to be represented as the object of our reverence, our love, and our confidence; and this end seems to be completely effected by the *rational* Christian, when he considers the Divine Being as having produced all creatures, with a view to make them happy, in a manner suited to their respective natures; bearing a most intense and absolutely impartial affection to all his offspring; providing for their regard to virtue (the only security of their happiness) by equal laws, guarded with awful sanctions; inflexibly punishing all wilful, obstinate transgressors, but freely pardoning all offences that are sincerely repented of, and receiving into his love and mercy all who use their best endeavours to discharge the duty incumbent upon them; when we consider him as most minutely attentive to all the works of his

hands, invisibly conducting all events with a view to the greatest happiness of all that love and obey him; secretly affording them all necessary assistance, in proportion to their real occasions, and abundantly and everlastingly rewarding, in a future life, their patient continuance in well-doing, during their abode in this state of trial and probation. How is it possible, made as we are, not to revere, love, and confide in such a Being as this?

On the other hand, those who assume to themselves the distinguishing title of *orthodox*, consider the Supreme Being as having created all things *for his own glory*, and by no means for the general happiness of all his creatures; as imputing to all mankind the transgression of their first parent, and dooming every man, woman, and infant, to everlasting and unutterable misery, for an offence to which they were no way necessary, of which it is impossible they should be, in any sense of the word, *guilty*; and for which it were absurd in them even to affect *repentance*. In this situation of things, when all mankind were incapable of doing any thing, in thought, word, or deed, but what tended to aggravate their condemnation; they suppose the universal Parent arbitrarily to select out of the whole number a few, whom he designs for eternal happiness, leaving, that is, in fact, *decreeing*, all the rest to everlasting and unspeakable misery. According to them, also, even the elect cannot be saved, till the utmost effects of the Divine wrath have been suffered for them by an innocent person. The grace that saves them is irresistible and irrevocable, so that they can never lose the Divine favour.

If it be possible to revere, love, or confide in such a Being as this, I must own that I know nothing of the human heart, or its affections. Sure I am, that a man of this character, and who should act in this manner, would be the object of dread and abhorrence to all who should be so unhappy as to be dependent upon him. What advantage favourable to virtue can be made of the *imitation* of such a Being as this? Must an earthly parent be encouraged to love one of his children, and to hate another of them, independent of a regard to their moral conduct; and must he never forgive an offence in any of them, till a full satisfaction, or atonement, have been made to him for it?

It is the great boast of those who style themselves *orthodox*, and particularly of Mr. Venn, that their sentiments have a great advantage in inculcating *humility*. But when, without that peculiar system, we consider ourselves as *the workmanship of God*; that all our powers of body and of mind, are

derived from him; that he is the giver of "every good and every perfect gift," and that without him we can do and enjoy nothing, how can we conceive ourselves to be in a state of greater dependance; or obligation? That is, what greater reason or foundation can there possibly be for the exercise of humility? If I believe that I have a power to do the duty that God requires of me; yet, as I also believe that that power is his gift, I must still say, *what have I that I have not received, and how then can I glory, as if I had not received it?* If the Divine Being have given me a *natural power* to move my arm, is not the obligation the same as if he should, by a *supernatural power*, move it himself, whenever I have occasion for it?

If, conscious of many imperfections, and many failures in the discharge of my known duty, I have recourse to the Divine mercy and clemency, is not my gratitude and humility as great, when I conceive that I am indebted for the pardon of my sins to the *free, unmerited*, goodness of God; as it could be, if I thought the pardon I received was *purchased*, by a full satisfaction made to his offended justice? If the sense of gratitude and obligation, in this case, arise from my idea of the *freeness* of the gift, I think it must be greater upon the former supposition than upon the latter.

A sense of our obligation to our Lord Jesus Christ, also, as a person commissioned by God to *redeem*, that is, to *deliver, save, or rescue*, us from a state of sin and misery; to give laws to mankind, to be Lord of all, and judge of the quick and dead, is as efficacious to attach us to him, (as far as our regards to him are consistent with our primary regards to God his Father; who, out of his own love to mankind, sent him on this great and gracious errand,) and to enforce obedience to his laws, as a sense of obligation that can arise from any particular hypothesis whatever.

Upon the whole, notwithstanding what Mr. Venn and others boast, it does not seem to be a *fact*, that those who call themselves *orthodox* are at all more humble and lowly-minded, or more free from spiritual pride and ostentation, than others. As far as my observation goes, I am satisfied, that the contrary is the case: nor from any knowledge that I have, or can procure, concerning these professors and their principles, do I think that there is the least reason to conclude, that (if we separate what belongs to the *form*, from what is peculiar to the *power* of religion) their scheme has any one proper advantage for religious and moral purposes. On the other hand, it seems to me to be, in many respects, unfavourable to

the true spirit of Christianity, or to that temper and disposition of mind which is peculiarly called *Christian*; consisting, in a more especial manner, of the virtues of humility, meekness, mercy, and benevolence. It is unfavourable also to genuine piety, and indeed to every branch of vital, practical religion. I think I could point out the cause of this, but it would lead me much farther than I propose to enter into this subject at present.

If I be asked, why those persons who hold these opinions are not abandoned to all wickedness, when they evidently lay them under so little restraint; I answer, that this is often the case with those who pursue these principles to their just and fatal consequences; for it is easy to prove, that the *Antinomian* is the only consistent *absolute Predestinarian*. But our wise Creator has by no means left our moral conduct at the mercy of our opinions; and the regard to virtue that is kept up by those who maintain the doctrines above-mentioned, is owing to the influence of some principles implanted in our frame; which, in many cases, will not suffer us to follow, or even to *perceive*, the immoral tendency of the most licentious opinions; so that, in general, they are only those who are previously depraved, that openly avail themselves of them. The consideration of this should make us both humble and thankful.

Besides, the opinions above recited are so contrary to natural reason and the general tenor of the Scriptures, that *better sentiments* are continually obtruding themselves upon the mind; and these are the principles that, *really*, though *secretly*, influence the conduct of those who are truly pious and virtuous among *Calvinists*; and by no means the principles which they openly profess, when they are questioned about them: and it is happy that they do not distinctly perceive the inconsistency there is between their principles and their conduct. We are, also, so formed, that we naturally turn our chief attention to the most favourable aspect of our sentiments, as well as of every thing else belonging to us; so that we seldom attend to what is very shocking, and has a bad tendency in them.

It confirms this observation, that many of the more moderate *Calvinists*, as I am informed, and the greater part of the *Methodists*,* seldom insist upon the doctrines of *absolute election and reprobation*, especially in their public discourses.

* This denomination, which was common, in 1769, to the adherents of *Whitefield* and *Wesley*, has been for some years past confined almost exclusively to the followers of the latter, while those of the former have generally assumed the name *Evangelical*.

This must be owing to their being secretly dissatisfied with them, to some latent suspicion, or confused kind of feeling, that they are not to be depended upon; at least, that they are not fit to be the subjects of frequent meditation with the bulk of mankind, and that they are in great danger of being abused. Mr. Venn himself, though he makes a great parade of, I believe, every other branch of what he calls *orthodoxy*, in his answer to my treatise, is quite silent on this head. If his good sense be really staggered at these doctrines, a little more thinking will give him reason to entertain suspicions of the rest: for the whole system is closely connected, and the doctrine of *unconditional election*, together with that of the subjection of the whole human race to the everlasting wrath of God, on account of original sin, are the chief corner-stones of the whole building. Take away these, and the whole *complex*, but *compact* fabric, falls to the ground.

Difficult as it is to account for the virtue of those who call themselves *orthodox*, on the principles mentioned above, they are such as themselves must necessarily allow: for they consider our sentiments as exceedingly licentious; and yet (whatever Mr. Venn may do) I know there are among them, who cannot help acknowledging, that there are genuine marks of unfeigned piety and goodness among those whom they call *new schemers*. To account for this fact, therefore, *they* must have recourse to the influence of principles that are not explicitly avowed by us, just as I do with respect to them.

SECTION IV.

Of the Causes of Difference of Opinion, and the Reading of the Scriptures recommended.

I CANNOT help wishing that persons of all sects and parties would study their *Bibles* more, and *books of controversy* less. But all persons have their *favourite authors*, to whom they too much confine themselves, even to the neglect of those *authorities*, from their agreement with which all their merit is acknowledged to be derived. Were it not for this circumstance, it would be absolutely impossible that the individuals of mankind, whose intellects are so much alike, should differ so widely in their religious sentiments as they now do; at least that they should lay so great a stress on the points in which they differ.

Since the understandings of men are similar to one another,

(at least so much, as that no person can seriously maintain that *two and two* make *five*;) did they actually read only *the same books*, and had they no previous knowledge to mislead them, they could not but draw the same general conclusions from the same expressions. But one man having formed an *hypothesis* from reading the Scriptures, another, who follows him, studies that hypothesis, and refines upon it, and another again refines upon him; till, in time, the *Scriptures themselves* are little read by any of them; and are never looked into but with minds prepossessed with the notions of others concerning them. At the same time, several other *original readers* and thinkers, having formed as many other hypotheses, each of them a little different from all the rest, and all of them being improved upon by a succession of partisans, each of whom contributes to widen the difference; at last no religions whatever, the most distinct originally, are more different from one another, than the various forms of *one* and the same religion.

To remedy this inconvenience, we must go back to first principles. We must begin again, each of us carefully studying the Scriptures for ourselves, without the help of commentators, comparing one part with another. And when our minds shall, by this means, have been exposed, for a sufficient time, to the same influences, we shall come to think and feel in the same manner. At least, all Christians, being sensible that they have, in many, and in the chief respects, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," they will "keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace."

In reading books of controversy, the particular texts, from which favourite opinions are chiefly inferred, are kept continually in view, while others are kept out of sight; so that the person who confines himself to the perusal of them, necessarily forms a very wrong notion of the *general tenor* of the Scriptures, and lays a disproportionate stress on particular opinions. He never looks into the Scriptures, but it is with a state of mind that leads him to expect to find his opinions either clearly expressed, or plainly referred to, in every chapter. Now, it is well known, that all strong expectations tend to satisfy themselves. Men easily persuade themselves that they actually see, what they have absolutely depended upon seeing.

Were it possible for a number of persons to make but an essay towards complying with this advice, by confining themselves, for the compass of a single year, to the daily reading of the Scriptures only, without any other religious books whatever; I am persuaded that, notwithstanding their pre-

vious differences, they would think much better of one another than they had done before. They would all have, more nearly, the same general ideas of the contents of Scripture; and of the chief articles of Christian faith and duty. By reading the whole themselves, they could hardly avoid receiving the deepest impressions of the certainty and importance of the great and *leading principles*, those which they would find the most frequently and earnestly inculcated; and their *particular opinions*, having come less frequently in view, would be less obstinately retained. It was in this manner, I can truly say, that I formed the most distinguishing of my opinions in religion.

I do not say that this practice would have the same effect with all persons. I have no hopes of its succeeding with those who are advanced in life. I would not even recommend it to them; since the consequence of unhinging their minds, though by a conversion from error to truth, might possibly do them more harm than good. Nor have I much hope of those who are hackneyed in controversy, and to whom the methods of attack and defence, peculiar to any system, are become familiar. But I would earnestly recommend this method of studying the Scriptures to young persons, before their common sense and natural feelings have been perverted; and while they are capable of understanding the obvious meaning of a plain expression.

In this case I cannot help thinking that, notwithstanding the seeming force of the texts that are continually in the mouths of those who call themselves *orthodox*; and notwithstanding our present translation of the Bible, which (being made by men who were fully persuaded of the truth of that system) is, in many places, much too favourable to it; yet that both the general *tenor of the whole* (which, with a person who reads the Scriptures much, cannot but have far greater weight than any particular texts whatever) and also that numbers of *emphatical, single passages*, would effectually over-rule any tendency to that which is commonly called orthodoxy.

To mention a single instance. Would not a constant attention to the general strain in which *Moses*, all the ancient prophets, *John the Baptist*, our Saviour, and the apostles, address sinners, wear out, in time, every trace of the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation? The language in which the Divine Being is uniformly represented in speaking, is, [*Ezek. xxxiii. 11,*] "As I live, saith the Lord, *I would not the death of a sinner, but had rather that he would*

repent and live. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" What a solemn and cruel mocking of mankind would this be, if the Divine Being, at the same time that he made this declaration, was purposed that many, if not the greatest part of them, should not repent, but die without mercy!

SECTION V.

General Advices.

LET all the different sects and parties of Christians attend with candour to the opinions and practices of others, and freely adopt whatever they are convinced is good in any of them. There is no sect or party but hath something belonging to it of an *adventitious* nature, and that is no necessary part of the general system; and let not our party prejudices blind us so far, as to make us condemn and reject what is good in any set of men, merely because they hold it; but be the system ever so bad, let us glean from it every good idea, and every useful custom. Were all parties faithfully to attend to this, the very worst of them would be made tolerable, and they would all soon be brought nearer to one another in affection and mutual charity, if not in opinion also.

Let us all accustom ourselves to the consideration of having *one proper head*, and make less use of other names, by way of party distinction. We are to "call no man *father*," or *master*, "upon the earth;" for we have one father, *even God*; and "one master, even Christ."* The use that is made by many of the authority of *the Reformers* and others, appears to me to be an infringement of this injunction. The use of the names of men tends much more to inflame a party spirit, than any other method of distinguishing one another. Besides, by frequently calling one another *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Calvinists*, &c., we are too apt to forget that all these are only different denominations of *Christians*; and, in order to raise an odium against their adversaries, many scruple not in so many words, to say they are *no Christians*. Now had men kept to the distinction of *opinions* only, I cannot conceive how any man could ever have been called a *deist* or an *infidel*, who professed to believe the divine mission of Christ. But the terms *Arians*, *Socinians*, &c., easily pass into that of *no Christians*. This, however, is a most base and disingenuous pro-

* See, on *Matt.* xxiii, 9, Vol. XIII. p. 291,

ceeding; * and those persons might, with the same propriety, call their adversaries, *Mahometans*.

In all our disputes about different tenets and modes of the Christian religion, let us be careful not to lose sight of the *great end and design of Christianity* in general, viz. that Christ came [*Acts. iii. 26*] “to bless *mankind*, in turning away every one from his iniquities;” to “redeem” (or *deliver*) “us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” † The chief thing, therefore, that we should attend to, and the only rule for estimating the importance of any opinions, is their efficacy for this moral purpose. Let us, then, not suffer ourselves to be deceived by mere words, and *pompous sounds*. As to those who follow other rules of estimating the importance of opinions, and who think that *mere belief* can be of any avail to recommend them to the favour of God; they ought, as I observed before, to have very good reasons for their persuasion. For, if once the above-mentioned plain and obvious rule be quitted, it will not be easy to find another that can be applied to any good purpose. After losing this clue, men will be involved in an endless labyrinth. They will often cry “peace, peace,” to themselves, “when there is no peace;” and they will also often *fear, where no fear is*.

I have nothing more to recommend to the different sects and parties of Christians, but to remember that we are all *men*; and to be aware of the force of prejudice, to which, as such, we are all liable. If we be not strangely infatuated indeed, we shall be sensible, that there have been great and good men of all parties. *Ridley* and *Latimer* were men who entertained very different opinions, with respect to the

* *Baxter*, in his *Saints' Rest*, describes *Socinians*, as “scarce Christians;” an equivocal expression, there, no doubt, employed in a sense the most unfavourable. Under the same inveterate prejudice, he again calumniates them, in connexion with one whose memory they justly venerate, whose cruel wrongs, inflicted by his brethren, could not be unknown to such an active Presbyterian, but on whose faithfulness unto death, after a highly exemplary life, bigotry would not permit him to bestow any praise.

“The *Socinians*,” says *Baxter*, in his *Life*, “made some increase by the ministry of one Mr. Biddle, sometimes schoolmaster in Gloucester, who wrote against the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, and afterwards of Christ, whose followers inclined much to meer deism and infidelity.” *Reliq. Baxt.* p. 79.

I am sorry to observe that Dr. Calamy has copied this passage *verbatim*, without the slightest expression of censure. Thus he allows himself, with the policy of a polemic, to perpetuate a slander against the followers of *Biddle*, a man, with whose extraordinary knowledge of the Scriptures and reverence for their authority it was scarcely possible he could have been unacquainted. See *Calamy's* “Abridgment of *Baxter's* Life and Times,” ed. 2, 1713, p. 104. Dr. Towers had occasion, on this subject, to complain of another Presbyterian historian, remarking, that “the account given of Mr. Biddle and his sentiments, by Mr. Neal, in his History of the Puritans, appears to be neither candid nor just.” *Biog. Brit.* II. p. 309.

† *Titus* ii. 14. See Vol. XIV. p. 149.

points which are now denominated *orthodox*; * yet they were both burned at the same stake, and suffered martyrdom with equal constancy. This consideration alone, if sufficiently attended to, cannot fail, I should think, to stagger the faith of those who believe the favour of God to be confined to any one party, especially if they be naturally men of modesty and candour. As *men*, however, we are certainly all of us fallible, and liable to adopt opinions without sufficient evidence. Let us, therefore, as becomes reasonable beings, in these circumstances, be careful to keep our minds always open to conviction; let us cultivate humility, and a diffidence of ourselves, and earnestly apply to "the God of truth," that *we may be led into all truth*.

What effect these considerations may have upon my readers is very uncertain. It is not improbable, but they may inflame the animosity of some against the author and his friends; but on others, it may be hoped, they will have a different and more favourable influence. If they be of any use to make any persons *think* and *reflect*, and "search the Scriptures" more than they have hitherto done, it is all that I desire; having no doubt but that the result will be favourable to what I think to be the cause of truth and virtue. Whether we preach or write, we are properly compared to those who *sow seed*; and *this* it is our duty to take every proper opportunity of doing, though we know not whether it will be productive. *Eccl. xi. 6*: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper." For though *Paul may plant and Apollos water, it is God that gives the increase*; that is, the success depends upon the operation of causes, and the influence of circumstances, which, though they be unknown to us, are under the direction of that great Being who, in his infinite wisdom, disposes of us and of all things. *May his will be done*, and "to him be glory, through Jesus Christ." Amen.

* To *Latimer* has been frequently attributed by the *Arminian* Subscribers to the 39 Articles the assertion that Christ shed as much blood for Judas, as for Peter. I have not met with this passage in his sermons, but the following representation, after objecting to "curious questions of the predestination of God," is not in the usual manner of a *Calvinist*:

"But you will say, How shall I know that I am in the book of life? How shall I try myself to be elected of God to everlasting life? I answer, first we may know, that we may one time be in the book, and another time come out again; as it appeared by David, who was written in the book of life. But when he sinned, he at the same time was out of the book of the favour of God, until he had repented and was sorry for his faults. So we may be in the book one time, and afterward, when we forget God, and his word, and do wickedly, we come out of the book; that is, out of Christ, which is the book. And in that book are written all believers." *Sermon* (xxxix.), "Preached 1553." *Latimer's Sermons*, 1758. II. pp. 846, 847.

TO
THE REV. MR. VENN.

CURIOSITY, from the influence of which neither myself nor you, Sir, I presume, are exempt, induced me to purchase the pamphlet * which you have been pleased to write, in answer to one of mine, on the subject of the *Lord's Supper*. Having heard of your design to animadvert upon my *Address*, within a few weeks after it was first published, and seeing your piece formally announced to the public a considerable time before it made its actual appearance; I was in hopes that your humanity would have paid so much regard to my situation, as to have contrived the most expeditious conveyance of a letter expressly *directed to me*; and that you would not have let the contents of it be known to half the nation, before I was made acquainted with them myself; but I was disappointed in that expectation, and prevented by it from seeing your book so soon as I should otherwise have done.

Upon the receipt of your much-expected performance, I was not at all surprised at the *bulk*, or the *price* † of it, considering the *time* you had taken about it; but I own that this circumstance made me rather wonder at the *warmth* of it. Had you, indeed, written and published immediately upon conceiving the first hint of this important composition, without asking the advice of any of your friends, there would have been no wonder, if it had borne the marks of a glowing, though disordered imagination, or betrayed the symptoms of vehemence and impetuosity of temper; and the circumstances of the publication would have been an apology for you. But all things of this nature generally cool with time and reflection. If, after I have written any thing with more ardour than usual, I can but have patience to let it lie by me a few days, in a place where I can now and then cast my eye upon it, like *Tarquin* with his poppies, ‡ I keep striking out the bolder expressions, and softening the harsher ones continually; and if, after this, I shew it to a friend, I am generally persuaded to lower the

* See *supra*, p. 302.

† This, however, was no more than "one shilling and sixpence," which was also the cost of Dr. Pirestley's rejoinder.

‡ See the story related by *Livy*, L. i. C. liv.

spirit of it still more; till, at last, the composition becomes so tame, gentle, and moderate, that the generality of my readers can go along with me, and bear it pretty well. But time may, perhaps, have a contrary effect with you, and tend to heighten and inflame your natural vehemence. If so, I may be thankful that you did not delay your publication still longer; and the next time you are pleased to honour me with another of your productions of this kind, I beg I may have the advantage of contending with the *Hercules in his cradle*.

When I consider the intemperate heat of this performance of yours, I cannot help wondering at the choice which my old orthodox friends have made of a *champion* to fight their battles for them; and especially that they should have gone so far *out of their way* to seek for such a one. Really, Sir, you must pardon my mistrusting any thing you are pleased to assert, but I cannot help suspecting you may have mistaken those of them with whom you have conversed upon this subject, and have obtruded yourself, unasked, into a business in which you have no concern; or, which is the same thing, that you have indirectly begged the compliment. I should be glad, at least, to know the names of those *Dissenters* who have entertained so very high an opinion of your abilities in controversy; that they should so suddenly, and, as it were, by *instinct*, apply to you in this difficult conjuncture. There are, to my knowledge, numbers among themselves who, without any disparagement to you, are full as able to support the characters of gentlemen, scholars, and Christians, in a debate, (as low a state as learning and charity are now in with them,) and I should much rather have chosen one of *them* for a free discussion of the question between us.

I think I shall shew some degree of skill in arrangement, if I can reduce into any tolerable method, the various subjects of your *Examination*, and reply to what you have advanced concerning them with any perspicuity. On the first view of your performance, I own that I am ready to despair. However, I shall endeavour, in the first place, to consider what you have said relating to my account of the *Lord's Supper*, which is properly the thing in debate; and, secondly, your account of my religious sentiments in general, together with the idea you have been pleased to give of my heart; neither of which, as I conceive, you had any business with. When I have done this, I shall conclude with a few reflections for your benefit, for my own, and that of all those who may choose to interest themselves in our friendly debate.

I shall follow your example so far as to take notice of what you have said of my *title-page*, before I enter upon any of these heads of discourse. "This," you say, "breathes the same unwholesome savour with the book itself."* I can, with great truth, assure you, Sir, that I meant not offence to your *nostrils* upon this occasion, not being aware of any peculiar sensibility of that organ in you. I find, however, that this is an instrument of considerable consequence to you; since it appears, that, by the same sense, you afterwards perceive me to be "a rank Deist at the bottom;" † and you represent the *Lord's Supper* as "smelling strong of the old superstitious notion of atonement." Indeed your figures, in many parts of your work, are drawn from such subjects, as I have not been used to attend to; and perhaps I may not, on that account, be sensible of all the delicacy, propriety, and force of them.

My *motto*, ‡ it seems, has given you offence. You are "surprised," you say, "and grieved to see a sentence of an atheistical poet prefixed to a treatise on the Lord's Supper."§ Now I really never thought of the *atheism* of the poet at the time; and whatever the poet was, there is no atheism in the sentence I have quoted from him. I have heard of serious preachers taking for their text a saying of the Devil; and I should never have imagined, that any *scholar* would ever have objected to an apt sentence from any *classic author*.

After considering how greatly this simple ordinance of the *Lord's Supper* had been abused, particularly in the reign of Popery; and how much *hay* and *stubble* has been built upon this *foundation of the apostles*; if I had spoken *Latin* myself, I could hardly have used any other words than those I have quoted, "Quantum est in rebus inane!" which you have given no proof of your knowledge, either of that language, or of my sentiments, in translating, "Much ado about nothing." If you can relish a plain *English proverb*, as well as a *title of a play*, the English of it is, pretty nearly, *Much cry, and little wool*.

Your conjecture concerning my reason for changing the quotation in the second edition, shews a great deal of ingenuity. "In the first edition of the Address," you say, "the Doctor's motto was quoted from its original author Lucretius, a chief of the sect of the Epicureans, the sect which encountered St. Paul at Athens. Probably, being told that this was

* *Examination*, p. 2. (P.)
Supra, p. 249, Note †.

† *Ibid.* p. 88. (P.)
§ *Examination*, p. 2. (P.)

rather too barefaced, the Doctor quotes it, in his second edition, from Persius the Stoic.”* By the way, did not the *Stoics* encounter St. Paul at Athens, as well as the *Epicureans*? † In order to quicken your sagacity on a future occasion, I shall tell you how the case really was. When I first thought of the passage, I imagined it had been in *Lucretius*; afterwards I recollected, that, though something to the same purpose might be found in that author; yet that the words, as I had quoted them, were in *Persius* only; and therefore, in the second edition, I changed the reference.

The indignation you have expressed at this *motto*, and your reasoning about it, is of a piece with every thing you have advanced in your examination of the book itself. I suspect, however, that *the surprise* and *grief* you express at my quotation of a Heathen poet is affected, or you could never have chosen a motto for yourself from a *Popish cardinal*. I hope you are not secretly a believer in the doctrine of *transubstantiation*. You infer much from mottos, and our debate relates to a distinguishing article in the Popish creed. I could make other observations on your motto; but I think I have trifled enough already in reply to your remarks on mine.

SECTION I.

HAVING premised thus much, I come to consider what you have advanced relating to my account of the *Lord's Supper* itself. This part of your work, you are pleased to call *strictures*; and, indeed, there is a peculiar propriety in that title, for you only *carp* at a word or a phrase here and there, without so much as considering what goes before or after, or seeming to take in the whole of my meaning.

You begin your remarks with saying, that I “ ascribe the neglect of the *Lord's Supper* wholly to some general mistake of the proper nature and design of the institution,” ‡ and you flourish away, after your loose manner, upon so “ partial and defective” an account of the matter. But I do not find, in the page you refer to, that I have used the word *wholly* at all. There may, for any thing I know, be even more reasons than *you* have mentioned for this neglect; but I did not make it my business to combat them all. In the latter part of my treatise,

* *Examination*, p. 3. (P.)

† *Examination*, p. 40. P.)

‡ See *Acts*, xvii. 18. (P.)

I expressly mention and consider more reasons than this one; and if, in any part of the book, I have used the word *wholly*, it has been through inadvertence, and what you might have seen was evidently contrary to other parts, and the general strain of it.

But this is a consideration that never prevents your dwelling upon any expression that can, by any force, be tortured to bear a sense contrary to what is evidently my own; so that you have the pleasure of demonstrating, in your own manner, the same thing that I had done in mine. You have even the assurance to advance, that "one of *my* assertions must be on the supposition that the Lord's Supper is no positive command, binding every professed Christian;"* when, to inculcate this very doctrine is the professed design of my whole treatise. You even say, that I am "pleased, *tanquam ex cathedra*, to dispense with all manner of contempt poured upon, and an entire neglect of, the Lord's Supper; as if the authority of the apostles, to command obedience in the name of God, was already cancelled."† You certainly write for those who read your book only, and do not seem to have considered what *they* might say who should happen to read both. From reading your remarks, one would imagine that my treatise, instead of being a *serious persuasive to communion*, as I intended it to be, was written with a design to dissuade people from it.

Equally disingenuous are your remarks upon my assertion, that "the only opinion which is declared by receiving the *Lord's Supper* is, that Christ is a teacher sent from God;"‡ which you are pleased to call "nothing better than the ravings of enthusiasm, though not of the devout sort."§ With me, and I believe every body else, the belief that Christ was a teacher sent from God, implies a belief of the whole gospel, and an obligation to live according to it. And if you had read my book, with any other attention than to find fault with it, you would have found a great deal in it, of a very serious nature, to that purpose.

You had no occasion to take so much pains to prove,|| that the profession of Christianity was a different thing in the times of the apostles from what it is now. I am as sensible of it as you can be; and nothing to the contrary appears in any thing that I have written. But, notwithstanding this, it is easy to gather from the writings of the apostles, that

* *Examination*, p. 3. (P.)

† See *supra*, p. 262.

|| *Ibid.* p. 52. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 64. (P.)

§ *Examination*, p. 54. (P.)

many persons, even in those days, made profession of Christianity, and even preached Christ, who, in the moral sense of the word, were not Christians. St. *Paul* very strongly intimates as much when he says, 1 *Cor.* ix. 27, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." Yet we do not find that these merely *nominal Christians* were excluded from the *Lord's Supper*. This was only the case with the *incestuous person* at Corinth; nor was he excluded from the *Lord's Supper* in particular; but the Christians were forbid, in general, to have any society or connexion with him; * probably that his conduct might not be a disgrace to the Christian name. And have not I supposed *excommunication* in case of scandalous immorality? In this imperfect state, it is evidently our wisdom to suffer many *tares to grow up with the wheat*. The proper time for separation is the day of judgment; when it will be done effectually and finally.

When I said, that the *Lord's Supper* "is a solemn but cheerful rite in remembrance of Christ, and of what he has done and suffered for the benefit of mankind," † (in which you say, I "evidently suppress a great part of the truth, and injuriously conceal what is absolutely necessary to be believed with the heart, before the *Lord's Supper* can be received according to the great end of its appointment," ‡) I thought I had omitted nothing that any Christian could possibly think of on the occasion. If Christ was, as you say, *a propitiatory sacrifice*; then, according to my definition, the *Lord's Supper* is a memorial of a propitiatory sacrifice. But according to you, no just account can be given of the *Lord's Supper*, except we include in it all the articles of your particular creed; and therefore you say, that I "have attacked what all the churches of Christ are agreed in, and have struck at the only foundation of the Christian's hope." § But have not I the same right to include in my definition, all the articles of *my* particular creed, and to say that every account of the *Lord's Supper* (and for the same reason of baptism, and every thing else belonging to Christianity) is imperfect, in which I do not find them? I thought I had taken a method which must have given satisfaction to every body, when my definition (agreeably to the account of the institution in the Scriptures) was such as might have been adopted by you,

* See, on 1 *Cor.* v. 5, Vol. XIV. p. 71.

† *Examination*, p. 47. (P.)

‡ *Supra*, p. 259.

§ *Ibid.* p. 1. (P.)

and all believers in Christianity, whatever their particular sentiments might be. But your objection to this is agreeable to your conduct in general; which is to allow no persons to be Christians but yourselves, and to brand with the name of *deists*, *atheists*, or *pagans*, all that cannot subscribe to your particular tenets.

If I have not, in my short treatise on the *Lord's Supper*, entered into so particular a discussion of what Christ did and suffered for the good of men; which you repeatedly call "a shameful deficiency;"* it was because it was not my professed subject. I took it for granted that my readers knew what Christ had done and suffered. You might, for the same reason, have asked why I did not particularly explain *who* Christ, that did and suffered so much, was; and *for whom* he did and suffered it; and in this manner have called upon me, as indeed you do, in several parts of this treatise, to enter into every controverted point of divinity. But all this I judged to be quite foreign to my purpose. All the branches of the mathematics have a dependence upon one another, but is there, therefore, a *shameful deficiency* in every treatise upon any one of them singly taken? This remark is an answer to the greater part of what you have written.

You say, I "continually cover *myself* under ambiguous expressions and inuendos, as if afraid to speak out *my* own meaning. Tell us plainly," you add, "what you call incumbrances to the religion of Jesus, and what you call vulgar errors."† Now I thought I had been a very plain and free-spoken man; and that most of my opinions had been sufficiently known already. You yourself say, that I "fight with a high hand against the truth;"‡ making use, I suppose, of a battle-axe, and not a stiletto; or in the open European manner, and not like the American bush-fighting; and indeed you seem to think you have had sagacity enough to find me out, notwithstanding all my covers. However, dear Sir, only wait with a little patience, and you may, perhaps, be gratified with a knowledge of what I may be able to say upon *some* of the subjects you have mentioned; though you must allow me to do it at my own time, and in my own way. But you need not be very eager in looking for it; for *you* are not the person with whom I shall choose to have any controversy upon those subjects. If I engage in one at all, it shall be with a man who has some command of temper, and a competent knowledge of the subject; in

* *Examination*, p. 45. (P.) † *Ibid.* p. 36. (P.) ‡ *Ibid.* p. 91. (P.)

both which respects, I cannot help saying, you have given proofs of your being very deficient. Besides, you and I think so very differently, that we should have too far to go back, before we could come at any *common principles* to argue from.

My method of quoting all that the evangelists have said relating to the *Lord's Supper*, you say, "is very absurd;" that, before I "published my account, I ought to have known how fully the absurdity of this method had been exposed;"* and for this purpose you produce a long quotation from some book, which you suppose I must have read; but you over-rate my acquaintance with books. I never saw the paragraph you quote before, nor do I, at this time, know whose it is. For any thing that I can tell, it may be an extract from some piece of your own; for I have not yet had the pleasure of perusing any thing of yours, besides the piece I am now animadverting upon.

You say, I have "repeated, and affirmed in print," that "nothing is overlooked, or concealed from my readers, necessary to an account of the nature and design of the Lord's Supper," merely "because I have placed before them the form of the institution."† But is this, Sir, a fair account of what I have asserted? I have not *merely* placed before my readers the *form of the institution*, but have also quoted every text in the Scriptures that has any relation to it, and have *commented* upon all the difficult passages that occur in them; and I cannot conceive what could have been expected more.

I "have not proved," you say, "neither is it in *my* power to prove, that there is one tittle of superstition either in the articles of the Church of England, or in the Assembly's Catechism, on the subject of the Lord's Supper; unless I can prove it to be superstition to maintain the reality of divine grace, and the vouchsafement of that grace to believers, duly observing the ordinances of God's own appointment;" and, with an awkward kind of parade, you say, that "when I have proved this, I shall be *your* great Apollo;" and that, "in token of *your* thorough conversion to *my* philosophy, you will burn *your* Bible, as a book of lies."‡ But how could you imagine I should undertake to prove any such thing, when you say, "I find in your book" (notwithstanding the shameful deficiencies of it) "every thing that is contained in our 25th article"? Indeed I fancy that I believe as much of

* *Examination*, p. 42. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 44. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 6. (P.)

divine grace as you do, perhaps something more; and also that the grace of God attends all believers in the due observance of his ordinances; but I apprehend that you must prove some *peculiar advantage* of this ordinance, above others, with respect to the communication of divine grace, before you can clear the above-mentioned *books* of the charge of superstition, and for this, I imagine, there is no foundation in the Scriptures. This point, on which the whole of the argument turns, you have not so much as touched upon.

Pretending, as you do, to write for those *Dissenters* whose opinions and practices I combat, you ought to have brought proofs from the Scriptures, in vindication of those customs among them which I censure as *unscriptural*. These things are not, indeed, provided for in the constitution of *your church*, superstitious as it is (and, therefore, I said, * that “many Dissenters have gone deeper into this superstition” than you have); but, being *employed* by Dissenters, you should have considered yourself as their advocate, have entered into their sentiments, and have pleaded their cause.

Really, Sir, I am afraid that your *Dissenting brethren* and *employers* will have but little reason to applaud themselves for the choice they have made of your pen, when they consider how indifferently you have discharged the trust they reposed in you.

If you were conscious that you could not defend the peculiar principles and practices of the *Dissenters* on this subject, you had a sufficient reason for declining the compliment they paid you. But I cannot help suspecting that, through your great *willingness* to undertake this business, you concealed from them the peculiar difficulties which, as a minister in the *Church of England*, you would necessarily lie under, in vindicating the practices of Dissenters.

By the way, I would advise you, Sir, not to be so very ready, upon every occasion, to *burn your Bible*. You have a great deal to learn from it yet. For my own part, notwithstanding that you suppose I hold it very cheap, I could, with pleasure, spend the remainder of my life in the study of it, as the only rule of faith and manners.

In many other parts of your book, you make the same strange and awkward proposals of renouncing your Bible (as “a heap of impious nonsense” †) and your Christianity, if my opinions be true; and (firmly persuaded as I am that they are true, and founded on truths revealed in those Scrip-

* *Supra*, p. 285. See also p. 276.

† *Examination*, p. 20. (P.)

tures, the authority of which you risk so lightly) I cannot help being shocked at such expressions. They certainly shew that you are "fully persuaded in *your own mind*;" and this I suppose is all the purpose they were intended to answer. I also am, perhaps, as fully persuaded in my own mind as you are; yet I should not choose to make use of such a method of expressing it. I do not think it *decent*, or consistent with the reverence with which we ought always to speak of those sacred books. Cannot you find something of less value than the *Scriptures* and *Christianity*, to pledge upon the truth of your opinions?

Were I in your place, I should think it more decent to say I would hang, drown, or shoot myself, if it appeared that I was mistaken. But in this, you may say, I speak in character; for, as you observe,* we *new schemers* both practise and plead for suicide.

You blame me for "branding," as you say, "the great and good Mr. Henry." † I meant no such thing; and I believe I have as high an opinion of the real worth of that man as you have, notwithstanding my opinion of his superstitious account of the *Lord's Supper*. Besides, I barely *mentioned* the title of his chapter, which you own to be "a quaint one;" so that, if there be any ridicule, it is such as it has drawn upon itself, without my assistance. But even such a title as that necessarily conveys what I call superstitious ideas, and therefore deserves that kind of notice that I took of it.

I observed, ‡ that "all the censure that St. Paul passes upon unworthy communicants" at Corinth, "relates wholly to such a manner of receiving this ordinance, as is no where practised at this day in any Christian country," because the Corinthians ate and drank to excess on that occasion; and really I did not expect that a remark which I still think extremely just and obvious, would ever have been called in question. Yet you say, that "it will follow, by the justest inference, that the same censure is perfectly applicable to others;" and you particularly "appeal to the whole body of real Christians, whether Socinians," as well as "infidels, hypocrites, and Pharisees, receiving the sacrament, are not in a state of heart as diametrically opposite to what men ought to bring with them to the Lord's table, as if they were then actually overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness."§

* *Examination*, p. 82. (P.)

† *Supra*, p. 258.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 62. (P.) See *supra*, p. 285.

§ *Examination*, p. 48. (P.)

You, Sir, appeal to those whom you are pleased to call "real Christians," that is, to those who are of your own opinion, and who must be very impartial judges between us, to be sure. I appeal to *common sense*, and notwithstanding your peculiar method of reasoning about the matter, (which I think not worth my while to examine,) I abide by my first assertion. By such logic as yours, every *Arian* or *Socinian*, as such, may be represented as a profane swearer, a drunkard, a murderer, or whatever you please to make him.

In as bad a light as you consider "Socinians, infidels, hypocrites," and "Pharisees"* in receiving the *Lord's Supper*, I apprehend that you, Sir, as a clergyman of the Church of England, are not at liberty to refuse administering it to them; so that you must either make yourself a partaker of their enormous guilt, or be suspended. If this be true, and all your conscientious ministers be laid under such difficulties as these, by the constitution of your church, how can you wonder that men of reason and religion should reflect upon it? If by "abusing very freely," as you say my "manner is, the Church of England," † you mean bringing a *false charge* against it, I deny the accusation. If you mean that I speak with contempt and indignation concerning such things as these, I admit the charge. But if it move the indignation of a person only to see the difficulties you labour under, how *must*, at least, how *ought* you to be affected, who *feel* them!

SECTION II.

HAVING made as many remarks as I think are at all necessary relating to the proper subject of our debate, I come, in the next place, to what is by far the most considerable part of your treatise, and without which your observations on my "Plain Account of the Lord's Supper" would have made a poor figure indeed; I mean the view you have given the public of my *sentiments* in matters of religion, and of my *heart*. In this I can make no mistake in applying to myself, whatever you say of "free thinkers, free inquirers, new schemers," or "Socinians;" for you scruple not to bestow any of these opprobrious appellations, and many more, promiscuously, to the same set of people. If they be not meant for me, I can see no meaning that they have

* *Examination*, p. 8. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 56. (P.)

on this occasion ; and I really believe I am as much of what you are pleased to call a “ new schemer ” as any other person you can have in view.

In many things I admit your charge, without being ashamed of it. “ After the manner which *you* call HERESY, so worship I the God of my fathers.” In other things, some of which I shall particularly recite, let the impartial judge betwixt us ; and remember that the “ God of truth ” sees and knows us both.

We *new schemers* are, as you say, “ the determined adversaries of the Reformers.”* We “ look down upon them all as a parcel of old fools.” † We “ set our faces, to a man, against them, and all their adherents.” We “ constantly dwell on these self-exalting ideas, till we are bloated with the conceit of our own rare abilities, as the only connoisseurs in religion.”

In reply to all this curious eloquence, I can only say, that I believe I have, to the full, as high an esteem and veneration for those whom you call *Reformers*, as you have. Perhaps I may be able to conceive more justly of their merit, in consequence of having, like them, rectified (as I think) the errors in which I was educated.

You say, “ Let common sense judge whether a more impudent vanity can be conceived, than for free inquirers, of all people in the world, to exalt themselves above the Reformers in matters of a religious nature.” ‡ But, dear Sir, doth not a pigmy, standing on the head of a giant, see farther than the giant can do ? I dare say you think yourself, in many respects, wiser than *Solomon* himself, and without thinking yourself chargeable with any impudent vanity on that account. Besides, who are they that we must call *Reformers*, and by the opinions of which of them must we abide ? Did not *Calvin* see farther than *Luther* ; or do you rest where *Luther* did, and admit the doctrine of *consubstantiation* ? Would you exactly follow the steps of *Calvin* ? Then you must use sports on the *Lord's-day*, § and instead of writing against, *burn* me at a stake, as he did *Servetus*. || If the Reformers themselves differed from one another, why may not we differ from them all ? You will hardly maintain their inspiration. What authority have you to suppose, that the Divine Being confined the refor-

* *Examination*, p. 8. (P.) † *Ibid.* p. 28. (P.) ‡ *Ibid.* p. 12. (P.)

§ See Vol. II. pp. 324, 325, Note ; *Strype's Life of Bishop Aymer*, 1701, pp. 215, 216 ; *Mon. Repos.* XIV. pp. 425, 556, 557.

|| See Vol. X. pp. 271, 272.

mation to that particular age? Is it not much more probable, that it was only begun then, and that it is our duty to carry it on.

Many of those tenets which you, by way of emphasis, term "the doctrines of the Reformers," you acknowledge were not the opinions of the *Reformers* "as such." They were held by them in common with the *Papists*, from whom they separated. How then can the authority of the Reformers give them any weight? Might you not, with as much propriety, allege their authority for the belief of the being of a God, or that *Mohammed* was an impostor? What, then, is your availing yourself of the name and authority of the Reformers in this case, but an unfair and unworthy *artifice*, to inflame the passions of your readers, and make your adversaries obnoxious to their blind resentment?

Besides, have not I a right to consider *Servetus* and *Socinus* in the light of Reformers, as well as *Luther* and *Calvin*? They, like them, were men who departed from the errors of Popery. They were nearly contemporary with those you call Reformers, and, in my opinion, carried the reformation farther than they did. But as you admit none to be called *Christians*, but those who think as you do, with respect to the doctrines of Christianity; so, in the same arbitrary manner, you will admit none to the high rank of *Reformers*, but those who reformed just as far as you approve of.

We "rely," you say, "on the force of the human understanding to investigate truth, not on divine teachings." * According to you, we "hold that the faculty of man is of itself sufficient to determine what it becomes Jehovah to reveal of himself, his councils, and his way of saving his rebellious creatures." † Nay more, you assert, that we "believe no divine teachings." We "speak great swelling words of man's power and excellence, though unenlightened and unrenewed; but not a word is heard" from us "of the spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which are, through grace and faith, the portion of real Christians." ‡ Now really, Mr. Venn, I do not believe that we *new schemers*, though called by you "sons of pride," § have any higher ideas of our own understandings than you have of yours; and surely you will not say, that you make *no use* of yours in the investigation of religious truths. If you do not, be pleased to

* *Examination*, p. 10. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 35. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 86. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 23. (P.)

inform us by what extraordinary faculty you have attained this comprehensive and clear conception of those truths, and wherein it differs from what is called fancy and imagination in other men. In the mean time, you must allow us to suppose, that you have employed your understanding on these subjects as well as we ; and to conclude, from the confident manner in which you assert your sentiments of them, that you have conceived much higher notions of its penetration and accuracy, than we durst ever presume to entertain of ours. It appears to our poor apprehensions, that the gospel is addressed to the reason and understanding of mankind. We are told also, that the Author of it delivered this demand, [*Mark*, vii. 14,] “Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand.” We conceive, that *ourselves* also are comprehended under the obligation of this demand ; and if, while we employ our attention and understanding on what he hath taught, in the most serious and careful manner we are able, we be so unfortunate as to conceive somewhat differently from you, concerning the sense of some particular doctrines, we cannot help it. The command above-mentioned gives us no directions, nay, we conceive that it plainly infers a prohibition to resign our understandings to you, or any man, and receive your decisions with implicit acquiescence. You, Sir, in a full confidence, superior to all doubt or hesitation, concerning their absolute certainty, may, as you do, be ready to stake your Bible, nay, even be willing to pledge all your hopes of salvation upon the genuine orthodoxy of your sentiments ; yet, pardon us, we must not, we dare not, pay you the homage of our faith, which is due only to our one Father in heaven, our one Master, Jesus, the Christ ; awfully reverencing that declaration of his, [*John* xii. 48,] “The word that I” (N. B. not Mr. Venn) “have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day,” when we must give an account of the fidelity wherewith we have improved those two most valuable and perfectly-corresponding talents, our Bibles and our understandings. For my own part, I believe the absolute necessity of divine teachings, and of a supernatural revelation, in order to the knowledge and worship of the true God. I believe that he himself is the only judge of what he is to reveal of himself, and when and how to make the revelation. And, if I know my own heart, I thank him, with my whole soul, for the important discoveries he has been pleased to communicate to us ; and especially that life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ.

In more than one passage of your book you will have it, that we *new schemers*, and myself in particular, “disclaim the divine authority of the Scriptures.” Because I say that “the sacred books have come to us in the common course of Divine providence,” you conclude, that I “think myself at full liberty to take or refuse, as *I* please, of the things they record, just as much as with any common writers.”* You say, that it is “a language blasphemous and execrable, to call those writings the word of God, when, according to *my* broad hint, they are the words of man and no more.” You say, that “concerning inspiration itself *we* are very doubtful, regarding some parts of the Bible as of suspicious authority; and that, with respect to the whole, *we* insist on a right to reject whatever appears to *us* unreasonable, be the words which affirm it ever so plain.” †

Lastly, in proof of what you advance on this subject, you say, in a note, “Dr. Priestley, in his Catechism for Children and Young Persons, published in 1767, instead of teaching them, as was the old orthodox fashion, down from the apostles, that all Scripture was given by inspiration of God, would have them esteemed no more than a collection of books written by good men.” ‡ Now I will venture to recite this very question and answer *at full length*, as a sufficient proof of the weakness, to say nothing worse, of your charge. For, if you read the former part of this answer, I may well presume that you read the latter part too, since the whole of it is contained in a very few lines.

Qu. *What is the Bible?*

An. The Bible is a collection of books written by good men, containing an account of what God has done for mankind, what he requires of them, and what they have to expect from him.

If now, as you assert elsewhere, I believed “no divine teachings,” or inspiration, which way could I suppose that these good men became acquainted with what God has done for mankind, what he requires of them, and what they have to expect from him? If this does not evidently imply *divine communications* with these good men, I do not know what does. However, the language I have chosen is the most proper that I could think of for the capacities of children. But possibly you, like the compilers of the *Assembly’s Catechism*, and many others, would have them drawn up

* *Examination*, p. 52. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 27. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 10. (P.)

for the purpose of *systems, creeds, or confessions of faith*, which is by no means my idea of the nature and proper use of catechisms.

“There is no trace,” you say, in our writings, “of the detestable properties of sin, not a trace of evangelical humiliation for it.”* Nay, if you are to be believed, we maintain, that “sin is the inevitable effect of the imperfection of creatures, for which, therefore, to suppose the curse of the law incurred, is unmanly and illiberal.”† Be pleased, Sir, to explain your meaning, and name the writers you refer to. We *new schemers*, think that we believe as much as you *old schemers*, concerning the heinous nature of sin, and the wrath of God due to it, and preach it too.

If you are to be credited, we *new schemers* maintain, that “men may merit the rewards of heaven by their own works,” and that “they have power to save themselves;”‡ that we “preach a religion that contains no glad tidings of good things, no remission of sins, no Mediator, no Redeemer.”§ Our “religion is nothing more than a bare rule of life, enforced by the revelation of a resurrection,” &c. &c. &c. || There are calumnies so impudent, that one is at a loss how to go about to refute them; and this, Sir, is exactly my case with respect to this, and many others of your accusations. This charge of yours is, however, very consistent with the former; for if we believe that the curse of God is not due to sin, what occasion is there for the doctrine of remission? But though we believe as much as you of the anger of God due to sin, we also believe, that “to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.” This is the grateful doctrine that Christ preached, and that we preach; and we think it to be “worthy of all acceptation,” a doctrine that contains “glad tidings of good things.”

If you are to be credited, “instead of strenuously opposing the world, and vigorously attacking the vassals of pride, ambition, and avarice; we give them no molestation.”** And, with an air of boasting and arrogance almost peculiar to yourself, you ask, “In what society of the free-inquiring stamp is it found, that their doctrines have the success promised to the preaching of the truth? Where are the lewd made chaste, the profane pious, the passionate meek, or the niggard bountiful?” According to you, we preach neither

* *Examination*, p. 35. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 14. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 86. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 80. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* (P.)

** *Ibid.* p. 11. (P.)

faith nor good works. We think, however, that we preach both in the Scripture sense of the words, and we hope with some success too; though, with the prophet, [*Isa. liii. 1.*] we may sometimes say, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

"To enforce virtue," you say, we "use moral arguments, not the command of the Almighty; its own natural advantages, not his express promises. To deter from vice, we urge its present evil effects upon men's worldly interests; very faintly, and very seldom, the wrath to come. We dwell on the branches of natural religion, not on the peculiar articles of revealed," &c. &c.* How consistent this charge is with that in the last paragraph, in which you represent us as "not preaching to enforce virtue at all," I leave you to make out. But, passing by this inconsistency, I think I may challenge you to produce a single person, who has heard me long enough to be a judge, whether you have given a just account of the general strain of my preaching; and I am what you call a *new schemer*.

"Will you labour," you say, "to appease an enraged conscience, by telling men (where your scheme with many terminates) that future punishment, and the wrath of God against sin, is a mere bugbear? This," you say, "will not administer the least degree of relief, because, upon these very free principles, their presumption in gratifying their vile lusts was founded. Tush, say they, there will no harm happen unto us. Is there knowledge in the Most High? Cannot we repent when we will, and by repentance entitle ourselves to his favour?" † Well may you conclude this extraordinary account with an "appeal to every man, whether these notions (nearly the sum and substance," you say, "of our rational principles) do not embolden men in their wickedness?" But, dear Sir, this is the sum and substance of a religion that has no existence but in your own brain.

You talk of my "blind rage;" pray, Sir, hath not your rage blinded you, so that you cannot see the manifest inconsistency of this strange account of our practical principles? For what signifies repentance, or the prospect of thereby entitling ourselves to the Divine favour, if, as you say, we believe that God has no anger against sin; or if he had, he has no knowledge of our vices? According to your account

* *Examination*, p. 10. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 77. (P.)

of the *new schemers*, they are, to all intents and purposes, as much atheists as *Epicurus* himself, or *Lucretius* after him.

Really, Sir, I am quite tired with following this phantom of your own raising. In the very same manner you may raise a thousand more, and much entertainment may the pursuit of them yield you. If we really think and preach in the manner you are pleased to represent, it can be no wonder that, as you boast, "virtuous conduct abounds more among *you* than among *us*."*

I observed, that "such a foundation has the God of nature laid for the practice of virtue in our hearts, that it is hardly in the power of any error in our heads to erase it;"† and it was an observation for which you ought to have thanked me: for were it not for this principle, who could pay any regard to moral conduct, and, at the same time, believe, as you profess to do, and as I have represented it? Instead of this, your comment upon my words, is very remarkable; observing, that "in plain English *I* say, that men need be under no apprehension concerning their creed, be it what it may, since there is a certain antiseptic quality, as physicians call it, interwoven in our frame, which expels the bane of all false doctrine, however plentifully imbibed; and that from this time forward, truth can claim no pre-eminence over error; because it is as good for the soul to be without knowledge, as to have a right judgment in all things; which," you say, "is one of the many precious consequences, which necessarily flow from *my* wild positions. In this," you say, we "perfectly resemble the Heathen, who made an intercommunity in the worship of their dunghill deities."‡ Also, you say, that we "free inquirers maintain the innocence of error."§ "This pernicious assertion," as you call it, you seriously labour to confute, under five distinct heads, extracted, I suppose, from one of your sermons. But do you seriously think, that if I had imagined religious knowledge to have been a thing of no consequence, that I should have taken any pains to promote it?

Notwithstanding I advance, what I know to be true, and for the truth of which I appeal to any person who knows the world, and is acquainted with the usual acceptation of terms in the English language, that *some Deists are men of the most*

* *Examination*, p. 70. (P.)

† *Examination*, p. 67. (P.)

‡ *Supra*, p. 292.

§ *Ibid.* p. 10. (P.)

irreproachable conduct in life; * I admit the observation you have quoted from my favourite author, Dr. Hartley; and from a serious conviction of the truth of it, one of the principal objects I have in view is to establish Christianity on the surest foundations, particularly by freeing it from the corruptions which, at present, disfigure it, and prevent its reception in the world.

By the way, I cannot help wondering how you could possibly speak of this most excellent writer, as my *favourite*, and, at the same time, represent my sentiments as so exceedingly libertine, and all *new schemers* as absolutely destitute of seriousness; when, if you have really read that book at all, you must have perceived, in every page of it, marks of the warmest benevolence and devotion too. Next to the Bible, *Hartley's* "Observation on Man," is the book that I have recourse to, when I would read to do my heart good, † though this work is too philosophical to be recommended to the generality of readers. Had you read that book a little more, you could not have written in the spirit that you have done.

Similar to the conclusion you have drawn in the last paragraph, is your candid remark upon my saying, that "I do not censure any man, or body of men, who do not choose to celebrate this institution." ‡ "Mark," you say, "the expression CHOOSE." § Very well, let candour mark it, and it will be construed to refer to those who do not choose, *through conviction of mind, or invincible prejudice*; to whom, I doubt not, the Divine Being will be favourable, and whom I, therefore, do not think it my business to censure. Others who, through a different influence, do not choose to celebrate this institution, I *do* censure, and pretty severely, in the book itself. But of this, according to your general conduct, observed before, you have not thought proper to take any notice.

By this time I hope my reader will be prepared for the last charge you bring against me, which is that of *Deism*. At first you advance it with some degree of diffidence, saying, I "have my *ne plus ultra* somewhere; but whether at all

* Though from this fair concession to Deism, the Christianity of the New Testament has nothing to apprehend, yet *Christian* advocates have not always had the magnanimity, not to say the justice, to hold such language. "The infidels of our days," observes Dr. Clarke, in 1705, "shew, plainly and undeniably, that they are not really *Deists*, but mere *Atheists*." To support this unqualified charge of insincerity against "the infidels" of a particular period, the Censor takes for granted, without alleging even a single instance, "their loose, vain, and frothy discourses, and above all their vicious and immoral lives." *Evidences*, ed. 8, 1732, p. 173.

† See Vol. II. p. 10.

‡ See *supra*, p. 289.

§ *Examination*, p. 65. (P.)

short of absolute Deism, who can tell?" * You hint, that my "enlarged way of thinking is retailed from Toland and Tindal, and that I take the surest way to sink revealed religion down to mere Deism." † Our "scepticism, is as destructive an enemy to the soul as absolute infidelity." ‡ You represent the "triumph of the whole conclave of Deists," § upon reading one of my paragraphs, and, in imitation of the ancient classics, you put a speech into the mouth of their chairman, which would be in the taste of Attic eloquence, were it not for a *pun* upon my name; for I cannot help thinking you had a view to it, when you repeat the word *priest* three times over; printing it in italics, and capitals; and when you speak of "a priest nurtured in the strictest sect of the carpenter's religion," you allude, I suppose, to my education. You say we "cavil at, and renounce what is peculiarly Christian;" || and, that we "reject the authority of the Lord of conscience himself in matters of faith." ¶ Lastly, being now grown warm, and bolder by this prolusion, you say, that my "insinuations are enough, in spite of charity itself," (of which you, Sir, are certainly possessed of a sufficient quantity,) "to make *you* believe, I am not a whit better than a RANK DEIST at the bottom."** I suppose there is some difference between a *Deist*, and a *rank Deist*; but as you have not been pleased to inform us wherein it consists, I can only conjecture, that by a *simple Deist* you mean a Deist of no long standing; and that by *rank Deist*, you mean one who has been so long dead to Christianity, that he is become quite *putrid*, and *offensive to your nostrils*.

Notwithstanding your extreme alertness in discovering heresy, and your talking so much about *Deists*, and *rank Deists*, I really question whether you have so much as consulted your dictionary to inform yourself what is the common acceptation of the word *Deist*; for you say, "Upon the new scheme, all the difference between Christians and infidels will vanish; or, at most, the difference must consist in this alone, that infidels may vilify Jesus as an impostor, while these upstart Christians, formed after your model, will regard him as a man employed by God to republish the law of nature, to be an example of virtue, to ascertain a resurrection, and, perhaps, to be the judge of the world." †† Here the

* *Examination*, p. 14. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 17. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 34. (P.)

** *Ibid.* p. 88. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 15. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 29. (P.)

¶ *Ibid.* p. 69. (P.)

†† *Ibid.* p. 20. (P.)

word *perhaps* seems to insinuate, that some of us do not believe that Christ will judge the world; but this insinuation is to be considered in the same light as all the rest that you have made. Yet in another place, you say we “maintain, that the Bible discovers nothing more to *us* than *we* knew from the light of nature, or might have known from the right use of *our* faculties.”* Certainly, Mr. Venn, we, or you must have formed a very high opinion of the human faculties, to think that by the help of them we could have made the discovery of a resurrection, and that even, *perhaps*, Christ would judge the world.

As you seem to have such good intelligence concerning the “conclave of Deists,” I wish, if it be no secret, that you would be pleased to inform me, and the rest of the world, where this general assembly is held; because, if all the Deists in the nation, or only their representatives, the *rank Deists*, meet in any one place, one might make some use of the information. But I cannot whisper, or give *mementos*, as you do, † in a book that is open to all the world.

I do not know whether it will be deemed any aggravation of your charge, that, after calling me a *rank Deist*, you insinuate that I am a *Pagan* also, when you say, that I “had better pass over the articles of the Church of England in silence, and establish, by the best arguments that *I* can invent, *my* own Pagan ideas in religion.” ‡ I think if I had gone so far, and upon such grounds as these, I would have advanced a step farther. Indeed you do half advance it; for by laying the stress that you do upon my quoting an *atheistical* poet, § and by putting atheistical language into the mouth of a dying *new-schemer*, you half insinuate that I am an Atheist. By these helps your charge is now complete. As a Deist, I believe in *one God*; as a Pagan, I believe in *many Gods*; and as an Atheist, I believe in *no God* at all. This would have been a fine round sentence, and for truth and consistency, would have been sufficiently of a piece with the rest of your pamphlet.

Perhaps you thought it necessary, to complete the character of *new schemers*, as *Deists*, *Pagans*, or *Atheists*, that we should maintain the lawfulness of *suicide*, and practise it too; and therefore you do not hesitate || to ascribe both the opinion and practice to us. According to our scheme, you

* *Examination*, p. 32. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 58. (P.)

|| *Examination*, p. 82. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 57. (P.)

§ See *supra*, p. 323.

say, "Men have no inbred depravity to confess; and if they can but imagine they have acted their part well, they are taught to cherish a consciousness of their own merit. Possessed with self-complacency," you say, we "can be in very good humour with Divine Providence, so long as *our* prosperity continues;" but that our "scheme excites murmurings, and often impious accusations against God, whenever his hand lies heavy upon *us*." In this case, "enraged at what *we* judge to be an undeserved fate, *we* are instigated to destroy a life, become intolerable to *our* haughty spirits. Pride, inspired by a consciousness of virtue, according to the new scheme, inflames the wound of deep affliction, till distraction of mind ensues, and strangling is chosen rather than life. And indeed," you say, "as if conscious that *our* free principles can do nothing to assuage the anguish which desperately impels *us* to this catastrophe, it is common to hear many of *us* openly plead for the lawfulness of suicide.* Pray, Sir, have you never heard of our pleading for the lawfulness of killing *others*, as well as *ourselves*? If not, you are not yet acquainted with all the *depths of the new scheme*, notwithstanding the care you seem to have taken to inform yourself concerning the rise, progress, and end of it.

The reader having been entertained with such a *caricature*, as you have been pleased to sketch out, of our *principles*, which you say, "are the same which the Holy Ghost calls damnable heresies," † he will not be surprised at the picture you draw of our hearts; and particularly of our intolerable *pride*, some elegant specimens of which I have produced already. You say, that we "give up the meek, lowly temper of a Christian, for the boastful, detestable temper of a Pharisee, or a Stoic." ‡ You call us, "the sons of pride." § We "bear," you say; "stamped on *our* foreheads the features of those who, in the Scriptures, are called the disputers of this world, wise in *our* own eyes, and prudent in *our* own sight; and by keeping out of sight what revelation holds capital, and urging an earth-born, feeble system of *our* own, open the way, in due time, for a bare-faced revolt from the authority of all revealed religion." || According to your prophecy, therefore, we shall, in due time, declare ourselves to all the world to be as *rank Deists*, as you have had the sagacity to find out we are, *at the bottom*, already.

Our pride and conceit, it seems, are greatly subservient to

* *Examination*, p. 81. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 35. (P.)

|| *Ibid.* p. 12. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 33. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 23. (P.)

our artifice and deceitful *sophistry*; for which you also celebrate us. "This delicious flattery," you say, with great beauty and propriety of metaphor, "is of great service to our cause; for by this slight of hand," whereby we give ourselves out as the only judges of what ought to pass for pure Christianity, we put A CLOUD of witnesses, all directly against us, UNDER THE HATCHES."* I will not dispute the propriety of this metaphor. It is very possible you may be a better seaman than I am, and may have seen *clouds put under hatches*. In the same strain you say, that we "new schemers confide more in debate, where sophistry can use all its arts, than in humble prayer; at least, that *we* are always loud and violent in pleading for the former, but about the efficacy of the latter, *we* are silent as death." † I do not remember that I was ever loud and violent in pleading *for* debate and sophistry; how loud and violent soever I may have been when I have made use of them in any cause. Whether I pray or not, is known to God. If I believed nothing of the efficacy of prayer, I think I should not have composed or published any *forms of prayer*, or have recommended *family prayer*, as I have done; ‡ but you may think there is some sophistry at the bottom even of this; for you seem to have formed the most strange and formidable idea of our subtlety and prevarication.

You say, that "dealing after a subtle manner with the Scriptures," my "treatise seems to be a studied design entirely to pervert the words of our Lord; an elaborate device to give a view of the Lord's Supper totally different from what he himself has given of it." § You say, that "by evasion," I "have evidently suppressed a great part of the truth, and injuriously concealed what is absolutely necessary to be believed;" || and that I "have artfully concealed, without positively denying, the very doctrines which the words of the sacred institution emphatically express."** Is then my account of the Lord's Supper so evidently contrary to truth and the Scriptures, that I cannot even have imposed upon myself by it? What end can you suppose I had in endeavouring, by sophistry, to convince others of what I myself knew to be false?

"In more than one passage of *my* book," you say, that I "have overshot the mark, and from a blind rage against what I mistake for superstition, strike at the very power of godli-

* *Examination*, p. 8. (P.)

† See "A Serious Address," 1769, *infra*.

|| *Ibid.* p. 47. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 10. (P.)

§ *Examination*, p. 63. (P.)

** *Ibid.* p. 51. (P.)

ness itself; and also" that, "in more than one passage, I publicly bewray the state of my own heart, respecting the grand subjects of revelation itself."* Lastly, declaiming against what you call our opinions, you call them "a proud and detestable imagination, which no one, endued with a single grain of sincerity, can ever embrace." †

You, Mr. Venn, who profess so great a reverence for the Scriptures, did you never, in all the time you have been employed in meditating and executing your answer to my treatise, recollect any of their excellent admonitions about *judging others*; particularly that the *Old Testament* says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour;" and the *New*, "Judge not, that ye be not judged;" and also that "we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ"? My "conduct," you say, "carries an awful appearance indeed," ‡ and so it would, if it were such as you have represented it; but according to my poor notions, it is the spirit and tenor of *your* pamphlet that carry the awful appearance.

As the character you have given of the *new scheme*, and us the patrons of it, lies scattered in very distant places of your work, and as my remarks upon it, though connected, have taken up a good deal of room; I shall, for your benefit, and that of our readers, bring the several parts of it together. By this means, those who are acquainted with us will be better able to judge of the likeness, and of your skill in drawing. Also, if any foreigner should think it worth his while to draw up an account of the several sects of *upstart Christians* in England, he may find that of the *new schemers* done to his hand.

According to you, Sir, then, we infatuated *new schemers*, believing sin to be the unavoidable consequence of the imperfection of creatures, think it unmanly and illiberal to suppose the wrath of God to be due to it. In consequence of this, there is not, in all our writings, a single word concerning the heinous nature of sin, or a trace of evangelical humiliation for it, and about the efficacy of prayer we are silent as death. We claim heaven by our own works, discard the doctrine of a mediator, or redeemer, and preach a religion which contains no remission of sin. Bloated with the conceit of our own rare abilities, as the only connoisseurs in religion, we rely on the force of the human understanding, and not on divine teachings, and think ourselves better

* *Examination*, p. 63. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 51. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 80. (P.)

judges than God himself, of what is proper to be revealed to us. When the revelation is made, we not only make no scruple, but insist upon a *right*, to reject whatever appears to us unreasonable, how plain soever it be expressed in the books which contain the revelation. But this is not to be wondered at, since we believe nothing of the inspiration, or divine authority of the books, and consider the Bible as the word of man, and not as the word of God. If, however, we think it worth our while, and that it will answer any end, to have recourse to the Scriptures, being fond of sophistry, dexterous in the management of it, and loud and violent in the use of it, we read with a studied design to pervert the words of it, and employ elaborate devices to give views of things totally different from what they are in reality. As to the *Reformers*, who lay such a foolish stress on the Scriptures, believing them to be the rule of faith and manners, we are their determined adversaries, and look upon them all as a parcel of old fools. Indeed, as to knowledge of any kind, we think it of no sort of consequence, believing it to be as good for the soul to be without it, as to excel in it. Rejecting the Bible, as a book which contains a great deal of some kind of knowledge, we sink revealed religion into mere Deism; and no wonder, since, at the bottom, we are no better than rank Deists ourselves, and are paving the way for an open revolt from all revealed religion.

When we preach, if we enforce virtue and dissuade from vice at all, it is by means of moral arguments, scorning to make use of the authority of God, or the peculiar motives of the gospel. But, indeed, the promoting of virtue is no part of our concern, for we flatter men's vices, and give no sort of molestation to those who are addicted to them. Through a blind rage, we strike at the power of godliness itself, and cannot help bewraying the state of our hearts. We are the sons of pride, and cannot be endued with a single grain of sincerity.

In consequence of all this, our preaching is observed not to have the effect that is promised to the preaching of the truth, but all manner of vice and wickedness prevail among us. After the profligate lives we lead, we comfort ourselves, when we come to die, with the belief that future punishment, and the wrath of God against sin, are mere bugbears. We say *no harm can happen to us, since there is no knowledge in the Most High*. If these consolations fail, we make no scruple of dispatching ourselves, I suppose, that we may get to hell the sooner; and in order that our companions in infidelity

and wickedness may follow us as fast as possible, we are careful to leave behind us arguments in defence of suicide. This I should imagine, you, Mr. Venn, would think a very happy issue, provided we did but all do it at once, that so the earth might be fairly rid of such monsters; and that you, and those whom you call *the orthodox, the saints, and the whole body of real Christians*, might have it all to yourselves.

SECTION III.

CERTAINLY, Sir, when you were collecting materials for your answer to my treatise, you raked together the opinions of all kinds of unbelievers, of *Christianity* or *orthodoxy*, without distinction; and, without considering how inconsistent many of them were with others, have heaped them indiscriminately on my devoted head.

In this manner have you been dressing up a bugbear out of your own imagination, and having the best right, that of *creation*, to give it what name you please, have called it a *new schemer*, and have been combating it with all imaginable success, to your own great satisfaction, no doubt, and that of your admirers. It is a satisfaction which I by no means envy you. I might, in my turn, have replied, by exhibiting a frightful picture of your peculiar scheme of religion, and of its effects upon the lives and hearts of men: for, notwithstanding your boasting, I really believe it to be not very favourable to virtue and genuine Christianity; and I should have had little occasion to look farther than the pamphlet before me, for the proof of my assertion; but I shall not do any thing of this nature in my answer to you.

What I say, is not out of any prejudice against you personally, or as a *Calvinist*, but merely in vindication of my own character, and that of those whom you call *new schemers*. As far as you are "of the truth," and preach "the truth as it is in Jesus," so far I heartily wish you "God speed."

I firmly believe there is a wise superintending Providence, with respect to all the sects and parties into which the Christian name is broken, and I believe there is not one of them without its use in the whole scheme.

I rejoice in the peculiarly seasonable rise and spread of *Methodism*, in all its forms, as calculated to excite an attention to a future world, and a regard to that temper and conduct which will fit us for it, in many people, who were out

of the reach of other methods of instruction. This, I hope, is the great object of the leading men among the *Methodists* notwithstanding the *heterogeneous matter* which, through human infirmity, has mixed itself with their scheme. In other respects, too, I consider the Methodists, and those of the more serious clergy who favour them, and in some measure join them, in a light of importance.

Both they and you may do some kinds of good that are not easily within my reach; and, far from obstructing you, I rejoice in the prospect and consideration of it. I trust, also, that, notwithstanding your opposition, (arising, I believe, from prejudice and ignorance, not from a hatred of the truth,) God will bless my sincere endeavours to procure light for myself, and to diffuse it among others. With this view, among other schemes, I have opened the *Theological Repository*,"* which you are pleased to make the subject of your unmeaning sneers. I hope also, notwithstanding your opinion of the licentiousness of my principles, and of the badness of my heart, that, through the Divine blessing, I shall not labour in vain, in another scheme which I have equally at heart, which is to promote the interest of *practical*, as well as, and in conjunction with, that of *rational* Christianity.

Convinced as I am of the utility of several practices which, in consequence of having been abused, have been too much neglected by those who are called the more *rational* Dissenters, (a term which I am, surely, as much at liberty to use, by way of distinction, as you are to assume the title of *orthodox*, for the same purpose,) particularly catechising of children, the observance of the *Lord's Supper*, and family prayer; I have endeavoured to recommend them by plain, serious *addresses* to the persons concerned; † and though *my* little good, in this way, be *evil spoken of* by you and others, I shall continue, as I have opportunity, to do something more, in order to promote that *vital* and *practical religion* which, notwithstanding your cavilling, ‡ I still think to be all that is *fundamental*, or, if you please, (since you are so very exact in the choice of your metaphors,) all that is *essential* in it.

The time we have to spend in this world is, at best, short and precarious. I would, therefore, be solicitous to employ

* "Published, under the direction of Dr. Priestley, in numbers, at the interval of two or three months, price one shilling and sixpence, *The Theological Repository*; consisting of Original Essays, Hints, Queries, &c. Calculated to promote Religious Knowledge." List of Publications prefixed to this pamphlet. For the *Introduction*, dated Leeds, Nov. 2. 1768, see Vol. VII. *Appendix*.

† See *supra*, pp. 249—292, and the "Serious Address," *infra*.

‡ *Examination*, p. 32. (P.)

it to the best purpose, according to the ability and opportunity I may be favoured with of being useful to mankind; and would, therefore, spend as little of it as possible in any thing that approaches to *altercation*; but the cause of truth and the public may, sometimes, require that the mouth of slander be stopped. In these disagreeable circumstances, however, I hope I shall always preserve the temper of a Christian, who, in meekness, though with firmness and intrepidity, *reproves, rebukes, and exhorts* them that oppose themselves; remembering that I myself am fallible, and, notwithstanding all the care I have taken in changing and forming my sentiments, I may have been too precipitate, and be still mistaken.

I trust, however, that, of all the errors into which men are liable to be betrayed, I shall never be seduced into the belief, that any *involuntary errors* whatever (whether they be mine, yours, or those of my greatest adversaries) will render us obnoxious to the final wrath of God. I trust that I shall always believe that *light coming into the world* will never be the cause of condemnation to any, but to those *who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil*; who must, therefore, know when they incur it, and be conscious that they deserve it; and shall never consider any *heresy* as *damnable*, but that of those who are *self-condemned*. Having experienced an almost entire revolution in my own religious sentiments, and finding, I trust, my heart better, as well as my head clearer in consequence of it; I hope I shall ever be ready to make sufficient allowance for the prejudices of others, at the same time that the recollection of my former ignorance will make me zealous to inform them better.

When I first heard of your intended answer to my treatise, I was in hopes that I might have derived some advantage from it; that I should have been able, from your candour and attention to the subject, to have corrected some mistakes I might have fallen into, or, at least, to have amended some obnoxious expressions, which, through inadvertence, might have escaped me in it; but I am afraid that your performance will be of very little service to me in either of these respects, whenever mine comes to a third edition. I have, however, such an opinion of your good sense, and of my remarks on your answer together, as to think, that if ever you do republish it, you will be able to correct several things which, upon farther recollection, you will think too hasty and uncharitable. You call your Examination “free and full,” and indeed, Sir, it is *very free*, and *very full*; but what *kind* of freedoms

you have taken, or of *what* it is full, I hope you will never again think with pleasure. To apologize for your freedom, you say, "Is there not a cause?" I answer, By no means; because no *good cause* can require *calumny* and *falsehood*.

You are pleased to express some degree of respect for us *Protestant Dissenters*, and indeed, I cannot help considering you as in a kind of connexion with us, on account of your attention to, and interference in this business, which belongs to Dissenters only. You even expressly say, (though in a style somewhat peculiar to yourself,) that the man "who does not feel a high veneration for some of them, must be devoured by a preposterous, horrible bigotry to his own way;"* nevertheless, "an enemy," as you declare yourself, "to all persecution," you give me what you call "a memento," to shew me, "with what an ill grace" I "revile your Thirty-nine Articles," by telling me, that if I "have not subscribed thirty-three of them, one clause excepted, *I* appear and act in a character I have no more right to assume, than a gentleman has to act as a justice of peace without his commission; and that if, without subscribing, *I* take upon myself to be a teacher of religion, *I* act contrary to the law of the realm, in that case made and provided." † But I hope that the *commission* you speak of will not be demanded of me when I *give an account of my ministry to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls*. And as to the laws of this realm, "in that case made and provided," let the makers and providers of them, and do you who approve of them, judge, whether it be better to obey God, or man.

You are pleased to call the intimation you here give me, concerning my being obnoxious to the laws of this country, "a memento," and solemnly to *aver*, that you "have not taken notice of this circumstance, to bring the least inconvenience upon any man;" for that you "abhor every sort of persecution on account of religion." But is not "a memento" *to me*, in a book advertised in all the public newspapers, and exposed to public sale throughout the kingdom, "a memento" *to the civil magistrate* also? Certainly; therefore, if any mischief should, by this means, befall me, my blood will be required at your hands.

I shall conclude with returning you thanks for the good-will you express for me in your last paragraph, in which you say you "wish me a rich experience of the power of those truths

* *Examination*, p. 1. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 57. (P.)

against which *I* fight with a high hand;" and that I "may employ myself, from henceforth, in the service of the best of masters, and the cause of the truth, as it is in Jesus." *From henceforth*, I suppose, means from the time that I should have read your pamphlet; which I, therefore, conclude was piously intended to effect my conversion from *rank Deism*, to *high Calvinism*. A great effect, to be sure! But I doubt not you thought the means were adequate to it; though you must, certainly, have thought me to be made of very different materials from the rest of mankind, if you could imagine that I was to be brought over from my present way of thinking in matters of religion without argument, good temper, or decent language.

I would not, however, have my *orthodox* friends absolutely to despair of my conversion, though this attempt has proved abortive. I trust that I shall always keep my mind open to conviction, and if they be not so precipitate in a second choice of a champion, but proceed with more deliberation, (as becomes them in a matter of so much consequence,) I may still yield with a good grace. For their encouragement, I can assure them, that nothing you have done has in the least prejudiced their cause with me, (what it may have done with *others* I cannot say, and am not answerable for,) the perusal of your pamphlet having left no trace of sourness, peevishness, or obstinacy upon my mind, more than I was impressed with when I first took it into my hands, so that the business is still *in integro*. And if, in the issue, contrary to their present expectations, they should be convinced, as I have been, that the opinions which now excite their horror and indignation are, nevertheless, agreeable to reason and the Scriptures; that we whom they regard "as deceivers," are "yet true" to the interests of God and of Christ; and should themselves come to profess that faith which they now labour to destroy; I shall, with the Christians at Jerusalem, in the case of *St. Paul*, [*Gal. i. 24.*] *glorify God on that account*; and receive their *acknowledgement of the truth* with joy, and without insult.

With respect to you, Mr. Venn, there is one probability of my having made a better choice of my present opinions in preference to yours, which I once held, than you have made of your own; which is, (as I suppose you will allow,) that I understand your principles, and am not unacquainted with what has been said in favour of them; whereas you appear, in this pamphlet, to be utterly ignorant of mine.

As you inform us, that “the duty of your office”* concurred with the request of Dissenters, to induce you to animadvert upon my treatise; I may presume, that, though the latter of these motives should happen to be withdrawn, the former will operate so much the more powerfully, that, joined with an additional motive, arising from the principle of *self-defence*, it will prompt you to write *another letter*, in answer to this. I shall, therefore, flatter myself with the expectation of hearing from you again, and in less than *two years*. Taking this for granted, I shall (in order to save you the trouble of writing, and myself and others the trouble of reading, a great deal of superfluous matter, and to point out to you a method of writing less favourable to rambling and repetition) state, as distinctly as I can, what will be expected from you; and without which any reply you can make will be deemed little to the purpose.

1. In the first place, I call upon you as a *theologian*, and *Scripture critic*, to state, with precision, your idea of the *Lord's Supper*; and, as I presume you will not deny it to be the same with that which is expressed (though in an awkward and confused manner) in your Thirty-nine Articles [xxv.], prove that “sacraments be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and of God's will towards us; by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen, and confirm our faith in him,” in a manner either *different from*, or *superior to*, the effects of other Christian ordinances. Prove that the *Lord's Supper* is any thing more than a *rite in commemoration of the death of Christ, and the blessings of his gospel*; implying a solemn and public declaration of a man's being a Christian, and his resolution to live as becomes a Christian. In short, prove it to be any thing more than I have represented it.

2. If you still choose to appear as the *advocate of the orthodox Dissenters*, I call upon you to assign good reasons why those who are merely *nominal Christians*, though of decent lives, and fair characters, but who are not able to make out any thing that, in their sense of the word, could be called an *experience*, should be excluded from the *Lord's Supper*. Prove this either by plain texts of Scripture, or by arguments drawn from the known practice of the primitive church.

3. On the other hand, as a *minister of the Church of England*, shew the propriety of admitting to communion, not

* *Examination*, p. 2. (P.)

only merely *nominal Christians*, but also known *infidels*, and persons of notoriously *profligate lives*, when, according to our excellent constitutions, "for that end made and provided," as you say, they are obliged to receive it, in order to be admitted to a civil office; and explain the reasonableness of compelling conscientious ministers to concur in this scandalous prostitution of a solemn religious rite.

4. As a *writer*, vindicate the account you have given of the sentiments contained in my book. Shew that you have quoted fairly, represented justly, and endeavoured to refute, what I have really asserted, in answer to the first section of my remarks on your pamphlet.

5. As a *writer*, also, I particularly call upon you to cite your authorities for every article of the black account you have given of those persons whom you call *new schemers*, including myself. Prove that we are "the determined adversaries of the Reformers;" that it is our opinion, that "the faculty of man is of itself sufficient to determine what it becomes Jehovah to reveal of himself, his councils, and his way of saving his rebellious creatures;" that we believe "no divine teachings;" that we "disclaim the divine authority of the Scriptures;" and that we "insist upon a right to reject whatever appears to *us* unreasonable in them, be the words that affirm it ever so plain." Shew me in which of our writings there is "no trace of the detestable properties of sin," or of "evangelical humiliation for it;" and that we think it to be "illiberal and unmanly to suppose the wrath of God incurred by it." Give the names of those of us who pretend "to merit heaven by *our* own works," and "a power to save" ourselves. Give your reasons for asserting, that we "preach a religion that contains no remission of sins, no Mediator," and "no Redeemer." Prove that we "give men no molestation in their vices," and that we do not make use of the "commands of the Almighty to enforce virtue." Tell us what "dying new schemer" was ever heard to say, "Tush! there will no harm happen to us. Is there knowledge in the Most High?" as a proof that our principles embolden men in their wickedness. Shew in what respects we *new schemers* "resemble the Heathen, in the intercommunity of their dunghill deities;" how myself, in particular, am "no better than a rank Deist at the bottom," and that our "notions in religion" are "Pagan." Demonstrate, finally, that our principles impel us to "self-murder," and prove that any of us ever "openly pleaded for the lawfulness of suicide."

If you do not choose to be considered as a *mere calumniator*, one who makes no scruple of using any means, how unfair soever, to bring an odium upon others, in order to gain some end of his own; let the public see what you have to advance in support of *all* these charges, and do it *fairly* and *fully*; unless you shall think it sufficient to prove your charge against us in the same manner as you have done, that “old Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was as orthodox as good Mr. Henry himself.”* As to what you say about our being the “sons of pride,” and every thing else concerning the “immoral tendency” of our opinions, I presume that what you have said will be deemed quite sufficient, and that you have no occasion to make any addition to it.

Lastly, as a thing of infinitely more consequence than all the above-mentioned articles, and which, I am afraid, will be a matter of some pain and difficulty to you, I desire you, *as a man and a Christian*, to lay your hand upon your heart, and question yourself concerning the real *temper of mind* in which you wrote to me, the *true motives* of your conduct, and the *end* you had in view, in endeavouring, as you have done, to expose me, and those whom you call *new schemers*, to the odium and indignation of mankind. Of this you need make no public declaration. It concerns only God and your own mind.

If you be not able to give full satisfaction with respect to the above-mentioned articles, I need not inform you, that it will be expected of you, that you act, upon the occasion, like an honest man, who finds that he has been “overtaken in a fault.” This is the light in which I am willing to consider you. The best of us (notwithstanding we endeavour, according to our Lord’s direction, to keep our *eye single*) are liable to be influenced by such a *mixture of motives* as I have mentioned, † so that we may *not know what spirit we are of*; and, being all of us conscious of our own infirmities, we ought to cherish a spirit of meekness and candour with respect to those of others.

Wishing you the very same good things that you have wished me, with the addition of as much modesty, candour, and meekness, as may be wanting to complete the Christian part of your character, I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your very humble servant,
JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

Leeds, August, 1769.

* Examination, p. 72. (P.)

† *Supra*, p. 304.

AN

ADDRESS TO PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,

ON THE SUBJECT OF GIVING THE

Lord's Supper to Children.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." SOLOMON.

 [London, 1778.]

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE subject of this Address was almost as new to myself, as it can be to any of you, at the time [1768] that I published my *Address* to you on the subject of the *Lord's Supper* in general.* I cannot say that I had not heard of the question, but I had given no particular attention to it. But having, since that time, been more conversant with the ancient Christian writers, usually called *Fathers*, and especially having met with Mr. Peirce's *Essay* on the subject, † I am now, upon mature consideration, fully satisfied, that *infant communion*, as well as *infant baptism*, was the most ancient custom in the Christian church; and therefore that the practice is of apostolical, and consequently of divine authority. ‡

I am well aware of the prejudice with which any thing that can be said on this subject will be generally received by persons who have been constantly used to the contrary

* See *supra*, pp. 249—292.

† An Essay in favour of the ancient Practice of giving the Eucharist to Children. By the late Reverend and learned Mr. James Peirce, of Exon." 1728. One of the publishers was "S. Chandler, at the Cross Keys in the Poultry," where Dr. Chandler then carried on the trade of a bookseller. See *Biog. Brit.* III. pp. 430, 431; *Prot. Diss. Mag.* I. pp. 219, 220; *Mon. Repos.* XVII. p. 27.

‡ Dr. Priestley, I apprehend, never saw reason to abandon this opinion; (see Vol. II. pp. 337, 338, V. p. 238;) though I am not aware that he ever had an opportunity of introducing the practice in either of the congregations which had the advantage of his ministry. He, probably, stood alone, like Mr. Newton of Norwich whom I mentioned Vol. II. p. 267, *Note*.

practice, and who have never so much as heard of any other ; but this obstacle lies in the way of every reformation, when the corruption of any opinion or rite in the Christian church has been long established. It was the case with the first reformers from *Popery*. They discovered but a part of the Papal corruptions, though some of the most glaring of them ; but the providence of God has been gradually opening the eyes of the Christian world to many others, of which they took no notice ; and such, I believe, is the case with this.

Think not, however, that, though the proposal of giving the *Eucharist* to children be new to many of you who read this *Address*, it is therefore a subject that has never been started before. The practice has been largely and ably defended by the learned Mr. Peirce, of Exeter, (who greatly distinguished himself both by his writings and sufferings in the cause of truth,) in a treatise * which was published, after his death, † in the year 1728 ; and to which no answer, that I have heard of, has yet been made. This treatise I think is abundantly sufficient to satisfy any candid and impartial

* See *supra*, p. 354, *Note*. Of the occasion of writing the *Essay*, and the unfavourable reception given to his opinion, the author has the following account in his *Preface* : " About six or seven years ago, (as I guess,) I began to write somewhat upon it, and went no farther than an introduction, only I cast together a very few hints of arguments which might be alleged for it. I had done so little upon the subject, that I had entirely forgot that I had ever writ any thing concerning it, till the paper a good while after came accidentally in my way. Upon the perusal of it, I was sensible I could say a great deal more for the custom. But I was still backward to take the pains to write what was like to be received in the world with so much dislike. I made it frequently the subject of discourse, when I was conversing with ingenious persons, who I apprehended might help me to some light about it. But, excepting one or two, who had the hint from me, and fell in with it, the suggestion met with contempt, horror, and detestation." *Essay*, p. iv.

† Which happened March 30, 1726, in his 53d year. See *Prot. Diss. Mag.* II. p. 451 ; *Mon. Repos.* XVI. pp. 331, 723. The author had designed the publication during his life, as appears in his *Preface*, where he also ingeniously describes the motives which determined him :

" I profess solemnly, the conviction I have at present of the truth of what I plead for, and the sense I have of the importance of that truth, make me judge it my duty to publish this to the world. I have no design to raise disturbances, or create any new controversies in the church. I heartily bewail those which already trouble it, and, excepting truth and a good conscience, I should count nothing too dear to myself to part with for the ending them. Nor shall my opinion lead me to do any thing to the breach of the peace of the church. If I am in the right, I doubt not others will perceive it, and some learned hand will supply what is wanting in my management of the argument. If the prevailing opinion should make this *Essay* be slighted, without removing my difficulties, I shall rest satisfied in having discharged a good conscience, and patiently wait till God shall further reveal the truth in this matter to us.

" I suppose I may expect an occasion of reviewing what I have written ; which I shall not hastily take, that I may first see all that will be said against me. But as soon as I think I have all, I design, if God give life and health, to defend or retract what I have said. And herein I hope to be wholly guided by a sincere regard to truth, being indifferent on which side of the question I shall find it." *Essay*, pp. vii. viii.

inquirer; and I pretend not, in this Address, to do much more than to bring into one view, and into a shorter compass, the most important of his arguments, in order to revive some degree of attention to the subject. While I do this, laying before you the evidence of what appears to me to be a truly ancient and apostolical practice, I flatter myself that you will hear me with due attention and candour.

I am far from pretending that any thing which relates to a mere *external* service, is of primary importance in Christianity. Nothing can be said to be of primary importance, but the doctrines concerning God, our moral duty, and a future state; because these have the greatest influence on men's hearts and lives, and fit them for a happy immortality after death. But, notwithstanding this, every *divine command* ought certainly to be implicitly complied with, even though we should not be able to discover the reason of it. I hope, however, to make it appear, that this practice has several, and even obvious uses, as well as the authority of an ancient apostolical practice, to recommend it.

In my address to you upon this subject, I shall first endeavour to shew, that we have sufficient reason to believe that giving the *Eucharist* to children was an ancient and even an apostolical practice. I shall then trace the history of this custom, and the manner in which it went out of use in the Church of *Rome*; (for it was never disused in any other Christian church;) and, in the last place, I shall endeavour to recommend this practice, from the consideration of the advantages that may probably be derived from it.

That little should be said in the way of *positive precept*, either about the *baptism* or the *communion* of infants, by the apostles and other primitive writers, cannot be wondered at, when we consider that they were *Jews*, and therefore took for granted all the general maxims of the Jewish religion, unless they were expressly countermanded by the authority of Christ. Now, it was a fundamental maxim in the Jewish religion, that children were capable of full communion in it; and, indeed, there is hardly any kind of religious service mentioned in the *Old Testament*, in which there is not express mention of children bearing a part in it, if they were naturally capable of it.* There would be nothing, therefore, in

* On "the right of infants to partake of the sacraments of the Old Testament," see Mr. Peirce's arguments from "*Josh. viii. 35, 2 Chron. xx. 13, Joel ii. 15, 16, Neh. xii. 43; compared with Zech. x. 7, Deut. xxix. 10-12, 14, 15, Micah. ii. 9.*" *Essay*, pp. 99, 100.

the Christian system, that could be applied to children, which the apostles would not, of course, have admitted them to, unless they had been expressly forbidden. *

Thus, as it had been the universal custom, that, when a master of a family was converted to the Jewish religion, he should not only be circumcised himself, but also circumcise his children, and even his slaves, the primitive Christians would, of course, unless they had had some express order to the contrary, conclude and direct, that when a master of a family was converted to the Christian religion, he should not only be baptized himself, but also all his *household*, consisting of his children and all who were properly *under his power*. †

Indeed, without any farther reasoning, they could not but see, that a child was, naturally, as capable of being *baptized*, as of being *circumcised*, and as capable of receiving the *Lord's Supper*, as of eating the *Passover*. ‡ They could not but perceive, also, that the *uses* of these ordinances have, respectively, a remarkable correspondence to one another. For as circumcision was the initiatory ordinance in the *Jewish* religion, so is baptism in the *Christian*; and as the *Passover* was instituted in commemoration of an event of the greatest importance to all Jews, so the *Lord's Supper* was instituted in commemoration of an event of the greatest importance to all Christians. Since these institutions have so remarkable a correspondence in the two religions, the Apostles and primitive Christians would never think of making any difference with respect to the subjects of them, without an express order for it; and certainly no such order appears.

Very particular notice, as I observed before, is taken of children in the Jewish law, and of their being present upon

* "As to this way of reasoning," says Mr. Peirce, "from the Sacraments under the old dispensation to those under the new, the apostle [*Paul*] is my warrant for it. He has as plainly as can be, taught us to argue in this manner, by the comparison he has made of the Sacraments under the two dispensations, and drawing inferences himself from the one to the other. Let any man read carefully the tenth chapter of the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, and I am persuaded he will see his argument will not hold, nor his reasoning be strong and convincing, (which yet it always is in the highest degree, when rightly understood,) unless this supposition be laid as the foundation of all: That the Sacraments of the Old Testament serve to direct us in the use of those of the New, and that we may safely argue from the former to the latter." *Essay*, pp. 100, 101.

† See Vol. II. p. 334, V. p. 272.

‡ "Since the Jewish infants being circumcised," says Bishop Taylor, "is used as an argument that they might be baptized, their eating of the Paschal Lamb may also be a competent warrant to eat of that Sacrament, in which also, as in the other, the sacrificed Lamb is represented as offered and slain for them." *Worthy Communicant*, ed. 6, 1701, p. 159.

occasion of all acts of public worship. Thus Moses, when he pleaded with Pharaoh for leave to go into the wilderness, to sacrifice to the Lord, in answer to Pharaoh's proposal, that "the men" *only* should go, (*Exod. x. 7, 11.*)* says, (*ver. 9.*) "We will go with our young, and with our old, with our sons, and with our daughters,—for we must hold a feast unto the Lord."

Agreeable to this, it is remarkable, that, in all Christian antiquity, we always find, that communion in the *Lord's Supper* immediately followed baptism.† And no such thing occurs as that of any person having a right to one of these ordinances, and not to the other. Indeed no terms of distinction are ever mentioned but of *full communicants*, usually called *the faithful, catechumens*, or candidates for baptism, and *penitents*, or those who had been excommunicated, and were desirous of being re-admitted to communion with the church.

The ancients had not even an idea of a right to join in the prayers of the church, without a right to receive the *Lord's Supper*. Catechumens, penitents, and even Heathens, were permitted to be present at the reading of the Scriptures, and also at the discourse, or sermon, which followed it; but when the church proceeded to the administration of the Lord's Supper, which part of the service, and which only, was preceded by prayer, in which all who were present were considered as addressing themselves to God, as their God and Father in Christ, all who could not properly join in those prayers were desired to depart.‡

¶

* "Pharaoh's answer," says Mr. Peirce, "indeed shews he was much of the opinion which is at present prevailing, and that he thought children were not fit to serve the Lord, and therefore should not be allowed to go and hold a feast to him with the grown people." *Essay*, p. 114.

† Bishop Taylor, on the question "whether infants are to be admitted to the Holy Communion," remarks, that "from some of the earliest ages of the church, down to the time of Charles the Great, that is, for above six hundred years, the church of God did give the holy communion to newly-baptized infants." *Worthy Communicant*, pp. 146, 147. See Vol. V. p. 282. Mr. Peirce has given, on his title-page, the following testimony to this opinion, by a learned divine, the object and end of whose inquiries are thus described by a biographer: "Il n'eut d'autre passion que celle de connoître la vérité, et d'autre désir que celui de l'enseigner." *Nouv. Dict. Hist.* II. p. 68. "Non desunt hodie viri in ecclesia catholica eruditi, qui hanc vetustam, infantes statim à baptismo communicandi, multarum ecclesiarum, in quibus fuit et Romana ecclesia, consuetudinem, usque adeo reprehendendam non putant, ut multis eam rationibus probent: Dignamque rem esse censeant, quæ ad ecclesiæ judicium deferatur. *Cassander de Baptismo Infantium*, Colon. 1563, p. 89." George Cassander died in 1566, aged 51.

‡ Mr. Peirce says, "When they cried before the administration, *Τα ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις*, did they intend to exclude infants, who, being baptized, were certainly reckoned among the *ἅγιοις*, or the saints? Whom did they mean when they cried out, Depart, ye that cannot pray, (*Ἀπελθετε οἱ μη δυναμενοι δεηθησαι*. Chrysost. *Hom.*

Besides, had there been with them, as there is with us, an interval between the time of baptizing and of receiving the *Lord's Supper*, the length of it could hardly have failed to have been mentioned, and expressly defined. Otherwise, in a case of this nature, there would have been differences of opinion, and consequently disputes; some maintaining that persons ought to come sooner, and others later, to this ordinance. Whereas it is remarkable, that, in all antiquity, from the time of the Apostles, there is no mention, either of any such *decision*, or of any such *controversy*. The very terms of *adult* and *infant communion* do not occur; for they had no distinction of that kind to suggest the use of them.

The very *prejudices* and *mistakes* of the ancients prove that they had no idea of the *Lord's Supper* that could lead them to exclude infants from it, but rather such as must have tended to enforce their communion. Thus, it was a general opinion, which we find in *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, and even in *Ignatius*, who was contemporary with the Apostles, that the words of our Lord, in *John* vi. 50—58, about the necessity of *eating his flesh and drinking his blood*, in order to have *life*, were to be understood of the *Lord's Supper*; and, accordingly, it was their opinion, that the partaking of this ordinance made the body capable of a resurrection to eternal life; and can it be supposed that the Christians of those times would cut off their children from this great privilege?*

So far were the primitive Christians from having an opinion of the necessity of all the communicants actually joining in the prayers which were made at the celebration of the *Lord's Supper*, of which, it is acknowledged, that children are incapable, that it was their custom to send part of the elements from one church to another, to express their fellowship and harmony.† They also sent of them from the place of public worship to the sick, and took of them to eat in private, at their own houses.‡ Some of their opinions and

iii. in *Eph.*,) but those who, not being baptized, might not be present when they said the Lord's Prayer? Did they mean any others hereby, than the catechumens?" *Essay*, pp. 30, 31. See also pp. 134—142; *Worthy Communicant*, p. 144. On the modern *Greek Church*, see Vol. II. p. 338, V. p. 238, *Note* §.

* See *Peirce*, pp. 59—63.

† "But the presbyters before you," says *Irenæus*, (*ad Victorem*, apud *Euseb.* H. E. L. v. C. xxiv.,) "who did not keep *Easter*, sent the *Eucharist* to the bishops of other parishes who did keep it." *Peirce*, p. 72. See Vol. V. p. 237.

‡ "Which they used to do daily. *Tertullian* has several passages to this purpose. Thus speaking against marrying with an infidel, he says, (*ad Uxorem*, L. ii. C. v. p. 190.) 'Non sciet maritus quid secreto ante omnem cibum gustes? Et si sciverit panem, non illum credit esse qui dicitur?' (Will not your husband know what you taste in secret before any other food? And if he knows 'tis bread, will he

practices, with respect to this rite, are certainly superstitious; but with this I have nothing to do. It is sufficient for my purpose, that they clearly suppose the universal practice of full communion to all who were baptized, as the foundation for them.

The fairest test that perhaps the authority of any opinion or practice was ever put to, was that which this was put to in the *Pelagian* controversy,* about the year 400, when *Austin*, in defence of the doctrine of *original sin*, which he then started, alleged, that baptism and communion in the *Lord's Supper*, are necessary in order to put it away. "No person," says he, "who professes himself a Christian, of the Catholic faith, denies or doubts, that children, without receiving the grace of regeneration in Christ, and without eating his flesh and drinking his blood," that is, without baptism and the *Lord's Supper*, "have not life in them, and therefore are liable to everlasting punishment." Now, certainly, the easiest, the most effectual, and, at the same time, the most obvious answer to this argument, would have been to deny the antiquity and authority of the custom of baptizing infants, and admitting them to the *Lord's Supper*; but no such argument was mentioned by *Pelagius*, or his followers. On the contrary, instead of disputing the antiquity and authority of the custom, they had recourse to various other arguments, and some very weak ones. Among others, *Pelagius* made a distinction between "the kingdom of God," and *eternal life*; allowing that unbaptized children had a right to the one, but not to the other. †

We find, also, in the writings of *Cyprian*, who flourished about the middle of the third century, that the custom of giving the *Eucharist* to children prevailed, and was uncontroverted in his time. He recites a history, ‡ in which it

not think 'tis such as 'tis said to be?) And in another place (*De Orat. C. xiv.*), to clear the difficulty of those who were against communicating on a fast-day, because thereby they broke their fast, he propounds this expedient, *Accepto corpore Domini, et reservato, utrumque salvum est, et participatio sacrificii, et executio officii*: To take the bread and reserve it till their fast was ended.

"They had another custom, that after the administration of the Sacrament, they sent the elements to such as were absent, by the deacons. This is most expressly asserted by *Justin Martyr*, in that *Apology* which he wrote within forty years after the death of *St. John*. Και τας ε παρασι δια των διακονων περιεεται. *Apol. II. p. 162.*" *Peirce*, pp. 72, 73. See Vol. V. pp. 237, 238.

* See Vol. V. p. 275, VIII. pp. 521—527, XX. pp. 475—478.

† See *Peirce*, pp. 24, 34.

‡ Certainly a very marvellous story. It is thus quoted by *Peirce*: "Præsente ac teste me ipso, accipite quid evenerit. Parentes forte fugientes dum trepidi minus suis consulunt, sub nutricis alimento parvulam filiam reliquerunt, relictam nutrix detulit ad magistratus. Illi ei ad idolum quo populus confluebat, quod carnem

appears, that the *Lord's Supper* was administered to a child that could not speak, without taking the least notice that there was any thing particular in that circumstance; and, speaking of some who had abandoned Christianity, he says, "That nothing might be wanting to the measure of their wickedness, infants were carried, or led by their parents; and, while they were little, *lost that which they had obtained presently after they were born*; * mentioning afterwards, "*the meat and cup of our Lord*," among the things which they had lost. †

Some persons may possibly wonder, that there should be no such express mention of this practice by any Christian writer before *Cyprian*; but the wonder will cease, if they consider, that the writers before *Cyprian* are very few, and the occasions of their writing such as could not, with propriety, have led them to speak of it.

This agrees with the notion of its having been the universal practice from the beginning of Christianity, but by no means with the idea of its having been introduced within that period. Thus in early writers we meet with no exhortations to *frequent communion*, because it was universally frequent; but when the idea of the great importance and peculiar sanctity of this ordinance took place, and with it that of the great hazard of receiving unworthily, which restrained great numbers from communicating so often as they had done, such exhortations begin to be very common, as in the writings of *Chrysostom* and others.

It should be considered, also, that there is no express mention made of *infant baptism* before this of *infant communion*;

necdum posset edere per ætatem, panem mero mixtum, quod tamen ipsum de immolatione percuntium supererat, tradiderunt. Receptit filiam postmodum mater. Sed facinus puella commissum tam loqui et indicare non potuit, quam nec intelligere prius potuit, nec arcere.

"Ignorantia igitur obreptum est, ut sacrificantibus nobis eam secum mater inferret. Sed enim puella mixta cum sanctis, *precis nostræ et orationis impatiens, nunc ploratu concuti, nunc mentis æstu cæpit fluctuabunda jactari, et velut tortore cogente, quibus poterat indicium conscientiam facti in simplicibus adhuc annis rudis anima fatebatur*. Ubi vero solennibus adimpletis calicem diaconus offerre præsentibus cæpit, et accipientibus ceteris locus ejus advenit; faciem suam *parvula instinctu Divinæ Majestatis* avertere, os labiis obturantibus premere, calicem recusare. Perstitit tamen diaconus, et reluctanti licet, de sacramento calicis infudit. Tunc sequitur singultus et vomitus. *In corpore atque ore violato eucharistia* permanere non potuit. Sanctificatus in Domini sanguine potus de pollutis visceribus erupit; tanta est potestas Domini, tanta majestas. Secreta tenebrarum sub ejus luce detecta sunt, sacerdotem Dei nec occulta crimina fefellerunt. Hoc circa infantem, quæ ad eloquendum alienum circa se crimen necdum habuit ætatem. *Cyprian, de Lapsis*, p. 132." *Essay*, p. 36. See Vol. V. p. 238, *Note* †; X. p. 469, *Note* †.

* "Ne quid deesset ad criminis cumulum, infantes quoque parentum manibus vel impositi vel attracti, amiserunt parvuli, quod in primo statim nativitatis exordio fuerant consecuti. *De Lapsis*, p. 129." *Peirce* (from *Wall*, l. p. 87), p. 42.

† "Derelicto cibo et poculo Domini." *Ibid.* p. 43.

and that the mention of them both is alike accidental. Had it not been for the circumstance which led *Cyprian* to mention them, and the conceit of one *Fidus*, who contended for deferring baptism till the eighth day,* in conformity to the Jewish time of circumcision, it is probable that there would not have been any mention of either of these customs till the fifth century; and for the mention of them at that time we are indebted to the *Pelagian* controversy.†

It is likewise not improper to observe, that there is no mention made of infant communion, from the time of *Cyprian* to that of *Pope Innocent*, though it is allowed by all to have been universally practised in that period; ‡ and the interval between *Cyprian* and *Innocent* is about the same as that which intervened between *Cyprian* and *John*, the last of the Apostles, viz. about 150 years,§ and an interval which had much fewer Christian writers.

Besides, nothing is said by any writer before *Cyprian*, from which it can be inferred that the custom of giving the *Eucharist* to children was not in use; and the prevailing opinions and prejudices mentioned before, || some of which may be traced up to *Ignatius*, who was contemporary with the Apostles, were such as are almost alone sufficient to lead us to infer the practice. In circumstances like these, the silence of remote antiquity is certainly a strong argument in favour of the universal prevalence of a custom. ¶

Now when infant communion appears to have been the constant practice among the earliest of the primitive Christians, and continued, without variation, for many centuries, in ages abounding with writers, and full of contro-

* See Vol. XX. p. 474; *Peirce*, pp. 45—49.

† See *Peirce*, pp. 20, 55.

‡ “*Pope Innocent* does not mention this as a new thing; and the very way of his speaking of it would make one think he was rather appealing to a received doctrine or practice, than attempting to introduce a new one. *Innocent* brings in the mention of it very accidentally and slightly, in order to confute those he wrote against, and just in the same manner as every one will allow he would have done, if the doctrine and practice had certainly been in vogue long before.” *Peirce*, pp. 33, 34.

§ *Ibid.* p. 56.

|| *Supra*, p. 359.

¶ *Pierce* p. 17. “As to the *Antipædobaptists*,” says Mr. *Pierce*, “I own this argument is of no strength at all; but they will be able easily enough to answer it according to their principles. But I desire all that are of the same persuasion with myself, concerning the ancient practice of baptizing infants, to consider seriously, how they can account for it, that there should be nothing found in the writings of the ancients like to the style and language of the moderns, if the custom of both as to infant communion were the same.—How common is it with us to urge such as were baptized in their infancy, to renew their baptismal covenant, when they are grown up, and to think of coming and doing it at the Lord’s table! Why are there no footsteps of any such exhortations in the ancient writers, unless it be, that in their time there was no manner of need of them, because the vows of such were renewed immediately after baptism, and continually from time to time at the Lord’s table?” *Ibid.* pp. 57, 58.

versy, can it be supposed that it was not in use even in the time of the Apostles ; and that we should not have been able to trace the rise and progress of it, if it had been introduced after their time ; especially considering how much easier it is to do this with respect to a *practice*, than with respect to an *opinion* ?

These considerations lead us not to expect to find much said concerning infant communion by the Apostles, and other writers of the *New Testament*, there having been no controversy about it, to give them an opportunity of mentioning it. However, there are not wanting circumstances which shew, that, though the writers of the *New Testament* do not expressly mention it, yet that they *had a view to it* in their writings.

The apostle *Paul* seems to have referred to the custom of giving the *Eucharist* to children in 1 *Cor.* vii. 14: " For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."* For what could the Apostle, or any *Jew*, mean by children being *holy*, or *clean*, but what had always been understood by that term in the Jewish law, where it implies a right to full communion in public worship ? A person *unclean*, or *unholy*, (for the terms are of the same import,) was excluded from the temple-service ; but when he was *cleansed*, or *made holy*, he recovered his former privilege. From these considerations I think we may pretty reasonably conclude, that the Apostle, in this place, meant to determine that the children of but one Christian parent were, in this sense, *holy*, or had a right to Christian communion, by which, at that time, and many ages afterwards, was always meant both *baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*.

Farther, the apostle *Paul* [1 *Cor.* x. 21] compares *communion with an idol*, or in idol worship, to *communion with Christ*, and shews that they are utterly inconsistent with one another. Now it is pretty evident that children partook of feasts in honour of idols.†

Again, when the *Corinthians* so far mistook the nature of the *Lord's Supper*, that they made a *common meal* of it,‡ on which occasion some were *hungry*, and others *drunken*, that is, drank very liberally, Mr. Peirce thinks it can hardly be supposed, but that their whole families were present ; and yet, though the Apostle, no doubt, reproves them for every

* See Vol. V. p. 275, XX. p. 470. † See *supra*, p. 360, Note † ; Peirce, pp. 94—98.
‡ See, on 1. *Cor.* xi. 21, Vol. XIV. p. 97.

thing that was *disorderly* in their conduct upon this occasion, he says nothing of their being guilty of any impropriety in this respect.

I do not lay much stress upon our Saviour's invitation to little children [Matt. xix. 14] to *come unto him*, or his adding, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven," because it is probable that his principal meaning was, that such innocence as theirs would qualify grown-up persons to be the proper subjects of his kingdom: yet they may also intimate, that of such would his *visible church* on earth consist.

It is true that these passages contain no more than *allusions* to the custom of giving the *Eucharist* to children, and that these allusions were, as it were, *accidental*; but then this very circumstance is an argument in favour of the practice being universally received and established when those writings were composed, so that there was no occasion to speak of it in any other manner, if at all. Had there not been so much as even an allusion to this custom in the *New Testament*, yet as we find it to have been universally practised so near to the times of the Apostles, that the introduction of it afterwards is in the highest degree improbable, we have sufficient authority to ascribe it to them. And if the practice and authority of the Apostles have any weight with us, it will be the same thing whether we be certified of their practice by the medium of their own writings, or by any other *unquestionable evidence*.

The *Apostles* themselves make no mention of their meeting constantly for public worship on the first day of the week; yet almost all the Christian world justly considers this practice as *apostolical*; because they find that it was, without any controversy, and universally, received among Christians in early times.* Now the evidence of *infant communion* being an apostolical practice, is exactly similar to that by which we infer that meeting for public worship on the first day of the week is so.

You will say, if *infant communion* was universally the ancient practice in the Christian church, how came it to be laid aside? This question I shall now endeavour to answer, by giving, as I proposed to do, in the second place, the history of this custom.

I own that our present practice in this respect is so very different from the ancient *apostolical* one, that a stranger might well wonder how the one could arise from the other. But would he not wonder more, how, in this same ordinance, the cup came to be denied to the laity, when it is

* See Vol. II. pp. 322—324, XX. pp. 322—351.

universally confessed, that all ancient churches communicated in both kinds? In fact, both these new customs had their rise from the same cause; and, what is very remarkable, took place about the same time, and not till the doctrine of *transubstantiation** was fully established, which was about the twelfth century.

It is well known that a superstitious reverence for the *eucharistical* elements took place in the Christian church very early. Several hints that I have dropped may satisfy you with respect to this.† Now, when such a wonderful efficacy was ascribed to the consecrated bread and wine, and especially when Christians began to consider them as the real body and blood of Christ, it is not to be wondered at, that every method that could be devised was made use of in order to prevent any *waste* or *abuse* of them.

The first regulation that I have met with, concerning *infants*, that had this aspect, was an order which some refer to the *seventh*, and others to the *eleventh* century, that infants should not, without the utmost necessity, have any food, or even suck, after they were baptized, before they received the *Lord's Supper*.‡

Afterwards, in the *twelfth* century, when pope *Paschal* forbade the custom of giving the bread dipped in the wine, (which had likewise been introduced in order to prevent any waste of the elements,) he ordered that young children, who could not swallow the bread, and also sick persons, should receive the wine only.§

Also, to prevent the profanation of the elements, it became the custom for the priest to dip his finger only in the wine, and give it to the child to suck. But still all the wine not being supposed to go down the child's throat, it was usual, in many places, to give children *unconsecrated wine*,|| a cus-

* "The refusing to communicate infants," says Bishop Taylor, "entered into the church upon an unwarrantable ground. For, though it was confessed that the communion would do them benefit, yet it was denied to them then, when the doctrine of transubstantiation entered, upon pretence lest by rejecting the holy symbols, the Sacrament should be dishonoured." *Worthy Communicant*, p. 153. See *Peirce*, pp. 9, 10.

† See *supra*, pp. 359, 360.

‡ For this order Bishop Taylor refers to "a Canon" cited by *Alcuinus*, (*Lib. de Divinis Officiis*,) adding, "The same also is used by the Greeks, by the Ethiopians, by the Bohemians, and Moravians." *Worthy Communicant*, p. 147.

Peirce quotes the following from *Ordo Romanus*, *Tit. de. Bapt.*: "Illud autem de parvulis providendum est, ne postquam baptizati fuerint, ullum cibum accipiant, neque lactentur, sine summa necessitate antequam communicent sacramento corporis Domini." *Essay*, p. 10, Note †.

§ See *ibid.* pp. 12, 14.

|| See *ibid.* pp. 12, 13. "They entertained a strange fancy, that the eucharistical

tom which continued in use in the church of *Dort* till the Reformation.

At length, however, it being imagined that there was less danger of waste in eating the bread made into the shape of a small round *wafers*,* than in drinking the wine, and the bread being supposed to represent the whole body of Christ, including the blood, the Church of Rome ordained, that all communion should be in one kind only. Upon this, as the children had been before deprived of the bread, the taking away of the wine excluded them from the communion of Christians altogether. Indeed, in many places, they were only, at that time, deprived of the mere shadow of it, having received *unconsecrated* wine.

It is remarkable, however, that *infant communion* was not absolutely forbidden in the Church of *Rome*, by an express and formal determination of any council,† till the fifteenth century, at the Council of *Basil*,‡ some time after they had, in the Council of *Constance*, in 1415, decreed that the laity should receive the communion in one kind only.§ Still, however, even the Council of *Trent*, in 1545, far from denying the antiquity and authority of the practice, ventured to anathematize only those who thought infant communion necessary to salvation.||

It is very remarkable, and certainly very much in favour of my argument, that in all Christian churches that have

wine, if received according to the ancient custom, might stick to men's beards, and freeze, or grow sour upon them; and therefore they brought in the custom of sucking the wine out of the eucharistical cup through a quill or pipe. This custom is taken notice of by *Beatus Rhenanus*, (Annot. in *Tertulliani* librum de Corona, p. m. 860,) who observes that the Pope to this day sucks the wine through a golden pipe in that manner. And the *Ordo Romanus* speaks of this custom, where the deacon is described as holding the cup and the quill while the bishop communicates. *Essay*, p. 11. See Vol. V. p. 260.

* See *Ibid.*

† "It is very observable," says Mr. Pierce, "that the *Lateran* Council which expressly determined (*Cap. i.*) the doctrine of transubstantiation, A. D. 1215, seems to have allowed infant communion. For when they require persons to confess to a priest once a-year at least, in order to their coming to the Sacrament, they put in this limitation, *when they are come to years of discretion*; which certainly must be designed to distinguish adult from infant communicants; for if infants had been then excluded, there would have been no need of that expression at all to clear the matter." *Essay*, pp. 14, 15.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 15.

§ *Ibid.* p. 14. See Vol. V. p. 260. "Quoique dans la primitive église ce Sacrement ait été reçu par les fidèles sous les deux espèces, néanmoins dans la suite il n'a été reçu sous l'une et sous l'autre espèce que par les prêtres officians, et sous la seule espèce du pain par les laïques, parce qu'on doit croire fermement, et sans aucun doute, que tout le corps et tout le sang de J. C. est vraiment contenu sous l'espèce du pain, comme sous l'espèce du vin." *L'Enfant's Hist.*, 1714, pp. 253, 254.

|| "Si quis dixerit, parvulis, antequam ad annos discretionis pervenerint, necessariam esse Eucharistiæ communionem; anathema sit." *Concil. Trident.* (Sess. xxi. C. iv. Can. iv.), 1781, p. 139. See *Peirce*, pp. 15, 16.

never been infected with the *Romish* superstition, and subject to the *Papal* authority, the right of infants to Christian communion was never invaded. Infant communion is to this day the practice of the *Greek* churches, of the *Russians*, the *Armenians*, the *Maronites*, the *Copts*, the *Abassins*, and probably all other oriental churches;* and it was also the practice of the *Bohemians*, who kept themselves free from the *Papal* authority till very near the Reformation; and in a petition which the Bohemian bishops presented to the Council of *Basil*, in 1438, they pleaded very earnestly to be allowed to continue this their ancient custom. For, in the sixth article they thus express themselves:

“Likewise we entreat, that, in consideration of the great affection of our people, you would grant us the liberty we desire, of giving children the holy Eucharist. For, if that custom should be laid aside, which this kingdom, upon pious considerations, and being moved thereto by the writings and example of great and holy doctors, has received as catholic, and has accordingly used these many years, a great and intolerable scandal will be given to the people: nay, their minds will be so disturbed thereby, that they will become implacable.”† But though this council admitted of their receiving the communion in both kinds, they would not grant this earnest and reasonable request.

Having produced these arguments, which induce me to conclude, that the practice of giving the Eucharist to children is truly primitive and apostolical, and having shewn how the present practice arose in its place, I proceed, in the third place, to point out the *advantages* which I apprehend might arise from our returning to the ancient custom.

But, previous to this, I would take the liberty to observe, that since the administration of the *Lord's Supper* is an act of public worship, the ends of the institution will be answered, if children be brought to communion as soon as it is found convenient for them to attend other parts of public worship. Besides, though baptism should always be administered in public, still there seems to be a reason why

* Peirce (from Wall), p. 5. See Vol. II. p. 338, Note; V. p. 238, Note §.

† Peirce, pp. 6. 7. “Item supplicamus, quatenus paternitates vestrae, considerata magna affectione populi nostri, velint dare nobis desideratam libertatem communicandi parvulos sacra Eucharistia. Nam si iste usus communicandi, quem regnum nostrum, pie motum, magnorum sanctorum doctorum scripturis et exemplis inductum, ut catholicum suscepit, et à multis annis effectualiter exercuit, aboletur, certe magnum et intolerabile scandalum in populo orietur, immo animus eorum plurimum ex eo implacabiliter perturbaretur. Fascic. rerum expet. et fug. l. 319.” *Ibid.*

it should not be deemed necessary for children to receive the *Lord's Supper* till they be properly capable of the external actions of eating and drinking.* With respect to baptism, the case is naturally different. For, this rite being only a washing with water, and performed by another, children are capable of being the subjects of it at any time. And it will equally secure their continuing to attend this ordinance, if they be accustomed to it from the time that they are brought to attend public worship, as if they had been used to it from their infancy. I am far, however, from thinking there is any impropriety in bringing even the youngest children to the *Lord's Supper*, in token of their being members of the same body, and entitled to the same privileges with ourselves.

Also, before I proceed to enumerate the advantages that may probably attend the revival of this primitive custom, I shall farther premise, that no *objection* can be made to this custom, but what may, with equal force, be made to the custom of baptizing infants,† to the circumcision of children, admitting them to the Jewish passover,‡ or bringing them to the public worship of Christians.

The Lord's Supper was instituted *in remembrance of Christ*, and children, it may be said, cannot remember him. But the Passover also was instituted in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from the Egyptian bondage, and children could not be made to understand any thing about the matter.

Also, our Saviour's commission to *baptize all nations*, follows the injunction to *teach* or *disciple* them; but infants cannot be taught any thing. In all these cases, it is to be understood, that these actions are to be done as soon as persons are capable of them, and that children are to be taught, and reminded of them, as soon as possible.

The Apostle also bids the *Corinthians examine themselves*, and *so receive the Lord's Supper*; but this was only a caution to them to consider that they were not going to a common

* See Vol. V. pp. 266, 267. Mr. Peirce had offered the same qualification of what he regarded as "the ancient practice," thus concluding his *Preface*: "I desire such as think I am mistaken concerning very little children, would yet take occasion from this Essay to consider, whether their own arguments will hold against those of six or seven years old. I am the rather encouraged to move this, because I have found several who disagreed with me concerning the former, inclinable enough to fall in with me in the latter." *Essay*, p. viii.

† "What begins without their own actual choice," says Bishop Taylor, "may be renewed without their own actual desire, and therefore it may be feared, lest if, upon the pretence of—the injunction of certain dispositions, the holy communion be denied them, a gap be opened upon equal pretences, to deny them baptism." *Worthy Communicant*, pp. 152, 153. See *Peirce*, p. 82.

‡ See Bishop Taylor, *supra*, p. 357, Note †.

entertainment,* with which they had before confounded this religious rite ; and, in its own nature, belonged to the adult. He does not say, that none should attend, but those who could examine themselves.†

Lastly, I would desire those persons who are startled at the *novelty*, as it appears to them, of the practice I would recommend, to consider more particularly that the thing is precisely of the same nature with a practice, which is, I believe, universal among Christians, and which the generality of serious persons consider as a duty of indispensable obligation. I mean that of bringing children to public worship. Is not this done long before it can be supposed that they are capable of understanding the nature of the several services which are performed in our churches, much less of properly joining and bearing their part in them? But this offends nobody, because it is easily acknowledged, that by establishing an *early habit* of attending public worship, and, at the same time, impressing the minds of children with a notion of its obligation and importance, their future attendance is secured, and by this means their *rational attendance*, and their *voluntary attachment* to it, are accelerated. Now I will venture to say, that the same advantages must necessarily arise from children being as early brought to the *Lord's Supper*, and that I cannot help being of opinion, that nobody would have thought of making any more objection to the one than to the other, if this simple institution had not been so grossly abused as it has been in the Christian world ; in consequence of which, it is so far from appearing to be, what it really is, a most agreeable and cheerful rite, that the greatest gloom and horror has been thrown about it, and Christians have been afraid to communicate.‡ But it is to be

* See, on 1 Cor. xi. 28, Vol. XIV. p. 98.

† "Though we are commanded," says Bishop Taylor, "to examine, and so to eat; yet this precept is not of itself necessary, but by reason of an introduced cause; just as they are commanded to believe and repent who are to be baptized, that is, persons that need it, and that can do it, they must: and infants without examination can as well receive the effect of the Eucharist, as without repentance they can have the effect of baptism." *Worthy Communicant*, p. 150.

‡ This apprehension has been too much encouraged by the phraseology employed, even by Protestants. Thus Bishop Taylor, in his "Epistle Dedicatory" of the work I have so frequently quoted, to the Princess of Orange, says, that "as the Eucharist is by the venerable fathers of the church called the *Queen of Mysteries*, so the worthy communicating in this, is the most princely conjugation of graces in the whole rosary of Christian religion; and, therefore, the more proportioned and fitted for the handling of so princely a person,—a daughter to such a glorious saint and martyr, [*Charles I.*,] a sister to such a King, [*Charles II.*,] in the arms of whose justice and wisdom we lie down in safety, having now nothing to employ us, but in holiness and comfort to serve God, and in peace and mutual charity to enjoy the blessings of the government under so great, so good a King."

Bishop Taylor agrees with the fathers of the church, that "the sacraments are

hoped that, in time, all the remains of the doctrine of *transubstantiation* will be worn out with us; that Christianity with all that belongs to it, will appear infinitely more amiable and inviting; and that, among other happy consequences, the table of the Lord will be crowded with cheerful and welcome guests.

It may be added, that children are generally, and very properly, made to say their prayers and learn their catechism, when they can repeat them no otherwise than by rote, without understanding any thing about them; because, by this means, a future, though no present advantage is secured to them.

Were this ancient custom of admitting children to the *Lord's Supper* revived, I cannot help thinking, that our children, and posterity in general, would derive considerable advantages from it.

In the first place, our children would by this means become more the objects of attention, both to their parents and the governors of churches, and we should, of course, be less likely to neglect their Christian education. They themselves also would be more apt to inquire concerning the reasons of what themselves constantly did, and thus furnish an easier handle for their religious instruction.

Moses takes particular notice of the effect which the celebration of the passover, in which the children of every family bore a part, would have upon them, and of the opportunity which it gave the parents of instructing them concerning the reason of it; and the same must necessarily be the case with our children, respecting the similar institution of the *Lord's Supper*. *Exod. xii. 26*: "And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the *Lord's* Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." In like manner, our children, were they present at the celebration of the *Lord's Supper*, and bore

mysteries," and he adds, that "they are to be handled by mystic persons." The *Lord's Supper* is a "great mysterious feast," and "as God descended and came into the tabernacle invested in a cloud, so Christ comes to meet us, clothed with a mystery." Yet he is not always mysterious, nor courtly, but to the inquirer, "where Christ is to be found," he offers the following excellent counsel:

"We must not look for him in the highways of ambition and pride, of wealth or sensual pleasures; these things are not found in the house of his Father, neither may they come near his dwelling. But if we seek for Christ, we shall find him in the methods of virtue, and the paths of God's commandments; in the houses of prayer, and the offices of religion; in the persons of the poor, and the retirements of an afflicted soul." *Worthy Communicant*, pp. 3-5.

a part in it themselves, would be excited to give particular attention to it, and inquire concerning the reason of it. Whereas, with us, children seldom see or know any thing of the matter. Their being present at the celebration, without partaking of it themselves, would not interest them near so much, and would likewise tend to give them improper and superstitious ideas of the service.

Secondly; the principal advantage that might be expected from it, is that, by this means, young persons would probably be more firmly established in the belief of Christianity. Having been from their infancy, constantly accustomed to bear their part in all the rites of it, they would be more firmly attached to it, and less easily desert it. This great advantage might, with still more probability, be expected, if the ancient custom of *communicating every Lord's day** were likewise restored; and it was only through a superstitious reverence for this ordinance, that the frequent celebration of it came to be abandoned. With us, *Dissenters*, the common people have too little *to do*, relating to their great profession as Christians; and consequently they give but little attention to it; and when we so sensibly labour under the evils of this want of proper attention to the profession of Christianity, it surely becomes us to have recourse to every proper and reasonable method to revive it.

Our children, and generally young persons under twenty years of age, including that period in which their most important attachments and habits are formed, have little connexion with Christian churches. In all this part of their life they are mere *hearers*, and, *bearing their part* in nothing that passes, they have little to attach them to Christian worship, and consequently they have *too little to break through* when they quit the profession of Christianity altogether. Indeed, they have nothing to distinguish them from *unbelievers*, for many of these choose to attend public worship.

* See Vol. V. pp. 231, 232. "There are not wanting those who affirm that our Lord commanded a *daily celebration*. Among these we may mention *Gaudentius Brixienis*, (Tract. de Exod. ii. p. 807,) and *Jerom* (Adv. Pelagium, L. iii. C. xv.). Both flourished about A. D. 378. In the time of St. *Cyprian*, the famous archbishop of Carthage, who flourished A. D. 248, a *Morning and Evening Celebration of the Eucharist*, may very fairly be presumed to have obtained, from his famous Epistle to *Cæcilius*." See "An Attempt to prove that the old Law relating to the Frequency of celebrating the Jewish continual Sacrifice is still in force. By a Clergyman." Dedicated to Archbishop Secker, 1755, p. 36.

Gaudentius, bishop of *Brescia*, where his works were published in 1738, by Cardinal *Quirini*, is one of the saints of the *Romish Church* and claimed as an early advocate of *Transubstantiation*. "Gaudence s' étend beaucoup sur l' Eucharistie et prouve par l'autorité des divines écritures, qu'elle contient réellement le corps et le sang de J. C." See "Dictionnaire Historique des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques." *A Lyon*, 1767, p. 153.

The source of the evils which arise from the neglect of *infant communion* with us is, that, as there is no fixed time for the commencement of the practice, persons keep putting it off from time to time, till they neglect it entirely. Also, in the mean time, their minds are exposed to the influences of superstition, which represents this service as something peculiarly solemn and hazardous. All these evils, as it appears to me, may be effectually prevented, by training up children, in this, as well as in every other respect, in the way in which we would have them to go. The great obstacle which now lies in the way of this part of their duty, will then be removed; and when the practice of every thing *external* belonging to Christianity is become habitual, the obligation to what is *internal* will be more constantly and more sensibly felt.

At present, the bulk of professing Christians think they can be excused from the strongest part of the obligation to act as becomes that profession, by declining the celebration of the *Lord's Supper*; and to evade this obligation, (in which they miserably deceive themselves,) they live and die refusing to comply with an express command of Christ.* Were the practice of communicating very early once established, this wretched subterfuge would be for ever removed.

Thirdly, the revival of the practice of infant communion might be a means of reviving an useful *church discipline*, which is altogether lost among us, and of the want of which many wise and good men complain. For if this practice were established, there would be a necessity for the government of churches, because there would be something for governors to do. Both the external decorum of Christian churches, and the proper deportment of the members of them would, of course, engage more attention. As the whole of every society would be admitted to *communion*, there would be an evident necessity for admonishing and reproofing the vicious, for excommunicating the unworthy and refractory, and for re-admitting the penitent.

This business would give to Christian churches an *external form and substance*, without which the *life and soul* cannot be expected to be found in vigour. The conduct of them would then more interest all their members, and their attachment to their respective churches, and also to the religion which is the object of them, would be greatly

* On doubts which have been entertained by Christians willing to obey every "express command of Christ," as to the extent of this command, see *supra*, p. 301, Note; Barclay's *Apology* (Prop. xiii. Sect. vi.), ed. 8, 1780, pp. 465—470.

strengthened. In this manner a zeal for Christianity might revive, and perhaps be equal to what it was in the primitive times, when the discipline of churches, we know, was remarkably strict.

That something is wanting to be done for this purpose, is most evident. The lukewarmness of Christians, especially as *members of one body*, and united by common ties, is too apparent to be overlooked by any person. There is no proper *fellowship* among us. We feel no obligation *to watch over one another*. We do not consider the good behaviour of a member of the same society to be an honour to us, or their misbehaviour a reproach, and till our union be such as that this shall be more sensibly felt, till we have that perfect *sympathy* which will dispose us *to rejoice with all that rejoice, and weep with all that weep*, we shall have no sufficient motive to *mind, not every man his own things only, but every man also the things of others*; and we shall consequently be deficient in that *brotherly love, which is the fulfilling of the law*, and without which there can be no lively and active principle of *love to God* our common parent. Moreover, when the life and soul of our assemblies are gone, is it to be wondered at that the body should decay and die?

Let us then, my brethren, apply ourselves in earnest to the revival of the *things that remain, and are ready to die* among us. Among other methods, let me recommend the practice of admitting our children to the *Lord's Supper*, as it promises to be of some use for this good purpose, especially as it has the sanction of primitive antiquity, and of apostolical, and consequently of Divine authority.

A
Free Address
 TO
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,
 ON THE SUBJECT OF
CHURCH DISCIPLINE ;
 WITH
 A PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE SPIRIT OF
 CHRISTIANITY,
And the Corruption of it by false Notions of Religion.

" Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die."
JESUS.

[London 1770.]

EVERY set of religious sentiments must have its influence upon the mind, and will produce a particular temper and cast of thought, which will greatly influence the conduct. Christianity is by no means an exception to this general observation. Its effect upon the disposition of mind is peculiar to itself, and except we *feel* as Christians, we cannot *act* as such.

Nothing can be conceived more excellent than the temper of mind that was inspired by genuine Christianity, as it appears in the life of our Saviour, his apostles, and the primitive Christians. It was that temper that could only be inspired by the worthiest notions of the Divine Being, as righteous, good, and merciful ; attentive to the interest of all his creatures, and accessible to them. It was such a temper of mind as naturally arose from the most favourable views of mankind, as our brethren, the offspring of the same Almighty Parent, the subjects of his moral government, the objects of his love, and partakers of the common salvation by Jesus Christ. At the same time, the prospect that Christianity opened to them of a future life, gave them a just superiority of mind to this world ; and thereby took off the influence of whatever might obstruct the growth of their piety towards God, and benevolence towards man.

But false and unworthy notions of God and of his moral government, and also of the whole Christian scheme, too soon crept into the church; and the spirit and temper of Christianity was debased in the same proportion.

This corruption began by the mixture of the *Oriental*, or more properly, of the *Indian* philosophy,* which was pretty much the same as we now find it in the religion of *Indostan*.† This is, probably, the most ancient of all the systems of Heathen mythology that we are acquainted with, and was the source of a great part of that of the *Egyptians* and *Greeks*.‡ It was a fundamental principle in this philosophy, that, since the world contains so great a mixture of evil, the Supreme Being, who is perfectly good, was not himself the maker of it; but that it was the production of another being, either independent of him, or derived from him.§ It was also another great principle of this philosophy, that all human souls were *lapsed beings*, of a superior order, which had existed in some former state; and it was probably an attempt to connect Christianity with these hypotheses, that first suggested the idea of Jesus Christ having been a pre-existent superangelic spirit, the creator and governor of this world; contrary to the express doctrine of the *Old Testament*, which gives us no idea of any other creator of the heavens and earth, besides the one only living and true God. Having got this hypothesis, they were easily led into a mistaken interpretation of some passages of the *Old Testament*, and supposed, that when God is there said to have created the world by his *word*, (*λογος*,) another *agent* was meant, and not the mere *power* or *energy* of God himself; though the apostle John seems to have intended expressly to contradict and refute that notion, by asserting, in the introduction to his Gospel, that what is called *λογος*, or *the word*, was *God* himself, and not a being distinct from him. When, however, by means of this philosophy, the Supreme Being was made to disappear, and to withdraw himself from the affairs of men, a considerable change could not but take place in our ideas of his attributes and character, and consequently in the disposition of our minds with respect to him.

The *Athanasian* doctrine of the Trinity giving men more objects of divine homage than one, *variety*, and consequently *imperfection*, was necessarily introduced into their ideas of God. It was impossible for the mind of man to

* See Vol. III. pp. 391, 404—416; VI. pp. 62—74.

† See Vol. XVII. pp. 141—146, 152—157.

‡ See *ibid.* pp. 146—152.

§ See Vol. VI. pp. 85—88.

conceive of *three* beings, or persons, as exactly alike; and, indeed, the purpose of the scheme would not admit of it. That union, therefore, of venerable and amiable attributes, that had before been referred to *one object*, could no longer exist; and by this means "God the Father," who, in spite of the modern notions, could not but be considered as supreme, became divested, in their ideas, of some of his essential, and especially of his amiable attributes, and was no longer the proper object of imitation or love.

When the worship of dead men, saints, and angels, as well as that of Jesus Christ, was introduced, the true idea of the Divine character and government was wholly lost. God was no longer considered as the proper object of our love, and immediately accessible to his creatures; and *Christians*, getting, by degrees, as great a variety in the objects of their devotion as the *Heathens* had, (objects of very different characters and dispositions,) they adopted as various, as whimsical, and as abject superstitions, in their endeavours to recommend themselves to their favour. The beauty and dignity of devotion being, by this means, lost, its happy influence upon the mind vanished; and instead of being favourable to benevolence, it became the source of hatred, rancour, and persecution. No cruelties ever equalled those that Christians have been instigated to, by thinking that *they did God service*; nor was human pride ever so conspicuous as it has been in the disciples of the meek and humble Jesus.

A fatal corruption of men's ideas of virtue and moral obligation was the consequence of false and corrupt notions of God: for the methods they would think of to recommend themselves to his favour would of course vary with their ideas of his character and disposition. It is no wonder, in particular, that they had recourse to pains, penances, and whimsical austerities, when they imagined they had to do with an arbitrary and capricious Deity. Hence such ideas of gloom and severity came to be annexed to a *religious life*, as could never have existed if the Divine Being had been considered as one who was, simply, *a lover of righteousness and a hater of iniquity*. These ideas we call *monkish* and *superstitious*; but they remain where monks are no more, and where superstition is disclaimed.

I do not propose, in this place, to trace all the steps of this corruption of the spirit of Christianity. That our holy religion has been greatly corrupted is what all Protestants are sensible of, and they all profess a zeal for its reformation; though some of them have been more ready to pull down

than to build up, contenting themselves with the easier task of the two.

By the labours of many courageous and excellent men, some of the grosser corruptions of the Christian doctrine and discipline have been happily rectified, and the spirit of Christianity has been improved in consequence of it; but much still remains to be done, especially with respect to doctrines that were introduced into the church in very early ages, doctrines that entirely disfigure the Christian scheme, and debase its spirit, that make thousands of *unbelievers* in Christian countries, and effectually prevent the general reception of Christianity among *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and *Heathens*. I mean chiefly, the doctrines that are generally distinguished by the term *Calvinistical*.

It is true that those doctrines daily lose ground with all persons who think for themselves, and who study the Scriptures; but much yet remains to be done to promote the general propagation of Christian truth as opposed to them; and being now, in a great measure, happily free from anti-christian tyranny, there is no other field in which we can exert ourselves more to the advantage of the Christian cause, than in clearing it from these things that so greatly disfigure our religion, debase its spirit, and obstruct its progress in the world.

It is by no means from a regard to *truth* only, that I am desirous of contributing the little that may be in my power towards rooting out the above-mentioned antichristian errors. The genuine spirit of Christianity, and a proper attention to the duties of it, are as much injured by these opinions, as the purity of Christian faith. If there be any thing that distinguishes the Christian religion from all others, it is its tendency to inspire humility, candour, benevolence, and, I may add, cheerfulness; whereas, I am convinced, from reflection and observation, that the opinions above-mentioned tend to inspire a gloomy, proud, uncharitable, and malignant disposition. In many instances the sweetest natural tempers, and every other favourable circumstance in a person's education and society, have not been sufficient to counteract their baneful influence. But there are many who only affect to believe, or only half believe those doctrines, for one who is thoroughly persuaded of their truth. Upon the former, their practical influence is, happily, little or nothing; and there are but few in comparison, though too many, whose hearts are much injured by those gross misconceptions concerning God and religion.

It cannot be wondered at that the worshippers of an austere and tyrannical Deity should contract a gloominess of temper; that those who imagine themselves to be the peculiar favourites of God, selected from all eternity from the rest of mankind, should be proud of the distinction, and, with the Pharisee, say, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou;"* that persons so favoured should have little cordial affection for those who are reprobated of God, who are never to have any share in his favour, and in whose everlasting misery they must for ever rejoice.† It can be no wonder that persons who habitually consider virtue as no reason with the Divine Being for his preference of one above another, should themselves be less influenced by those principles of honour and integrity, which, according to the dictates of nature, are the things that recommend men to the favour of God.

Those who pursue the sentiments above-mentioned to their just and only consistent length, disclaim all moral obligation; maintaining that they were the same favourites of heaven before as after conversion, and have the same communion with God when they are abandoned to vicious indulgencies, as in the most devout meditation, or fervent prayer. Many persons, whose natural good sense restrains them from these extravagancies of opinion, will, however, have less scruple to defraud or calumniate their neighbour, than to be deficient in those *religious exercises* that give an air of sanctity to their character, and make them "appear righteous unto men."

The opinion that men are entirely passive in the work of conversion and the new birth, and incapable of themselves so much as to think a good thought;‡ and that saving faith consists in an acceptance of, or a dependence upon, the merits of Christ for salvation, or (since it is a *feeling* rather than an *act* of the mind) what they are fond of calling *throwing themselves upon Christ*, or a *resting* § *upon Christ for salvation*, must be the source of great distress to persons of an ingenu-

* *Isaiah* lxv. 5.

† See *Edwards*, Vol. III. pp. 8, 9, *Note* †.

‡ This appears to be the doctrine of *Art. xiii.*, though *Burnet* would, if possible, discover some *qualified* sense, in which "works before justification have the nature of sin." See his *Expos.* pp. 130, 131.

§ Thus the phrase *leaning upon Christ* seems to have been a favourite in the 17th century. Dr. *Eachard*, in his defence of "the Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy," quotes the following passage from "Apples of Gold for Young Men and Young Women," (p. 181,) a book so famous, that there had been "no less than eight editions" when he wrote in 1671:

"Ah! young men, young men, if you must needs be leaning, then lean upon precious promises, lean upon the rock that is higher than yourselves, lean upon the Lord Jesus Christ, as John did; John leaned much, (*John* xxi. 20,) and Christ loved

ous disposition and good understanding; who cannot persuade themselves that they have felt what they conceive to correspond to those phrases, and who believe that they cannot be the children of God without having felt it. In this observation, I doubt not that I speak to the painful experience of many of my readers. Too many, also, it is to be feared, are driven to despair by these opinions; and, considering themselves as abandoned of God, plunge themselves in vice and ruin. If any persons *can* fancy themselves to have passed through this kind of undescribable new birth, as the feeling they have of it is incapable of being defined, they will be very apt to suspect its reality or genuineness, and consequently will be subject to the most distressing doubts and fears; because they will apprehend themselves to be in a most dreadful situation, out of which they have no power to rescue themselves, and that God has probably denied them repentance.*

If they be of a temper of mind never to doubt of the genuineness of their faith, and the reality of their conversion and new birth, they will have such an idea of their rank, and superiority to the rest of mankind, as must be utterly destructive of that Christian humility, through the influence of which we are to "work out *our* salvation with fear and trembling," and will be inspired with a more insufferable, and a more dangerous pride than can arise from any other source.

When once men's ideas of the Divine Being are so much lowered, as they must be before they can suppose him to act in an arbitrary manner in the preference he gives to his rational and accountable creatures, and to bestow his favours by rules that are independent of their regard to virtue, they will be apt to fancy that he may be pleased with a variety of things, indifferent to virtue, as they themselves are. They will, consequently, adopt many whimsical methods of rendering themselves acceptable to God, and be liable to run into the most foolish and abject superstition; so that the ideas that they annex to *serviug God* will be quite different

him much: Ah! lean upon Christ's wisdom, lean upon his power, lean upon his purse, lean upon his eye, lean upon his righteousness, lean upon his blood, lean upon his merit." Dr. Eachard adds, very judiciously, "We well understand and know the meaning of Christ's wisdom, power, righteousness, and the like; but to make a huge clattering of Christ, and a long empty tattle of leaning, and to make people sigh and cry by mere repetition of scripture words, when perhaps there is little further sign of sense, than shaking of the head, and wringing of hands, has much more in it of popular deceit, than popular rhetoric." *Works*, Ed. 1772, pp. 232, 233.

* See the Author's own case in early life, Vol. I. *Memoirs* 13.

from the practice of moral virtue. If there be any thing austere and gloomy in their own dispositions, they will be apt to fancy that they give the fullest proof of their love to God, and consequently please him the most, by those actions that give pain and mortification to themselves. Hence came the variety of penances, and the tiresome repetition of *pater-nosters* and *ave-marias*, as a mere bodily exercise, in the Church of Rome; and it seems to be pretty evident that going to church and attending prayers, is considered by many members of the Church of *England* in the same light. This they look upon as in the highest and most proper sense, their *duty*, and they hardly ever attend to it as a means of cultivating good dispositions, and fitting them for proper conduct in life. The frequent long and severe exercises,* by which the *orthodox* Dissenters distinguish themselves, are of the same nature. They serve to discharge their consciences, as a *positive duty*; but have little influence to improve their dispositions and their conduct.

Upon the whole, I cannot help thinking, that there is a striking resemblance between these professors of Christianity and the *Pharisees* in our Saviour's time, those who *strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel, who devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers*; and that, were our Lord again upon the earth, he would treat them with the same severity.

It may appear strange, that the influence of false notions in religion should not be confined to those who hold them; but it is true, and much to be lamented. They affect both those who have held them, and those who observe them.

When the *cause* of any disorder in the human body is removed, it is not always found that all its *effects* are immediately removed with it; and much less is this the case with the human mind. False notions in religion vitiate a man's temper and disposition, with the whole turn of his thinking and acting; and when these have been long fixed,

* These, however, have been much abated in length and severity, since the 17th century. I quote the following passage from the Life of Mr. Joseph Lister, an exemplary member of a *Calvinistic* church in Yorkshire, who died at an advanced age in the beginning of the last century. He is describing (p. 6) the religious exercises which he attended when a youth, about 1640:

"I have known that holy Mr. Wales, of Pudsey, spend six or seven hours in praying and preaching, and rarely go out of the pulpit; but sometimes he would intermit for one quarter of an hour, while a few verses of a psalm were sung, and then pray and preach again; and O what confession of sin did he make! What prayers, tears, and wrestling with God was in that place, on these days! What tears and groans were to be seen and heard in that chapel! I am sure it was a place of weepers." For an account of Mr. Wales, see *Calamy's Acc.* pp. 801—804. *Cont.* pp. 946, 947.

they are seldom or never entirely changed. The old associations will recur, and reason comes too late to break them. Thus the fear of being alone in the dark remains long after the least belief in apparitions.* Those persons, therefore, whose minds have been deeply impressed, in their infancy and youth, with abject and unworthy notions of God, may never be able, habitually and practically, to regard him in that amiable light, in which he is represented in the gospel; as the object of filial reverence, love and confidence to all his creatures. Having long considered the Divine Being in no other light than that of a strict moral governor, they cannot soon learn to regard him as their father and their friend, attentive to the interest of all his creatures, and waiting that he may be gracious to them. They will not easily get over all remains of the notion, that God is pleased by actions and exercises that give them pain and mortification. The ideas they annex to a *religious life* will ever convey the idea of something grave, austere, and laborious; and never that of the ease, freedom, and cheerfulness, which naturally belongs to it; and the service of *God*, and of *man*, will not have that intimate connexion in their minds, that they have in nature and in the Scriptures.

When the mind has been deeply tinctured with any false notions of God, it is hardly possible that they should ever be practically rectified; because the same names will continue to suggest the same ideas, and to excite the same feelings, whatever reason may dictate to the contrary. Many talk of God like *Arminius* or *Socinus*, who, nevertheless, think of him much like *Austin* or *Calvin*. In their ideas he is a being that they cannot freely address themselves to; and whenever they do it, it is merely to comply with a positive enjoined duty. Tinctured as their minds are with the remains of superstition, it must be a long time before they can attain to *love God with their whole heart*, and habitually to rejoice in their relation to him, as their creator, preserver, benefactor, friend, and father.

Many persons, I doubt not, would be much more pious and devout than they are, were it not for these remains of superstition; which, though disavowed, have a secret influence on their minds, dictating exercises and practices which they disapprove and dislike. Endeavouring to free themselves from these bonds, they too often neglect devotion entirely, seldom praying themselves, or seriously joining in

*See the Author's experience, Vol. III. pp. 50, 51.

in the prayers of others ; till they almost lose all regard to God, and never look up to him with pleasure or confidence. This habitual indevotion would not, I believe, in many cases, have been contracted, if superstitious notions had not originally enjoined slavish and unnecessary religious exercises. Disusing these, before they could do it with the full consent of their minds, instead of resting in a just medium, they do what is not uncommon with men who believe themselves to be guilty to a certain degree ; they plunge themselves in greater guilt.

It is particularly remarkable, that, long after any thing has ceased to be considered as sinful, we cannot do it without reluctance, and something of remorse ; and this unjust self-accusation, and *false* remorse, is not without its effect upon the mind, as well as the true. We ought not, therefore, to discontinue any practice that we have long thought necessary, immediately upon being convinced that it is not so, but wait till we can do it with perfect ease, and the full consent of the soul.

Many well-disposed persons, I doubt not, find it extremely difficult to make their practice correspond to their real sentiments concerning the *Lord's Supper* and the *Lord's day*. They will do less with respect to the former, and more with respect to the latter, than, according to their judgment, they are obliged to do ; and allowance ought to be made for certain degrees of this kind of inconsistency. Many persons refrain from receiving the *Lord's Supper* when they are persuaded it is their duty to attend it, and are satisfied that they are properly qualified for it ; yet, though they really wish to partake of this ordinance, they never do it.* These remains of prejudice are entitled to our indulgence, provided persons really strive with themselves, and endeavour to overcome them.

With respect to the *Lord's day*, it is evident, that the influence of a rigorous, and what I should not scruple to call a *pharisaical* observance of it,† when it has been habitual and conscientious, does not cease with the opinion that it ought to do so ; and, in this case, little or no inconvenience will arise from continuing, in some measure, through life, those religious exercises which we may have long thought necessary, and in refraining from those indifferent actions which we may have thought to be sinful on that day. If we controul the real feelings of our minds, though they arise from false notions, and an erroneous consciencē,

* See *supra*, pp. 289, 290.

† See Vol. XX. pp. 337, 351.

we, in some measure, lessen the power of conscience in general, and may do an essential injury to ourselves. He is truly happy who has attained that perfect *soundness of mind*, that he can do, with entire freedom and ease, whatever his judgment approves. To this perfect concurrence of the moral sensibilities of conscience with the judgment of the understanding, the Apostle seems to refer when he saith, (*Rom. xiv. 22.*) "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

We suffer in a similar manner from the remains of superstition and false notions, concerning the person and character of Christ.* Much of the peculiar power of the gospel-motives to virtue, (separate from our acting with a view to obtain the reward of immortality promised in it,) arises from just ideas of the nature and offices of Christ, as distinct from those of the Divine Being himself, with which they are too much confounded upon the supposition of the proper deity † of Christ, notwithstanding the different offices ascribed to the Divine Persons, or rather *Beings*, in the *Athanasian* scheme.

The consideration of the *love of Christ* has something in it peculiarly endearing, when it is not considered as the same thing with the love of the Creator towards his creatures, but as the love of one who, notwithstanding his miraculous birth, ‡ was as much a *man* as Adam was, or as we ourselves are; when it is considered as the love of our *elder brother*, who *bore our infirmities*, who felt all the pains and agonies that man can feel, and, being the very same that we are, "was in all points tempted like as we are;" § who *loved us* and *freely gave himself* to death for us, to *redeem us* from sin and misery; that we might become partakers of the same love of God, and be *joint heirs* with him of the same glory and happiness; that we might all alike become "kings and priests unto God, and his Father," || for ever and ever; who, after living many years on earth, in which he manifested the most intense affection for us, is now *gone to prepare a place for us, in our heavenly Father's house*, that *where he is, there we may be also*; as one who is now exercising a power which, as the reward of his obedience unto death, he received from God, to be *head over*

* This sentence, and the first, third, and fourth following paragraphs, were quoted in the *Disquisitions*, 1782. See Vol. III. pp. 436—438.

† "Or superangelic nature," 1782.

‡ See Dr. Priestley's later thoughts on this subject, Vol. XX. pp. 255, 256.

§ *Heb. iv. 15.* See Vol. XIV. p. 359.

|| *Rev. i. 6.* See Vol. XIV. p. 445.

all things to his church; and who still feels for, and will be present with, his faithful disciples and followers, in all their trials, even to the end of the world.

The resurrection of Christ, also, considering him as a man like ourselves, is not only a *miracle*, and a *proof*, but also a *sample* or *pattern* of our own resurrection; which certainly affects the mind in a peculiar manner, and gives us stronger reason to hope, that *because he lives, we shall live also*; since as "by man came death," so "by man came also the resurrection of the dead." [1 Cor. xv. 21.]

The esteem and love that we bear to the character which we form of Christ, considered as a man like ourselves, the attachment we have to him and his cause, and the efficacy of this principle, to promote a Christian temper and conduct, and to encourage us to follow this our glorious leader, "the Captain of *our* salvation,"* and the *first fruits from the dead*, (even though, like him, we be called to *lay down our lives for our friends*, and to bear persecution and torture in the cause of conscience, virtue, truth, and God,) is exceedingly great, and peculiar to itself. It is a kind of love and esteem that cannot be felt by one who is truly and practically an *Athanasian*; † and, in general, but imperfectly, by those who have long been Athanasians; ‡ and who, therefore, cannot easily get rid of the ideas they have had of Christ as God, or at least as a being who has little in common with us; who therefore could not feel as we do, act upon views similar to ours, or entertain, and be the proper object of, a similar and reciprocal affection.

A man may have rejected the *Athanasian* § hypothesis a long time before these ideas shall even occur to him, or their power be at all apprehended. At least we can only expect to feel their influence at intervals, and must not hope to experience that amazing force, which, however, we may easily conceive they must have had with the primitive Christians, and especially with the apostles, and others who personally knew Christ, and therefore never had an idea of his being any other than a man like themselves; || though, as *Peter* expresses himself, "a man approved of God,—by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him." ¶

It is also to be regretted, that men can hardly ever pass from one extreme without going into another; and certainly

* Heb. ii. 10. See Vol. XIV. pp. 353, 354.

† "Or Arians," 1782.

‡ See *Watts's* opinion, even while a *Trinitarian*, Vol. XIII. pp. 97, 99, *Notes* †.

¶ See, on *Acts* ii. 22, *ibid.* pp. 393, 394.

† "Or Arian," 1782.

§ "Or Arian," 1782.

a great deal of the libertinism and infidelity of the present age may justly be charged upon the real or affected austerity, and on the bigotry and unchristian spirit of many who call themselves the disciples of Jesus Christ; though he affected no austerity or needless singularity of any kind, and was for that reason accused of being "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."*

It is to be regretted, however, I say, that because the professors of this *spurious* Christianity affect too much austerity of character, the professors of *genuine* Christianity should indulge themselves in too much levity; that, because the former have over-rated the duties of devotion, and made them stand for all the virtues of a Christian life, the latter should neglect the really useful and decent forms of it; and that, because the former have much less real and vital religion than they seem to have, the latter should seem to have less than they are really possessed of.

Upon the whole, however, as far as I can judge, from giving a good deal of attention to the disposition and conduct of the different parties among the Dissenters, I am clearly of opinion, that the character of those who may be called the more free livers among the rational Dissenters is, with respect to the true spirit of Christianity, superior to that of those who are, seemingly, the more devout and zealous of the other sort. Take those that have the least appearance of what is commonly called *religion* among some men, and they will often be found to have more of a principle of honour, integrity, and generosity; and to have a greater abhorrence of fraud, dissimulation, and hypocrisy, than many who pretend to a great deal of religion; and the vices just now mentioned are those that sink deepest into the heart, and vitiate the character the most. It certainly argues a wrong disposition of mind to be ashamed of virtue and piety, but it argues a worse disposition to be ostentatious of them. The former is an excess, though a blameable excess, of modesty; whereas the latter is the offspring of pride and conceit.

If we may judge from the conduct of our Saviour, we should conclude that there was something more hateful and dangerous in the principles of the *Pharisees*, than in those of the *Sadducees*. He frequently, and with great severity, inveighed against the vices of the former, but never mentioned any thing as particularly heinous in the conduct of the latter. Admitting, therefore, that the principles of the Sadducees

* See, on *Matt.* xi. 18, 19, Vol. XIII. pp. 141, 142.

led to *libertinism*, we may conclude that the *pride* and *hypocrisy* which he censured in the Pharisees, were more heinous vices. *

† Our aptness to pass from one extreme to another, and the inconvenience attending it, are also felt with respect to our sentiments concerning the person and character of Christ. Upon finding that, instead of being “very God of very God,” ‡ *the creator of heaven and earth*, § he is only a man like ourselves, we are apt, at first, to undervalue him, and not to consider him in that distinguished light in which, though a man, he is every where represented in the Scriptures; as the great instrument in the hands of God, of reversing all the effects of the fall; as the object of all the prophecies from Moses to his own time; as the great bond of union to virtuous and good men (who, as *Christians*, or having Christ for their master and head, make *one body*, in a peculiar sense); as introduced into the world without a human father; || as having communications with God, and speaking and acting from God in such a manner as no other man ever did; and therefore having “the form of God,” and being “the Son of God” in a manner peculiar to himself; as the means of spreading divine and saving knowledge to the whole world of mankind; as, under God, the “head over all things to *his church*,” and as “the Lord of life,” having power and authority from God to raise the dead, and judge the world at the last day.

There seems to be a peculiar propriety that these powers respecting *mankind*, should be given to a *man*; and it therefore *behoved* our Redeemer to be “in all things like unto his brethren,” and to be “made perfect through sufferings”; but, certainly, the man who is invested with these powers and prerogatives should be the object of our attention, reverence, and love, in such a manner as no other man can be, or *ought* to be.

I trust that the tendency to that extreme which is the reverse of the austerity of the old Dissenters will not be of long continuance, but will cease with the spirit of opposition; and he may think himself happy who can, in the least

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 4, 238, 239.

† This and the following paragraph were quoted in the *Disquisitions*, 1782. See Vol. III. pp. 438, 439.

‡ *Nicene Creed*.

§ “Being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.” *Ibid.* Yet the introductory paragraph of this *Creed* is thus strictly *Unitarian*: “I believe in one God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all things visible and invisible.”

|| See *supra*, p. 383, Note †.

degree, be the means of accelerating this desirable event. What greater object can a man have in view, than to establish the evidences, ascertain the genuine principles; extend the knowledge, and promote the spirit of Christianity, free from Pharisaical rigour on one side, and a tendency to licentiousness on the other?

It is with this view that I have made the following "Address to Protestant Dissenters on the subject of Church Discipline," intended to revive the genuine spirit and conduct of Christians, as members of a religious society, and to exhort them, after having rejected what has proved to be tyrannical and mischievous in church authority, to resume what may appear to be consistent with Christian liberty, to promote a Christian temper, and lead to good morals.

AN

ADDRESS TO PROTESTANT DISSENTERS

ON THE SUBJECT OF

CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHERN,

HAVING addressed you formerly, and, I hope, not wholly without effect, on the subject of the *Lord's Supper*,* I now take the liberty to request your attention to another subject, that nearly concerns you, as Christians, and which, I cannot help thinking, is too much neglected among us Dissenters; and especially those of us who are generally denominated *rational* Dissenters; I mean CHURCH DISCIPLINE, or a proper provision for promoting the knowledge of Christianity, and more especially the practice of the duties of it, among the members of a Christian society.

It is obvious to every person, who attends to the state of Christianity in primitive times, and who reads the *New Testament*, and other early Christian writings; that, origin-

* *Supra*, pp. 249—292.

ally, Christian churches were particularly distinguished by the vigour of their discipline ; and it is no less evident, that the attention they paid to their profession as Christians, their knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, and their peculiar zeal in discharging the duties of it, and in adhering to their religion in difficult times, were, in a great measure, owing to this circumstance.

It is no less obvious, that there is hardly the face of any thing that can be called *discipline*, among us ; and I fear, that the effects of this deficiency are no less conspicuous. Such, indeed, is the state of things at present, that I have very little hope of seeing any effectual reformation. I am sensible that the bare attempt to introduce any thing of this kind, would, in many cases, be attended with peculiar difficulty. This, however, shall not discourage me from endeavouring to bring the subject a little more into view. When we see the importance of the *end* to be gained by it, if we dislike one *means*, we may, at least, be thinking of some other.

To give you the clearest idea of this subject, and of what I would propose with respect to it, I shall divide this discourse into several distinct Sections.

SECTION I.

Of the State and Effect of Church Discipline, in primitive Times.

WE are sufficiently authorized to say, that the great end which the Almighty had in view, in the dispensation of the gospel, was the reformation of a sinful world ; and that, whereas, before the coming of Christ, the Jewish nation alone was honoured with the title of the *peculiar people of God*, the general promulgation of the gospel of Christ was intended to procure him, from *all* nations promiscuously, “ a peculiar people zealous of good works.”

Every Christian society, therefore, having the same object in a particular place, that Christianity in general has with respect to the world at large, should be considered as a voluntary association of persons who embrace Christianity, and who are desirous of taking the most effectual methods to promote the real ends of it ; or, in the language of scripture, *to build themselves up in the holy faith* whereof they make profession, *to edify one another*, and “ to provoke unto love and to good works.” [*Heb. x. 24.*]

The members of Christian societies are to exhibit to the world around them, an engaging pattern of Christian virtue, faith, hope, and joy; that *others, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven.*

In every Christian church, therefore, there should be provision for admonishing all those who transgress their duty; for *reproving, rebuking, or exhorting*, wherever there may be occasion for it; for taking every favourable opportunity of suggesting useful hints, cautions, and encouragements; in order to make good impressions on the minds of all, at those seasons in which they are most likely to be deep and lasting, as in time of sickness, affliction, and distress. More especially, there should be proper provision that children and youth be particularly attended to,* that they be carefully instructed in the fundamental and practical principles of Christianity, in order that they may be well prepared for entering upon life with advantage, and be proof against the temptations and snares to which they will be exposed in it. Lastly, the weak and wavering should be strengthened, and have their difficulties removed. By this means, the great motives to a holy life being continually kept in remembrance, every member of the society may be *prepared for every good word and work*, be disposed to act with propriety and dignity, as becomes men and Christians, upon every occasion in life, and to die with composure and good hope.

To gain these great and valuable ends, in the present state of human nature and of the world, (in which every man is continually in danger of swerving from his duty, of indulging some inordinate passion, and contracting some bad habit,) I need not say that some *apparatus* is necessary; for no end can be gained without adequate means: and the methods that were adopted by the apostles and primitive Christians were excellently calculated to answer these purposes.

The plan of a Christian church was originally the same with that of a Jewish synagogue, † which (though, I believe, it was not of divine appointment) was admirably simple and proper. Synagogues were places set apart for the reading and expounding of the law, and also for prayer. Here the people

* See Vol. II. pp. xxvii. xxviii.

† See Vol. II. pp. 338, 339; V. pp. 293, 294. "Campegius Vitringa," in his work *De Synagoja vetere*, has demonstrated, says Dr. Wotton, "that the public service and government of the churches planted by the Apostles was built upon the Jewish Synagogue." *Miscellaneous Discourses*, 1718, I. p. 102. See De Beausobre and L'Enfant's *Introduction*, 1806, p. 96. These learned editors of the *Prussian Testament* remark, (p. 83,) that "the Christians often gave the name of *Synagogues* to their assemblies, as also to the places where they assembled."

in the neighbourhood assembled for these purposes, every Sabbath-day.* A number of the more elderly persons, and those who had the most influence in the neighbourhood, had the title of $\alpha\gamma\iota\omega\tau\epsilon\varsigma$, or elders, were appointed rulers of the synagogue, and had some kind of authority over those who belonged to the place; and some one of them was generally distinguished from the rest, but only by precedence, and having the direction of the service.† The apostles and primitive Christians, having been used to these regulations in places of public worship, adopted them in the constitution of Christian churches.

When, therefore, in consequence of preaching the gospel in any place, a number of persons were converted, the apostles immediately formed them into a *regular body*, and appointed proper *officers*. Those who were distinguished for their age, gravity, good character, and knowledge, were made *presbyters*, or *elders*; or, as they are sometimes called, *bishops*, though this last title was very soon appropriated to one of them; who was not, however, superior to the other elders in rank or authority, but only (to prevent confusion) presided in the assembly, and superintended the business of preaching, baptizing, and administering the *Lord's Supper*. He also gave orders with respect to some other things, in which a number could not act to advantage.

Besides elders, and bishops, *deacons*, also, were appointed. They were persons whose business it was to assist the elders and the bishop, particularly in administering to the poor, and in other things that were of a civil, and not of a spiritual nature.

But it was a fundamental principle in the constitution of the primitive churches, that no regulation, or resolution, respecting the state of the whole church, could be made but by the body of the people. They also chose the bishop and the elders, as well as the deacons.‡

Epiphanius, who flourished A. D. 360, says, that nothing

* "In Jerusalem," says Godwyn, after *Sigonius de Rep. Heb.* L. ii. C. viii., "there were 480 *Synagogues*, beside the Temple, partly for Jews, partly for strangers; one, for strangers, was called the *Synagogue* of the Libertines, *Acts* vi. 9.—Out of Jerusalem, in many cities and provinces, were many *Synagogues*.—Yea, their tradition is, that wheresoever ten men of Israel were, there ought to be built a *Synagogue*." *Moses and Aaron*, 1628, p. 87. See *Beausobre* and *L'Enfant*, pp. 83, 84.

† "He that gave libertie to preach there, was termed $\alpha\rho\chi\iota\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\rho\gamma\acute{\omega}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, 'The ruler of the *Synagogue*.' There was also a *Minister*, who gave the book unto the *Preacher*, and received it again, after the text had been read. *Christ* 'closed the book, and gave it again to the *Minister*,' *Luke* iv. 20. This is probably him whom they called *Sheliach Tsibbur*, the *Minister*, or *Clerke* of the *Synagogue*." *Godwyn*, p. 88.

‡ See Vol. II. p. 339.

was necessary to the regular constitution of a church but *elders* and *deacons*; and that in churches where none of the elders were thought worthy of any distinguished rank, there was no bishop.

It was the business of the *elders*, and by no means of the *bishop* only, (who, in this respect, was only considered as one of them,) to watch over the society, for the moral and religious purposes above-mentioned.* This is very evident from the books of *Acts*, and the apostolical epistles.

St. Paul, when, on his voyage to Jerusalem, he called for "the elders of the church" of *Ephesus*, addressed himself to them all alike, without distinguishing any particular person as bishop, or minister; and, giving them all that name promiscuously, exhorted them to "take heed to *themselves*, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost" had made them "overseers," (or *bishops*, *επισκοπους*), "to feed the church of God."† St. Peter also, (1 *Ep.* v. 2,) exhorts these *elders* to "feed the flock of God,—taking the oversight thereof, not of constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind," &c.

The office of *elder* being of so much importance in the church, the apostle *Paul* is very particular in describing those who were proper to be appointed to it. In his epistle to *Titus*, (i. 5—9,) he gives the following account of them: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly; for a bishop" (or one who oversees others) "must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers." It is evident, at first sight, that the apostle, in this passage, uses the terms *elder* and *bishop* promiscuously, applying them both to the same persons.‡

It is, no doubt, to the same order of men, that this apostle directs the following advices, 1 *Tim.* iii. 1: "This is a true saying; if a man desireth the office of a bishop," (*overseer* or *elder*,) "he desireth a good work. A bishop, then, must

* See Vol. II. p. 339.

† See, on *Acts* xx. 28, Vol. XIII. p. 479.

‡ See, on *vers* 5—7, Vol. XIV. p. 146.

be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient; not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.”*

We find, in an epistle of *Polycarp* to the church of *Philippi*, that the original idea of the character, duty, and authority of a presbyter, or elder, was not altered in the middle of the second century. “Let the presbyters,” says he, “be tender and merciful, compassionate towards all, reducing those that are in errors, visiting all that are weak; not negligent of the widow and the orphan, and him that is poor; but ever providing what is honest in the sight of God and men; abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons, and unrighteous judgment; being far from covetousness, not hastily believing a report against any man; not rigid in judgment, knowing that we are all faulty and obnoxious to judgment.”†

In times of persecution this order of *elders* was particularly useful, in discharging all the duties of the episcopal; or pastoral office, in the absence of the bishop or minister, and at his appointment. Thus *Cyprian*, Bishop of Carthage, while in exile, writes to his elders, exhorting them “to discharge their own and his office too; that so nothing might be wanting either to discipline or diligence.”‡

We see the sentiments of the body of elders at *Rome* in the following passage of a letter which they wrote to the elders at *Carthage* about the same time: “And since it is incumbent upon us, who are as it were bishops, to keep the flock in the room of the pastor; if we shall be found negligent, it will be said unto us, as it was to our careless preceding bishops, in Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4, that we looked not after that which was lost, we did not correct him that wandered, nor bound up him that was lame; but we did eat their milk, and were covered with their wool.”§

In the absence both of the *bishop* and *elders*, the *deacons* officiated in all ministerial duties.

* See Vol XIV. pp. 129—131.

† Lord King's *Constitution of the Primitive Church*, [1691,] p. 59. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 62. (P.)

§ *Ibid.* p. 63. (P.)

At the first formation of Christian churches, there seems not to have been, in any respect, the least difference between their *elders* and their *bishops*, in point of qualification for the ministerial office; nor will it be wondered at, when it is considered, that they were alike converts from the common ranks of life, and that none of them could have been educated with a view to any employment of that kind. Also, as the bishops gave little or no more of their time to the society, they had little or no greater share in the church's stock, than other elders: and no bishop or elder was wholly maintained out of it, unless he had no other subsistence, and gave his whole time and attention to the duties of his office, which was seldom or never the case.

It appears, however, that the nature of their situation soon made a change in this respect. It was found necessary, for the honour and credit of Christian churches, that the *Bishop* should be a man of reading and learning, well versed in the Scriptures, and capable of expounding them; thoroughly acquainted with the grounds and principles of the Christian religion, and able to defend them against the objections of the philosophers, and other enemies of Christianity in those days. For this purpose he could not do less than give his whole time to study, and other duties of his station. Upon this the bishops began to share more largely in the revenues of the church than any of the other elders; and at length it became the custom of the western churches, to divide all their collections into four parts; of which the bishop had one, the elders and deacons (who were also called the clergy) another, the poor a third, and the fourth was applied to the purpose of repairing their church, and other incidental expenses. The division of the church's stock is said to have been the source of many disputes and corruptions in the discipline of the western church, from which the eastern church was always, in a great measure, free; the *Greeks* having never made any partition of this kind, but always distributed out of the common stock, according to every person's necessities and reasonable claims.*

I need not say that it was the custom, in those primitive times, to give a much greater proportion of their wealth to the common stock of their church, than is done by us at present. In the apostles' times, even the rich made a surrender of all they had for this purpose; and for a long time a very great part of their wealth went the same way; but the officiating

* See *Simon's History of Ecclesiastical Revenues.* (P.)

clergy were not the better for this. It was distributed "as every man had need." [*Acts* ii. 45.]

You see, then, that in every primitive Christian church, there was a number of persons appointed by the society, whose business it was to attend to the instruction and good behaviour of all the members of it; taking every opportunity of teaching those who had need of instruction; who admonished, reprov'd, or encouraged, as they saw occasion; who, as the apostle advised, were "instant, in season and out of season," in this useful work. I shall now give you, in a few words, an idea of the effect of this discipline.

The great object of it was the prevention of all vice, and irregularities of every kind, and especially whatever tended to bring disgrace upon Christianity, or might lead Christians to relapse into Heathenism; upon every instance of which they animadverted with the utmost severity. I am far from ascribing every thing that was good and exemplary in the primitive Christians to their church discipline; but unquestionably it had its share in producing many good effects on their dispositions and conduct; and it seems to be agreed by all writers, that, in those early times, the Christians were remarkable for the virtues that are still more emphatically called *Christian*, such as meekness, patience, superiority of mind to the world, and the strongest attachment to one another, and to their religion; with respect to some of which, it must be owned, they were greatly assisted by a general expectation of the speedy coming of Christ to judge the world. For several centuries their church censures had no aid from the civil power, and yet they were more dreaded than they have ever been since, with all the terror of civil-penalties superadded to them.

Their rule of proceeding in these church censures, was that which is laid down by our Saviour, the propriety and reasonableness of which is evident at first sight. "If thy brother," says he, *Matt.* xviii. 15—18, "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, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican."† He adds, "Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye

† See, on ver. 17, Vol. XIII. pp. 198, 202.

shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

From this it was generally concluded, that the censures of the church, passed in a solemn and unanimous manner, would be ratified at the tribunal of Christ, at the last day; so that a person cut off from the communion of the church here, would be excluded from heaven hereafter. And, indeed, if a man's conduct were such as exposed him to this censure of his fellow-christians, of whose kindness and affection he had had abundant experience, and when they were under no bias or prejudice in giving their judgments, it is more than probable that it would be just, and therefore would be ratified in heaven; and we may presume, that in primitive times, this was generally the case; notwithstanding, it cannot but be acknowledged, that a whole church may judge uncharitably and rashly, and in this case, no doubt their censures will not be ratified at the righteous tribunal of God.

Whatever was the cause, the effect of church censures in those times was very extraordinary, notwithstanding all that was done to those who were exposed to them, was only exclusion from their religious assemblies, for a longer or shorter space of time, according to the nature of their offence. In no case were excommunicated persons restored to church communion without public confession, and in some cases, as in repeated apostacy from Christianity, they were not absolved even in the hour of death, but left to the judgment of God only.

It was customary, we are informed, for persons under sentence of excommunication to attend at the doors of the church, (for they were not permitted to enter,) with all the marks of the deepest dejection and contrition, intreating the ministers and people, with tears in their eyes, making voluntary confession, and earnestly begging their prayers, and restoration to the peace of the church.

Persons the most distinguished for their wealth or power, were indiscriminately subject to those church censures, and had no other method of being restored to the peace of the church, but the same humiliation and contrition that was expected of the meanest of the society. When Philip, governor of Egypt, would have entered a Christian church, after the commission of some flagrant crime, the bishop forbade him till he first made confession of his sin, and passed through the order of penitents; a sentence which, we are told, he willingly submitted to.

Even the emperor *Theodosius* the Great was excommunicated by *Ambrose*, bishop of Milan, for a barbarous slaughter of the *Thessalonians*; and that great prince submitted to a penance of eight months, and was not received into the church till after the most humble confession of his offence, and giving the most undeniable proof of his sincerity.*

SECTION II.

A general Account of the Corruption and Decay of the primitive Church Discipline.

HAVING, in the preceding Section, given a view of the outlines of the ancient church discipline, and the general effects of it, I shall now endeavour to trace the corruptions of it.

The first great change in the constitution and discipline of the Christian church, was the exaltation of the *presbyters* or *elders*, and of the *deacons* also, into the rank of single *bishops*, in churches; which was, in fact, an annihilation of those important orders of men, and throwing the whole government of a church into the hands of one person.

The manner in which this change took place, was gradual and easy. Whenever the number of converts in any place became too great to assemble, with convenience, in one building, they erected other places of public worship; but (considering those not as *new* and *distinct* churches, but as branches of the old one) in order to preserve the connexion with the mother church, they did not ordain any new *bishop*, but had all the ministerial duty done, either by some of the former *presbyters* and *deacons*, or by new presbyters and deacons ordained for the purpose.

In this train things went on, till, at length, the mother church, or some of the dependent churches, sending out more colonies, and to greater distances; the bishop of the mother church, being the only person in the district who bore that name, came to be a *diocesan bishop*, whose elders and deacons presided in all the separate and dependent churches, without any assistant or subordinate ministers. Very few elders also remained in the mother church; because none were now ordained to that office, except such as lived by the ministry; so that the members of Christian societies

* See Vol. VIII. pp. 477, 478; *Ant. Univ. Hist.* 1748, XVI. p. 448.

had no longer such particular attention paid to their conduct as before.

For some time, however, when new churches were erected in places at a distance from any capital town, they were governed by new-made bishops, presbyters, and deacons, like the original churches. *Beausobre* says, that he believes one cannot find an instance so early as the middle of the third century, of a church governed by a simple presbyter.* These country bishops (called *choriepiscopi*) made but a poor figure in comparison of the opulence and splendour of the city bishops; and as the system of *diocesan episcopacy* gained ground, they were compelled to descend to the order of presbyters. Upon this the scheme of *episcopacy*, as it is now generally understood, was fully established. There were bishops in capital towns only, and all the churches within their district were governed by presbyters, or deacons, under them.†

I need not say that the consequence of this change in the external government of the church, was the total loss of the ancient internal discipline; when, instead of their being a number of persons in every church, *to feed the flock of God*, there was only a bishop in a capital town, whose whole attention was generally employed upon the emoluments and authority of his office, with respect to the inferior churches, which were governed by a single presbyter or deacon, dependent upon the diocesan bishop, chiefly, for his nomination, and upon his people for his revenues.

2. Another, and indeed an earlier abuse of the primitive discipline was introduced by factious persons, who employed church censures to animadvert upon particular *opinions*, as well as practices; in consequence of which, men of unexceptionable characters and conduct were excommunicated, if they only held opinions that had been condemned by a council or synod. The persons thus censured, often formed separate churches, and, in return, excommunicated those who had excommunicated them.

In this state of mutual hostility things often continued a long time, till the influence of an emperor, or some other foreign circumstance, determined the dispute in favour of one of them, which was from thenceforth deemed the *ortho-*

* *Hist de Manich.* (1734), I. p. 113. (P.) "Je ne crois pas qu'on puisse trouver vers le milieu du iii. siècle, ni dans les villes ni dans les bourges, aucune église, qui n'eût sons évêque." *Ibid.*

† The four preceding paragraphs occur, with some variations, Vol. V. pp. 362, 363.

dox side of the question, while the other was condemned as *heretical*. It is well known that the *Arians* and *Athanasians* were, in this manner, reputed *orthodox* by turns; as both had the sanction of councils and emperors in their favour; * till, in consequence of mere faction, and the authority of the emperors, the party of *Athanasius* happened to prevail at last. But the first remarkable abuse of the power of excommunication, *Le Clerc* says, was on account of the celebration of Easter, when *Victor*, bishop of Rome, excommunicated all the *Eastern* churches that did not celebrate that festival at the same time with the *Western* churches. †

3. The primitive church discipline was farther corrupted by the annexing of *civil penalties* to the sentence of excommunication. These were introduced when the Roman emperors became Christians; for in the imperial constitutions, made after that event, we presently find various civil disqualifications added to the censures of the church; and the whole system of this mixed ecclesiastical and civil polity received a fresh sanction upon the conversion of the *Germans*, *Goths*, *Celts*, and other northern nations. These people had been used to an *excommunication* in their own pagan religions, and the consequences of it had always been the most dreadful civil penalties and disabilities. Among the *Gauls*, the excommunicated persons were looked upon as wicked and scandalous wretches. All people shunned their company. They were not allowed the benefit of the courts of justice, nor were they admitted to any post of honour or profit in the community.

Of this prejudice of the people the Christian priests willingly took advantage, as by this means they could overawe those who despised mere church censures; ‡ which, indeed, had become truly contemptible, by the manner in which they had been conducted. Civil penalties for offences against the church were increased by degrees, till heresy came to be considered as a crime of so heinous a nature, that burning alive was decreed to be the proper punishment for it; § and this horrid excess was not confined to the Church of Rome, which is *drunk with the blood of the martyrs*, but has been imitated, in more than one instance, by several sects of the reformed themselves. ||

4. Under the preceding article, I may be said to have

* See remarks on *Constantine*, Vol. VIII. p. 317.

† *Hist. Eccles.* p. 802. (P.) See Vol. VIII. pp. 159, 160.

‡ See a "sentence of excommunication," Vol. V. p. 333, 334.

§ See Vol. V. p. 337, Note *

|| See Vol. X. pp. 242, 271, 272, 358, 359.

enumerated the most *horrid* abuses of church discipline; but that which may more properly be called the most *scandalous* abuse of it, was the injunction of a variety of ridiculous *penances*, as walking barefoot, repeating a certain number of *Pater-nosters* and *Ave-Marias*,* pilgrimages, &c. and especially the commutation of those for sums of money; whereby, at length, every sin had its fixed price; and a person might purchase a pardon, not only for all the sins he had actually committed, but for all those that he, or any fixed number of persons, might commit, in any given time to come. That no offences, or occasions of making these profits, might be neglected, and also that the priests might confirm and extend their influence over the people in a variety of ways, the practice of *auricular-confession* was introduced. It was the scandal of *indulgences* that was the immediate cause of the Reformation in Germany, headed by Luther and his associates.†

In consequence of these abuses, religion became a mere trade, and was a fund of vast wealth to the priests and the court of Rome, who spent the sums they extorted from the superstition of the people in the most abominable excesses.

SECTION III.

A more particular Account of the very low State of Church Discipline among us, and the Inconveniencés attending it.

AT the *Reformation*, the capital abuses of church discipline were reformed, along with other corruptions; but still the propriety and vigour of the truly primitive discipline, has never yet been restored. All established churches, I believe, have annexed more or less of civil penalties to the sentence of excommunication; and all churches, established or not established, have confounded matters of opinion, that is, mere mistakes of the head, with the corruptions of the heart and life.

In the Church of *England*, as in the Church of *Rome*, neither the *bishop* nor the *presbyter* do, in the least, correspond to those orders of men in the primitive church. The bishop, instead of presiding in one society of Christians, who meet in one place, is encumbered with the superintendency of a large diocese, or district, in which are many churches; and

* On "the worship of the Virgin Mary," see Vol. V. pp. 204—208.

† See Vol. V. pp. 413, 414; X. pp. 87—93.

the presbyters, or priests, are those who officiate in these subordinate churches. The *deacons*, also, are only *ministers*, or *clergy* of an inferior class, and nothing is left to correspond to the ancient *elders*, several of whom generally presided in every primitive church. The little that doth remain of this office, together with that of deacon, is done by the *churchwardens*.

As to the *bishops' courts*, in which church censures and excommunications are passed, in which lay-chancellors and commissaries preside, (officers unknown for more than four centuries in the Christian church,) courts in which the most vexatious civil penalties are inflicted, in which suits are conducted in the most expensive and oppressive manner, and in forms quite contrary to the spirit of the English constitution; I need not say they bear no resemblance of, and are no proper substitute for, the ancient church discipline. I think it is agreed on all hands, that, instead of being of any use for the reformation of manners, they are a great grievance, and a nuisance to this country.

The *Presbyterians* of the old stamp, had elders in every particular church. In the first church of this denomination, formed at Wandsworth, near London, in 1572, eleven elders were appointed, * and, as far as I am informed concerning the regulations of particular churches in *Scotland*, it is, upon the whole, very well adapted to answer the purpose of church discipline.

Each parish, in proportion to the extent of it, is divided into particular districts, and every district has its own ruling elders and deacons. The ruling elders are men of principal quality and interest in the parish, and the deacons are men of good character for manners and understanding. † A consistory of the minister, the elders, and deacons, ‡ is called a *kirk session*, which meets once a-week, to consider the affairs of the parish. "The minister is always moderator, but with-

* Neal's "History of the Puritans," [ed. 2, 1754,] l. p. 202. (P.) "Their offices were described in a register, entitled *the Orders of Wandsworth*. All imaginable care was taken to keep their proceedings secret, but the bishop's eye was upon them, who gave immediate intelligence to the *High Commission*, upon which the Queen issued out a proclamation for putting the *Act of Uniformity* in execution; but though the Commissioners knew of the *Presbytery*, they could not discover the members of it, nor prevent others being erected in neighbouring countries." *Ibid.*

† "In many country churches, they have only elders, who exercise also the office of the deacons, according to that known rule, that, in the church, the greater office includes the lesser." See "The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland," *Edin.* 1690, p. 32, *Note*.

‡ "One or more ministers, and of elders so many in number as the proportion of the congregation doth require.—The deacons are always present with the elders, not for government, but that they may make known the case and necessities of the poor, and may consult and receive direction for their supply." *Ibid.*

out a negative.* The number of elders is indefinite, but generally twelve in each parish. † In some churches, I am informed, they amount to sixteen or eighteen. ‡

In the first *Independent* church that was erected in England, § there were only a *pastor* and *deacons* appointed. In some of their churches, I believe, there are one or two elders; but their deacons have powers similar to those of the elders in the primitive church; though they are not near so numerous.

The terms of church communion, both among the old *Presbyterians* and *Independents*, were much too narrow; both of them insisting upon the belief of certain opinions, || which many are so far from thinking to be Christian, that they look

* *Neal* [from *Rapin.*] II. p. 260. (*P.*) "If there be more Ministers than one, the Moderator is either chosen or they do moderate by course, providing that none be Moderator while any matter is treated which concerneth his own particular." *Government and Order*, p. 32.

† "History of Religion," *Index.* (*P.*)

‡ "The number doth vary according to the number and necessity of the people. The elders do attend with the pastor in catechising the people, and assist him in visiting the sick.—But a principal part of their duty is to join always with the Pastor in the particular eldership, and in the other assemblies of the church, as they shall be called, for exercising of discipline, and governing the whole congregation." *Government and Order*, pp. 26, 27.

§ By Henry Jacob, in 1616. See Vol. X. p. 401, *Note.* With Jacob was joined as co-pastor John Lathrop. "Henry Jacob," according to *Wood*, "was a *Kentish* man born," and "entered in St. Marie's Hall," Oxford, in 1579, "aged 16." There he "took the degrees of arts, holy orders, and became benefited in his own country." He is acknowledged, while "a most zealous Puritan," to have been "most excellently well read in theological authors." Among other works, he maintained, in 1598, against Bishop Bilson, "That Christ, after his death on the cross, went not into hell, in his soul." He also published, in 1604, "A Position against vain-glorious, and that which is falsely called learned Preaching." He died about 1621, "aged 60 years, or more." *Athen. Oxon.* 1691, I. pp. 344, 394, 395, 857.

Henry Jacob, the son of this "first Independent in England," was educated in Holland, "under the famous Thomas Erpenius," and became "the prodigie of his age, for philological and oriental learning." From the patronage of *Laud* he acquired a fellowship in *Merton* College, where "he taught, or, at least, improved *Selden* in the Hebrew language." He was elected "Superior Bedle of Divinity" in 1641, but was deprived of all his appointments in 1648, by "the Parliamentarian visitors," for incorrigible neglect of duty; "his head being always overbusie about critical notions."

Thus "being destitute of maintainance, he retired to London, where the learned *Selden* exhibited to him, gave him his cloaths and an old scarlet cloak, of which last his friends would mock him and call him *young Selden*, when they saw it on his back. But he being a shiftless person, as most meer scholars are, and the benefactions of friends not sufficing him, he sold that little land he had, to supply his necessities, and died before that was spent," in 1652, aged about 44. *Ibid.* 1692, pp. 89, 90.

|| Thus the Ministers of both denominations, in 1692, united in "Heads of Agreement between Mr. Chauncey and Mr. Williams," according with "the Holy Scriptures, and the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, the *Westminster* and *Savoy* Confessions, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms." The "Propositions" subscribed, they say, "do most fully provide against the *Arminian*, *Antinomian*, *Socinian*, and *Papish* errors." See "The Agreement in Doctrine among the Dissenting Ministers,

upon them to be *antichristian*; and the Independents require also such an account of what they call *experiences** in religion, as there is not a shadow of ground for in the *New Testament*, and which few but enthusiasts will pretend to.

The immediate object of church discipline among the *Independents* is two-fold, viz. an almost perfect uniformity in matters of faith, and also the religion of the heart with respect to God; both of which in the extent to which they carry them, are very improper subjects of human judicature, and which it is highly dangerous to the interests of Christianity for men to intermeddle with.

The articles contained in many of the *church covenants* that I have seen, and which every communicant is obliged to subscribe, are far more numerous than the *thirty-nine* of the Church of England; † and, besides all the absurdities and contradictions of what is commonly called the *Calvinistical system*, enjoin an unity of opinions, with respect to such things as all the established churches in the world have left indifferent; so that all the mischiefs that can attend human impositions in matters of religion, in any part of the Christian world, are found among them; except, that they have not the power to persecute unto death those who differ from them.

As to the second object of their discipline, viz. the state of the heart with respect to God, and a person's actual fitness for heaven, their conduct is not only absurd, but dangerous to the interests of real virtue. All that men can be proper judges of, is the outward propriety and regularity of beha-

in London, subscribed December 16, 1692," 1693, pp. 1, 2; Dr. Toulmin's *Historical View*, pp. 202—207.

* This demand of an experience is, I apprehend now (1822) much less general than when Dr. Priestley wrote; a *deacon's* satisfactory report to the church, after a conversation with the applicants for communion, on their views of Christian truth, is frequently regarded as quite sufficient.

† Such *Church-Covenants* deserve to be contrasted with the following concise "Covenant of the first Church in Boston," N. E., which, according to "Mr. Foxcraft's Century-Sermon at Boston," was subscribed, in 1630, by Governor Winthrop, and his associates, who had emigrated with him that year from England:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in obedience to his holy will and divine ordinance, we whose names are here underwritten, being by his most wise and good providence brought together into this part of America, in the Bay of Massachusetts, and desirous to unite ourselves into one congregation or church, under the Lord Jesus Christ our head, in such sort as becometh all those whom he hath redeemed and sanctified to himself, do hereby solemnly and religiously (as in his most holy presence) promise and bind ourselves to walk in all our ways according to the rule of the gospel, and in all sincere conformity to his holy ordinances, and in mutual love and respect to each other, so near as God shall give us grace." *Bachus's* "History of the Baptists," N. E., 1777, p. 46, Note. See *Neale*, N. E., 1747, l. p. 141.

viour. This was all that the primitive churches attended to; and whenever men pretend to decide concerning any thing but plain *facts*, of which every man can judge by the evidence of seeing and hearing, a field is open for the utmost extravagance of fancy, which may be productive of the grossest self-delusion and imposition.

It has pleased the Divine Being, for good and obvious reasons, not to make the terms of salvation so very determinate, as that a man shall be able to pronounce with *absolute certainty* concerning the future state of himself or others, while we are in this life. It is evidently the best for us never to be without the influence both of *hope* and *fear*; and therefore all that we have authority to say from the Scriptures, is, that when we have a fixed resolution to do our duty, as far as it is known to us, we have reason to *hope*; and that when we either have not that resolution, or when our virtuous purposes are easily overborne by the influence of temptation, we have reason to *fear*. This is the nearest that any man can judge, even in his own case; and by this rule let every man *examine himself*, though not with a view to church-communion. All that others can see or judge, is, whether a man's conduct in life be such as is unworthy of their society; that is, in this case, contradictory to his profession as a Christian, and such as would be in danger of corrupting or disgracing them.

Instead of proceeding upon these maxims, which are easy, useful, and authorized by the Scriptures and the practice of the primitive church, the *Independents* judge by rules exceedingly obscure and doubtful; their proceedings have a dangerous tendency with respect both to the candidates for church-communion, and those who sit as judges of their qualifications; and their whole system of discipline has no countenance in our only rule of faith and duty, and no example for very many centuries in the Christian church.

What can be more precarious than to judge of a man's fitness for Christian communion by certain *internal feelings*, which are incapable of being described, except by strong metaphors; by a kind of *faith* that is different from believing, and a *new birth*, that is something else than a change of affections and conduct, proceeding from rational motives; a new birth, in which a man is entirely passive, and to which nothing he does, or can do, does in the least contribute? What room is not here left for self-delusion with respect to the candidate, and imposition with respect to the judges.

How dangerous also, is the conceit that is encouraged in the candidate, who hereby declares his opinion of his fitness for the communion of the saints on earth and in heaven! And what must we think of the presumption and arrogance of those who make themselves judges in such a case? Such a discipline as this, which, in the most favourable view of it, chiefly respects the feelings of the heart, might be worthy of the cloistered monk, but is certainly hurtful in real life.

Men who act upon this system will be liable to be imposed upon both by the visionary and the artful; in plainer terms, by the *fools* and the *knaves*. The one will really believe that they have felt and experienced what is absolutely incompatible with the human faculties; and the latter, seeing that nothing else will do, will be tempted to dress up a tale in the only style that will take. It is no secret, that, in some places, those who are versed in the *peculiar style* of the party, have made a business of drawing up *experiences* for those who wanted them.

In saying this, I mean no ridicule. The representation is true, and lamentable. I have even heard it complained of by several honest and sensible ministers of that persuasion; who, though thoroughly *Calvinistical* in other respects, cannot but be sensible how unscriptural and mischievous this system of church discipline is.

For my own part, I am very willing to think that the most corrupt species of Christianity is better than none; but I do not scruple to declare, that, in my opinion, it is better to have no church discipline at all, than that of the *Independents*.

With the generality of those who are now called *Presbyterians* in England,* the whole government of the society, with respect to morals, is in the hands of the minister. There is no regular appointment of any officers. If there be any, they are those who, by tacit consent, officiate as *deacons* only, and barely carry about the bread and wine in the administration of the Lord's Supper.† Something, however, of the idea of the ancient *elder* is annexed to their character, as they are generally expected to be some of the more grave and serious persons in the society.

* Who, as Dr. Kippis has remarked, "while they retain the name of Presbyterianism, have lost the thing." It is, indeed, to be regretted, that policy or convenience should induce any to retain that name, while they "assert, that every church and congregation has sufficient power to act and do every thing relating to religious government, within itself, and that it is no ways subject or accountable to other churches, or their deputies." *Biog. Brit.* II. p. 621.

† See *supra*, p. 300, Note †.

So long has every appearance of church discipline been neglected in many of our societies, that nothing of the kind is expected of the minister, though he is the only person who has so much as any nominal authority in the place; and so far is it from being expected of him to visit his hearers, in order to inquire into the state of their families, and to give them advice and admonition, as was the custom formerly, that I am informed there are societies among us, in which the ministers are expressly forbidden to visit their hearers, except by particular invitation. It is certain that the least hint of an admonition, out of the pulpit, would, in many places, give unpardonable offence; and these maxims, I am afraid, are gaining ground among us.

In short, a Dissenting Minister, among those who are usually called the *rational Dissenters*, begins now to be considered as a person who is paid by his hearers for haranguing them once a-week; and the people attend the place of divine worship, if not from mere unthinking habit, with the same views with which they would attend the lectures of any other person, from whom they expected instruction or entertainment. Many of them have hardly the idea of having any thing *to do themselves*, or *with one another*; so that the performance of the minister being the only object of attention, if they dislike his sentiments or delivery, they make no difficulty of quitting the society, provided they can please themselves better elsewhere.

In fact, all the real business or connexion that the generality of our *hearers* (as they are now usually and properly called) have with the society, is to attend the baptism of their children, and to have the prayers of the church on those few occasions on which it would still be considered as *indecent* not to have them. The *Lord's Supper* is neglected, partly through some remains of superstition hanging upon their minds with respect to it; * but in part, also, I am afraid, through indifference to it, as a religious act, and because they find that, consistent with decency, it may be neglected. Indeed, the neglect of *church-communion* is now so general, that those who do attend the Lord's Supper, are more *marked* and singular than those who do not. If it were possible for a primitive Christian to see the order of our churches, he would hardly think there was the appearance of our professing ourselves Christians; and, indeed, those

* See *supra*, pp. 289—291.

who do not believe Christianity do almost every thing that we do. How, then, my brethren, do we distinguish ourselves in the face of the world, and confess Christ before men, when we are, in fact, rather ashamed of the strict and proper profession of Christianity?

In the Church of England the people have *responses* to make, and I believe it would be particularly noticed if a person habitually omitted *communion*; which, together with other things of a similar nature, gives the members of that church something to do; which fixes their attention, and makes the discourse of the minister to be considered as the least essential part of the service. The people going to church, and doing what they call their *duty*, is, with them, quite a different thing from the minister doing his.

In this respect, (though in little else,) it must be owned, they resemble the primitive Christians. With them the church or the society was every thing, and the presiding *bishop* was comparatively of small account. They met *to edify one another*; to read the Scriptures, to pray, sing psalms, occasionally to admonish and censure particular members, and always to express their relation to one another, and to Christ their common head, by partaking of the *Lord's Supper*. The discourse of the minister, or his mode of delivery, were with them things of trifling consequence, in comparison of these. They had no idea of leaving any Christian society on that account, and the man who should have done it would not have been received in any other.

The inconveniencies attending our maxims and conduct, are great and manifest. That any single person, however well disposed or well qualified, should conduct the whole business of church discipline, as it is described in the *New Testament*, and practised in the primitive church, in admonishing, reproofing, comforting, and advising all the members of a large Christian society; and, at the same time, do what is now expected of the minister or pastor, in composing sermons, preaching twice every Lord's day, and often on other days, baptizing children, administering the *Lord's Supper*, and visiting the sick, is, at the first view, impossible. And when it is added, that this person is generally entirely dependent upon the society he so serves for his subsistence, we may certainly say, that, if it were possible, it is, in the nature of things, highly improbable that he should do it with fidelity and good effect. It is much more than can be expected from the powers or virtue of man; and it may justly be said,

that every idea of the ancient church discipline, and of the uses of it, must have been lost, before such an imperfect system as ours could have been adopted.

The generality of our Dissenting Ministers are, in a variety of respects, exceedingly unfit to discharge many important parts of the duty of the ancient elders. The business of composing sermons and preaching, in a manner obliges them to adopt a *studious and retired life*; so that they are often the last persons to hear of any irregularity in the society; and when they do hear of such things, admonition or reproof would in almost every case be too late.

Ministers, for the same reason, cannot have much personal acquaintance, except with a very few of their hearers; and therefore cannot watch favourable opportunities of advising them for their good; so that if they intermeddle at all, it must almost unavoidably be in such a manner as is the least likely to have any good effect.

Besides, the business of advising, admonishing, and reproving, requires very different talents from those of composing and delivering sermons. Nay, it requires that practical knowledge of human nature, life, and the world, that but seldom falls to the share of those who excel the most as preachers. It cannot, therefore, be expected of them.

Lastly, they who undertake this business should be men independent of those whom they may have occasion to admonish or rebuke, and by no means in the situation of the generality of Dissenting Ministers; who will necessarily feel themselves restrained from doing their duty by the fear of giving offence, and of losing the affections and contributions of their more considerable hearers. Are not your ministers men, and men of like interests and passions with yourselves?

Upon the whole, it must be evident to every thinking person, that to contrive and execute every thing that ought to be done to promote the real interest of a Christian society, no one person can be sufficient; and that the joint labour and attention of many persons, of different talents and situations, are absolutely necessary.

For want of this, there must be frequent instances, in every large society, of persons contracting bad habits without any opportunity of being admonished and warned of their danger; of some who are a disgrace to their profession, and even to human nature, and yet are never reprov'd, much less publicly censured; and of persons labouring under affliction or distress, without the assistance of those

consolations which a Christian friend might suggest, and which their own minds were not in a proper situation to attend to.

In our situation, many persons must entertain doubts and difficulties, which they have no opportunity of having discussed and cleared up; difficulties, which may lead to scepticism and infidelity. And so loosely do we hang together, that any person may entirely quit our societies, without being expected to give any reason for it, and without any censure upon his conduct by those who continue in it.

SECTION IV.

An Account of the Circumstances that have contributed to bring Church Discipline into so low a State among us.

THAT church discipline is in a very low and imperfect state among the rational Dissenters, and that, in consequence of it, the original ends of a Christian society are very imperfectly answered, has, I imagine, been sufficiently demonstrated in the preceding Section. In this I shall endeavour to trace the causes of it, and I think it will not be difficult to do this. I wish the remedy of this evil, which I shall treat of in the next Sections, were half so easy.

Those persons who bore the title of presbyters or priests, had been so long elevated above their rank of elders, and had enjoyed such considerable benefices, that it was some time before many of the *Reformers* could think of creating officers under the same name, with inferior powers and appointments. This was probably the reason why the *Independents* contented themselves with a minister and deacons only.

The English Puritans, however, so early as the reign of Queen Elizabeth, proposed to change the "churchwardens and collectors for the poor—into elders and deacons."* They held that the *elders*, joined with the *ministers*, should be *overseers* of the manners and conversation of all the congregation; that they should be chosen out of the gravest and most discreet members; that they should also be of some note in the world, and able, if possible, to maintain themselves.†

As far as their circumstances would permit, all the old

* Neale, I. p. 252. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 449. (P.)

Puritans and *Presbyterians* formed their churches upon this plan ; but this regular form of a church, and the discipline to which it was subservient, are now almost universally grown into disuse among us.

1. I almost think that one of the first things that contributed to it, was the indefatigable zeal of the *ministers* in those difficult times. Giving their whole time and attention to their respective congregations, aided by a superstitious reverence and respect that had long been paid to Christian ministers, and being, many of them, men of wealth and influence in other respects, they discharged all the duties both of ministers and *elders* ; while these latter, being not so well qualified for the work, and their office itself commanding little or no respect, were overlooked by the people ; and, besides not being paid for their services, the people were more careful not to give them unnecessary trouble. The elders, therefore, having little or nothing to do in the society, the formal ordination of them, by prayer and imposition of hands, grew into disuse ; and the *deacons*, whose office could not so well be dispensed with, were nominated by the minister himself, with the tacit consent of the people.

2. It may also be supposed to have contributed to the disuse of *nominal elders*, that the people, without distinction of persons, were desirous of procuring the prayers and advice of any persons in the society who had a character for understanding and piety. For many of these, being modest persons, chose to continue these services, and in other respects, also, to do the duty of elders, without any formal appointment. Christian zeal decreasing in peaceable times, fewer of those persons were to be found ; so that, at length, most of our societies were destitute both of nominal elders, and also of any persons to do the duty of elders. At the same time, religious zeal decreasing also among the people, there was very little demand for those offices for which elders were applied to by the people, and consequently the want of them was not so sensible ; and the want of what they did as it were *ex officio*, or without solicitation, as advising, and exhorting, &c., was not of such a nature as to occasion any great alarm.

3. As luxury and a love of pleasure naturally prevail in times of peace, it was found more difficult to engage men of fortune to fill up the station of elders ; and in places where this church power was in the hands of persons of the lowest

ranks, without natural influence or authority, the whole business could not but sink into contempt.

4. So long as a kind of superstitious regard to ministers was kept up among the *Dissenters*, they had an authority which, in some measure, superseded all other powers in the congregation; but this undue reverence has now generally subsided, and, as might naturally be expected, the people are rather tending to the other extreme; so that the whole power of church discipline being in the hands of the minister, and his authority and influence, in a manner, annihilated, our societies are left destitute of any provision for those purposes for which the ancient discipline was established.

5. The discipline of a church has sometimes been lost, upon a change of ministers. Many of the elder ministers, were possessed of sufficient authority for any purpose of church discipline; but their successors, being young men, could not with any propriety assume the same. They would only have exposed themselves to ridicule by the attempt; and before they had got years and experience, the people, having been unaccustomed to any kind of discipline, would not bear it. Thus has ministerial authority, which was a kind of substitute for church discipline, often died with particular ministers, and has not revived under any of their successors.

6. Another circumstance that has had a considerable share in bringing church discipline into its present low state among us, is the greater *freedom of thinking* that first began to take place among the ministers, and is now generally diffused through the people. For some time, however, the bulk of the people, and especially the church officers, who were generally the more serious and zealous of their members, continuing strongly attached to the opinions in which they had been educated, the ministers found themselves greatly incommoded by them; the church officers often making parties in the congregation in opposition to the minister, and controlling him in his favourite measures and conduct. In this disagreeable situation, the ministers purposely neglected to fill up vacancies in church offices, and were, in general, heartily glad when they became entirely extinct.

For the same reason that ministers promoted the abolition of church offices, they discontinued, in many places, as far as was in their power, all private meetings for religious exercises, and even the catechizing of children; in short, every thing

but the more *conspicuous* duties of their office. Entertaining sentiments in religion different from those of their people, and such as their people would not have borne with, they endeavoured to keep them as much as possible out of view;* and finding themselves more particularly incommoded and embarrassed with the *extra* duties of their office, they laid hold of every opportunity of abolishing them.

It is greatly to be lamented, that the progres of Christian knowledge should have been unfavourable to any useful provision for promoting the spirit and practice of Christianity; but such have been, and such, in many places, still *are* our circumstances, that it was, and is unavoidable. I only fear lest the ministers, and the more intelligent of their people, reflecting on the obstacles that have been thrown in the way of all improvements in religious knowledge by the old system of church discipline, and other methods adapted to promote the knowledge and practice of religion, should never be brought to bear the idea of them with patience, even though they might be applied to the best purposes.

It is too much the disposition of mankind to refuse the aid of those powers that have been employed against them, though they be capable of being rendered as favourable to their views, as they have ever been unfavourable to them. The folly and unreasonableness of this conduct, however, is such, that I should think that men of reason and reflection might be made sensible of it; and that, after some time, at least, they might be able to get over their aversion to any useful institution, or custom, how much soever it may have been abused.

SECTION V.

A more particular View of the Progress and present Estimation of Preaching.

As the business of *preaching* is become almost the sole object of our assemblies, I shall give a more particular account of the original state, progress, and present estimation of it.

What we now call *preaching*, was originally nothing more than *expounding the Scriptures*;† which not the *bishop*

* See Vol. XV. pp. 50, 51, 470, 471.

† See Vol. XV. pp. 6, 471.

only, but any person who was qualified for it, whether *elder*, *deacon*, or ordinary *layman*, might do, with the permission of the bishop; and which might have been omitted altogether, and the service not have been reckoned incomplete, if it had happened that no person present had any thing to observe on the subject of what had been read: and it is not improbable that this must have happened pretty often, as the primitive Christians seem to have followed the example of the Jews, who read their sacred books in order; and some parts would hardly require or admit of any illustration. Among the Jews it is probable, that, originally, *the Scriptures only* were read, in certain fixed portions; that when the *Hebrew* language became unintelligible to the common people, the *Greek* and *Chaldee* paraphrases, or translations, were introduced; and that no discourse was made, except a person learned in the law was present. It is probable, also, that their discourses were generally short, and that there were often several speakers. It is certain, however, that they had no provision for constant and set discourses, every Lord's day, and that no sermons were composed for any such purpose.

That which was more especially called *preaching the gospel*, and *preaching Christ*, in the first ages, was, probably, nothing more than reciting the history of Christ, as of itself containing a satisfactory proof, that he was a teacher sent from God. If any Jews were present, this history was compared with the ancient prophecies, to prove that he was the promised *Messiah*. Our Saviour's discourses were carefully recollected and repeated, as containing the best instructions and motives to a good life.

When these histories of the life of Christ, and his discourses, were committed to writing, every Christian church considered itself as in possession of the substance of all the preaching of the Apostles and Evangelists; and the reading of these writings called *Gospels*, was a recital of the best part of all their sermons.

When the apostolical epistles were written and dispersed, they were considered by Christians as an additional treasure of the same kind, and, together with the *Gospels* and the book of *Acts*, were imagined to contain a complete system of Christian faith and duty, that was sufficiently intelligible in those days, when all persons were acquainted with the language in which they were written, and with all those allusions and idioms of speech that puzzle us so much

in their writings. A mere recital, or at most a short exposition of these books, therefore, was deemed sufficient for all the purposes of preaching.

Expounding the Scriptures seems to have been what the apostle *Paul* calls *prophesying*,* which, according to his account of it, was calculated for edification; and it might have been called prophesying, because it was an exercise that those who of old were called *prophets* had been accustomed to. We infer from 2 *Kings* iv. 23, that it was customary for the people to resort to the prophets on "the new moon," and the "sabbath;"† probably to hear them read and expound the Scriptures, which, otherwise, every person used to do in his own family at the same times. A number of persons agreeing to join in this exercise, and to set apart a place for the purpose, was, probably, the origin of synagogues among the Jews.

The custom of interpreting the Scriptures, particularly those of the Old Testament, soon degenerated into a most extravagant taste for *allegory*. The plainest facts and most simple moral instructions were supposed to have a reference to the gospel. Nay, the whole Jewish history was perverted, and, instead of being considered as a plain narrative of things past, was construed to be a dark prophecy of things future. It is no wonder that, with the introduction of this taste, preaching began to be more diffuse, but at the same time it was more jejune and trifling. Such were the sermons of *Origen*.

When Heathen philosophers and rhetoricians were converted to Christianity, they introduced their custom of haranguing on particular subjects and particular occasions, and carefully premeditated or precomposed their sermons; sometimes prefixing to their discourse a short text of scripture,‡ not to pass at once from the old method of interpreting the sacred writings, and sometimes omitting it. In this style are the sermons of *Chrysostom*, consisting of such kind of eloquence as the *Greeks* and *Romans* were fond of displaying, in haranguing the populace, and pleading at the bar.

These set discourses were a splendid addition to the service of Christian societies, and, I doubt not, were much valued and admired; but it was a sacrificing of the genuine simplicity of the gospel and its ordinances, to a taste for the charms of eloquence, and the refinements of a false philosophy; and, in most cases, I doubt not, the plain recital of

* 1 *Cor.* xiv. 6; 1 *Thess.* v. 20, See Vol. XIV. p. 22, 24.

† See Vol. XI. pp. 453, 454.

‡ See Mrs. Barbauld on "a text—dwindling into a motto," Vol. XX. p. 305, *Note*.

one of our Saviour's parables would have had a much better effect upon the audience. They would have gone away thinking less of the preacher, but more of his subject. So far did Christian preachers, in those times, depart from the simplicity of the gospel, and so little were they influenced by the spirit of Christianity, that, in imitation of the *Greecian* orators and philosophers, they even hired persons to clap, and express their applause, with violent gestures and vociferations, at proper intervals, on a signal previously concerted between them and the preacher, or his particular friends. It must be observed, that these set harangues were only occasional, and by no means delivered in every Christian church every *Lord's day*. In the dark ages, few persons being qualified to preach, sermons became scarce; and at this day, in the Church of Rome, the people meet only to hear prayers and celebrate mass. They have no sermons except in *Lent*, on certain festivals, and on some other particular occasions.*

Sermons revived at the *Reformation*, and particularly the custom of explaining the Scriptures, and preaching from particular texts of scripture. Indeed, frequent and set discourses were necessary for explaining to the common people the grounds and principles of the *Reformation*; and it was particularly favourable to their purpose, to bring the Scriptures into view, and recommend the general reading of them.

At the same time, however, a taste for the *Greek* and *Roman* literature happening to revive, the generality of Christian preachers, like *Chrysostom*, forming themselves upon the model of the Heathen orators and philosophers, this part of the service came to be particularly attended to, especially as the celebration of the *Lord's Supper* was less frequent than before, and consequently the people were chiefly hearers and spectators, and had little to do themselves in the place of worship. Besides, ministers having had a liberal education, being instructed in the art of oratory, and receiving a stipend for ministerial services, the people in general could have had no idea of their being employed in any other manner, so as to appear to deserve their salaries. Hence the composition and delivery of sermons came, by degrees, to be considered

* The *Council of Trent* appears to have designed a more general practice of preaching, which they describe as the first duty of a Bishop; unlike our Protestant Church, where it may, I apprehend, not unfairly be said, that a sermon by a *Lord-Bishop*, and especially by his Grace an *Archbishop*, is, at length, become "a work to wonder at." See *Council. Trident. (Sess. v. Cap. ii. Sess. xxiv. Cap. iv.)*, 1781, pp. 17, 18, 210, 211.

as the chief business of gospel ministers; and while large salaries were allowed for this work, in many churches, the people left themselves wholly unprovided for purposes of more importance to their edification as Christians.

Thus have we been brought into a situation the very reverse, in many respects, of that of the primitive Christians; better calculated to display the abilities and address of a public speaker, and to gratify the taste of our hearers, but by no means so well adapted to promote the real improvement of the whole society, as one body.

I am far from denying the utility of *preaching*, but I would not have it considered as the most essential part of Christian worship, or, indeed, as any essential part of it. Reading the Scriptures, praying, and singing of psalms, (for which a small stock of knowledge is sufficient,) are all that can properly be deemed necessary. Otherwise, there could be no public worship without men of learning and ability.

The business of *preaching*, when properly conducted, is certainly very useful, and would, perhaps, be more useful, if it was not quite so frequent as it is with the generality of *Dissenters*, and I wish the true art of it was more studied than it is, and that it was conducted with more propriety; but as it generally is, and probably always will be conducted, many inconveniences attend our placing it in so high a rank of importance.

As the members of our societies assemble chiefly to hear sermons, if the preacher's discourse or delivery be mean, they are chagrined and disappointed, or perhaps leave the society. On the other hand, if the preacher acquit himself to their satisfaction, they are, in general, only entertained, or affected for the time. They leave the place, expressing their admiration of the ingenuity, learning, or eloquence of the preacher, but the discourse has produced no other effect. Their disposition and conduct are the same as before.

Another inconvenience attending the great estimation of sermons respects the preachers. If a minister happen not to have popular talents, he is overlooked and despised, whatever be his real worth, or his abilities in other respects. He is then discouraged, the generous ardour of his mind is damped, and he is often for ever lost to society. On the other hand, the applause which rhetorical talents, and the graces of a good delivery universally meet with, are apt to intoxicate the preacher. From thence it becomes his whole study to rise upon his hearers, and surprise them every time that he exhibits; till, at last, he is a mere stage-player; his

gestures and figures of speech are no longer prompted by his *real feelings*, and the whole service is a piece of artifice, without the exercise of the pure devotion of the heart towards God, and without that simple and earnest desire to instruct and amend others, that ought solely to animate the breast of the preacher; so that whether the preacher acquit himself very ill, or, as is generally esteemed, very well, the consequence is almost equally to be dreaded.

Those discourses and that manner of address which are really calculated not to procure admiration to the preacher, but which proceed from the heart, and are adapted to make good impressions on the heart, and to engage men to form steady resolutions of good living, will not engage the attention of the *many*. This kind of preaching may be compared to the *still, small voice*, which few will listen to, whereas it is something noisy and bold that the populace will generally run after.

It is much to be regretted, that the custom of *expounding the Scriptures* is now almost universally laid aside among us, and much to be wished that it might be resumed; but not in the manner in which it was conducted before, as a part of the service introductory to prayer and preaching, but to stand in the place of preaching, all the real uses of which it is generally well calculated to answer. The use that was formerly made of this exposition of the Scriptures, was the reason of its being discontinued. The service was long enough without it.

If the custom of expounding the Scriptures were once more introduced, it would be the means of making our people better acquainted with them; and it is notorious they are every day more neglected; so that it is justly to be feared that, in a few generations, our posterity will have but a very imperfect and indistinct idea of the contents of those sacred books.*

As the books of Scripture contain a history of all the dispensations of God to mankind, a great variety of examples both of virtue and vice, and the progress and issue of both, the wise reflections of good men on a variety of occurrences, together with their meditations and prayers; as they contain all the rules and precepts of a good life, and all the genuine motives to it, delivered with great plainness and native energy, I cannot help thinking, that if they were only understood, they would, of themselves, be able *to make us wise*

* See the Author's complaint, Vol. II. p. xxiv. This evil is aggravated when a preacher, even though treating a subject of which, but for the Bible, he had known nothing, declines the use of *scriptural phraseology*, however appropriate, as if like Cordial Bembo, he feared to corrupt a *Ciceronian style*.

unto salvation; and that a very short exposition of them, illustrating those passages that must be really difficult to the unlearned, pointing out the connexion of a train of reasoning, shewing the force of an argument, the propriety of a precept, &c. &c., would, in general, be more likely to engage such a kind of attention as would make men think for themselves, and act upon it afterwards, than the best set declamation upon a particular subject. If men will not hear Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, that is, God himself speaking by them, neither will they be persuaded by any other methods that we can apply.

We have no example of a regular discourse, or a set declamation on a particular subject, in the history of our Saviour's method of teaching. He delivered himself, I doubt not, with great perspicuity, dignity, and energy; but he only discoursed as particular occasions prompted, and, probably, seldom spake for any length of time without interruption, or in a manner that we should now call methodical. The manner of *Socrates* seems to have been something like it, but not at all that of *Plato*, or the more pompous and admired of the Greek philosophers and orators.

When the servants of the Jewish rulers, who had been sent to apprehend Jesus, returned, saying, "*Never man spake like this man,*" it is not to be supposed that their admiration was at all similar to that which would have been excited by what we call a fine, or eloquent speaker; but rather that they were struck with the majesty and authority with which he, at that time more especially, spake; an authority which they had never seen their Scribes or Pharisees assume, and which no Christian preacher ought to assume.

One reason for the peculiar fondness for frequent and long sermons among the old Dissenters, may be looked for in the times of persecution. They had then few opportunities of hearing sermons at all; so that they could never think they had enough of them when their places of worship were open. For the same reason they seem to have gone to great excess in the frequency and the length of all public exercises of religion,* an excess that has had several bad consequences.

* See *supra*, p. 380, *Note*. The "ordination, in 1694," of Dr. Calamy, "and six young ministers besides,—was the first public transaction of that kind which had taken place amongst the Dissenters, since the passing of the Act of Uniformity.—The whole service lasted from ten o'clock in the morning, till past six in the evening." Dr. Kippis, adds that "the Dissenting Clergy have since found out the means of reducing these solemnities within a much shorter compass." *Biog. Brit.* III. p. 143.

SECTION VI.

A Delineation of a Method of Church Government.

WHEN what has been advanced under the preceding Sections has been considered, I imagine it must appear, that the state of our churches requires to be looked into. We have departed very far indeed from the primitive Christian plan, and much farther than any regard to the difference between their circumstances and ours required. We feel the inconveniencies resulting from it, and cannot but wish that they were removed. I shall, therefore, as one who has had occasion to think upon the subject, and is willing to contribute what may be in his power to the good of the common cause, propose such a form of church government as I conceive to be the best adapted to remedy the evils we labour under; considering, in the first place, what appears to me the best constitution of a Christian church, without any regard to our present customs, habits, and prejudices; and afterwards recommending such forms as may be introduced with more ease, and yet are calculated to answer the principal ends of the stricter discipline.

In order to do this to the most advantage, I shall briefly enumerate the wants both of the Christian church in general, and of Christian societies in particular; observing that these wants will vary in a course of time, and consequently that the provisions and regulations adapted to them should vary with them. The apostles themselves made alterations in the constitution of the church as new circumstances arose; so that we may conclude they would have continued to do so had they lived longer, and other circumstances arisen. I shall therefore take it for granted, that, in re-constituting a Christian church, we are at liberty to make those variations from the plan of the primitive church, which the very great difference between their times and ours shall appear to require. Provided we keep in view the original design of a Christian church, there will be but little danger of falling into any great impropriety; or if this should be done in theory, a little experience will rectify it. It was only worldly views, and a spirit of faction, that gave rise to the scandalous corruptions I have recited in the primitive discipline.

The situation of things is such as makes it more than ever necessary, that the Christian church should be furnished with *learned men*; by which I do not mean philo-

sophers, mathematicians, or critics, (though the Christian scholar should not be destitute of a competent knowledge of any branch of liberal science,) but men thoroughly acquainted with the language of the Scriptures, and the history of primitive times; with the learning, languages, customs, and revolutions of the *Jews*, and other ancient eastern nations, and also those of the *Greeks* and *Romans*; more especially with the antiquities of the Christian church, and all the remarkable changes that have taken place in the world since the time of Christ, particularly as affecting the state of Christianity; that they may be able accurately to trace, in their causes and effects, the rise and progress of the corruptions of Christianity. They should also be well acquainted with the writings and reasonings of the *modern literati*, on moral and metaphysical subjects, and have carefully read and considered all that has been objected to Christianity by *unbelievers* of every class.

It is only men thus furnished, who can read the Scriptures with critical skill themselves, or explain them to others; and this learning, by the very description of it, must have been unnecessary in the primitive times; since those who were contemporary with the apostles, could not but know their own language and customs, their own turn of thinking, opinions, and prejudices, which we have so much trouble to investigate. Christianity was not then corrupted at all, and the objections of *unbelievers* were few, and such as it required no reading or study to answer.

To acquire this furniture, a liberal and expensive education is absolutely necessary. In these things, mere genius and abilities, without other advantages, will go but a little way. Christians, therefore, if they be wealthy, cannot better consult the honour of their religion, than by making provision for the education of such persons, and putting it in their power, if they be able and faithful men, to attend to those important studies without distraction.

It would be most desirable, indeed, if men of fortune would themselves apply to those studies, or educate their sons so as to serve the church in this important capacity. But if no person will give so much of his time, talents, and fortune, to the public, numbers should join to defray the expenses attending the education of such as have ability and inclination for the work.

As it is not particular *Christian churches*, but the *Christian cause* in general, that requires such men as I have been describing, there is no necessity that they be very numerous; though, certainly, the greater number the Christian church

can boast of men who thoroughly understand her principles, constitution, writings, and history, the better.

If we consider the wants of particular Christian societies, we cannot but observe, that there should be provision in them all, not only for reading and expounding the Scriptures, and singing of psalms, but also for *set discourses*, calculated chiefly to inculcate the great practical maxims of the Christian religion upon the minds of the people, in order that they may impress their hearts and influence their lives. These regular discourses, or sermons, may certainly be very useful, and it is very desirable that provision be made for them in every Christian society; though I would not have them considered in a light of so high importance as they have gained at present. However, such is the custom and taste of the age, that mere reading the Scriptures, or a short exposition of them; will not now be deemed sufficient for the purpose of Christian assemblies; and so far it is certainly right to comply with the established custom and taste, and to avail ourselves of it for good purposes.

Among the generality of the *Dissenters*, it is also, in a manner, necessary, that some person lead their devotions without the help of a prescribed form of prayer, and that he be able to express himself *extempore*, both on the general subjects of prayer, and also on all the particular occasions that usually occur among them. The whole compass of prayer is not so very large, but that it seems to be very possible for a person who will properly attend to it, to make himself so much master of it, as to acquit himself with sufficient propriety and fluency in this respect; and whenever *extemporary* speaking is practicable, * it has so many advan-

* As, I apprehend, it would generally be, were the talent early cultivated, under the instructions of theological tutors, and especially if encouraged and enforced by their examples. A striking instance to this purpose occurs in the life of *Burnet*, written by his Son.

In 1661, at the age of 18, he became intimate with Mr. Nairn, "Minister of the Abbey Church at Edinburgh," who "always preached extempore," though then "all sermons in Scotland" were delivered *memoriter*. Mr. Nairn soon recommended to his young friend his own "method of preaching, which *Burnet* continued to practise all the rest of his life. He attained to an easiness in it, chiefly by allotting many hours in the day to meditation upon all sorts of subjects, and by accustoming himself, at those times, to speak his thoughts aloud, studying always to render his expression correct."

To *Burnet's* early and deserved celebrity, Mr. Evelyn has given the following testimony: "1674, 15 Nov. I first heard that famous and excellent preacher Dr. Burnet, with such a flow of eloquence and fullness of matter as shewed him to be a person of extraordinary parts." (*Life*, I. p. 445.) After he became a Bishop, he is recorded by his son, to have preached every Sunday in some church of his diocese, except during his "necessary attendance on the House of Lords," when "he failed not of preaching every Sunday morning in some church or other in London; and as he was much followed, he was generally engaged for charity sermons. In the Sunday evening, he had a lecture in his own house, upon some select portion of scripture, to which many persons of distinction resorted."

tages above a mere *reciting* of any thing, either from notes, or the memory, particularly in point of justness and strength of emphasis, that it ought, by all means, to be adopted.

But the field for preaching is so very large, that, in general, there seems to be a necessity for the composition and recital of sermons. I cannot consider any man, whatever be his natural or acquired abilities, as qualified to discourse *extempore*, with sufficient variety and fluency, so as not to give disgust to a sensible audience, at least in a course of time.

For both these purposes, viz. preaching and praying, a person should not only have had a liberal education, in which particular attention should have been paid to the art of composition, but he should have been trained up in the

Through all these ministerial labours, *Burnet* was always an *extemporary* preacher, except "in 1705," when "he was appointed to preach the Thanksgiving Sermon before the Queen, at St. Paul's; and as it was the only discourse he had ever wrote beforehand, so this was the only time that he was ever at a pause in preaching." *Life*, O. T. 1734, II. pp. 675, 707, 721.

This exemplary preacher, for more than half a century, has a right to be heard "concerning preaching," which is the subject of *Chap. ix. "Of the Pastoral Care."* He there considers "the difference that is between the reading and speaking of sermons," adding, that "*reading* is peculiar to this nation, and is endured in no other," and "that the people, who are too apt to censure the clergy, are easily carried into an obvious reflection on *reading*, that it is an effect of laziness." *Ed. 3*, 1713, pp. 204—206. See, also, a pamphlet, republished in 1778, entitled "Reading no Preaching, or the fashionable Mode of delivering Sermons considered, as opposite to Scripture, the Practice of the Primitive Church, Reason, and the Common Sense of Mankind; in a Letter to a Clergyman of the Church of England."

This anonymous author wrote, probably, many years ago, against "the too frequent practice of *reading* Christ, instead of *preaching* him." While he injures his argument, by expecting for a *preacher*, in these later ages of the church, some supernatural assistance from "the free spirit of grace," he proves (pp. 11, 12,) from *Justin Martyr*, "that the primitive Christian clergy did follow the *paperless* method of preaching," and from *Tertullian*, "that Scriptures were read, psalms sung, and then sermons pronounced, or, more literally, speakings to the people uttered. *Scripturæ leguntur, Psalmi canuntur, adloquutiones proferuntur.*"

"Respecting the practice of reading sermons," this author adds, (p. 13,) "as the primitive fathers knew nothing of it, so their successors in all after ages knew as little of it; and even in this age, as far as we know, there is no denomination of clergy, Greek or Latin, Papist or Protestant, in any nation (*England* excepted) that gives into this unprecedented method of *reading* their discourses;" as if "a secret necessity, arising from the climate, the constitution, the natural and religious taste of the inhabitants, must be fixed on to warrant this peculiar practice."

I have been led so far into this subject, from an united conviction of its importance, and of the extent to which it has been hitherto neglected, especially by those Christians who ought rather to afford their scriptural though yet *unpopular* opinions every fair advantage of *popular attraction*. Nor can I quit the subject without adding the candid acknowledgment of *Lardner*, who was, I apprehend, probably for want of *Burnet's* early advantages, quite incapable of *extemporary* preaching. Mentioning the method of his friend Dr. Hunt, who "having with care and diligent examination made himself master of his text and subject, and well digested his thoughts, clothed them in the language which offered in the delivery," *Lardner* adds, "which to me appears an excellent method, when there are sufficient abilities for it; I mean, a stock of knowledge, readiness of thought, and a good memory." *Works*, X. p. 112. See also the candid admission and the good counsel to students, by my exemplary friend the *Visitor of Manchester College* at York, *Mon. Repos.* XV. p. 433, XVI. p. 429.

art and habit of public speaking,* so as to deliver himself with distinctness and good emphasis, and, in every respect, so as to convey his meaning with precision and energy.

In every thing that has been already mentioned, some allowance has been made for the difference between the circumstances and established customs of the primitive times and ours; but nothing has taken place that can make us consider the business of friendly advice, admonition, censure, &c., as before explained, to be less necessary in the Christian church. It must continue to be necessary while human nature is the same, and the world we live in, the same too; so that its snares and temptations are equally alluring, threatening, and dangerous; because there is the same reason for watchfulness both over ourselves and others.

It is true that vice frequently changes its form. The vices of one age are sometimes extinct in another, and some temptations that have been fatal to virtue, may now no longer exist; but different vices, no less dangerous in their nature and consequences, arise in their place, attended with temptations peculiar to themselves. We are no longer, for instance, in danger of being seduced into idolatry, in sacrificing to the Heathen Gods, or of apostatizing from the profession of religion by the violence of persecution; but a time of prosperity may, in reality, be more fatal to our virtue; as there is nothing to keep up that attention to our duty, and to rouse those powers that are sure to be awake and vigorous when adversity calls them forth.

Is not the state of our times such, that youth are even

* A preacher, as I understand Dr. Priestley, lest he should at length "give disgust to a sensible audience," (which, yet, I apprehend other *extemporary* preachers, besides *Burnet*, have happily avoided, through a long life,) must generally adopt those confessedly disadvantageous methods of public instruction, "a mere *reciting*, either from notes or the memory." In the former case, especially, and according to the general practice in *England*, it may be fairly asked why, with reference to the services of the pulpit, a student should be "trained up in the art and habit of public speaking"? He thus, indeed, may *speak* with fluency, and often with effect under the impression of present views and feelings, on some topic of inferior interest, while on the all-important subject of religion, for which he is supposed to have reserved his most powerful efforts, he can only *read* to a congregation those thoughts and feelings which occurred to him, perhaps *days*, perhaps *years* before, during the composition of his sermon.

"The imagination," says the author of *Reading no Preaching*, (p. 22,) "is checked, having little to do, all the necessary images being already ranged in the due successive order, on the paper before it. The understanding having acted its part yesterday, and no business for it to-day, only permits a successive flood of stale ideas to pass through it. The will has nothing to choose or refuse, having chosen every necessary word and phrase, as well as every necessary matter and manner the day before, only the general choice of *reading* the paper gracefully."

It must, however, be admitted, and I readily make the acknowledgment, not without some grateful recollections of earlier days, that there are preachers, like my author, whose knowledge is only equalled by their diffidence, and consequent want of self-possession in the public *oral* communication of it. Without the *readings* of such preachers, their fellow-christians would be debarred from some of the most valuable sources of scriptural information.

more than ever in danger of running into excess? Is not that rage after what we call pleasure, and that turn for dissipation which prevails so much at present, a dangerous circumstance for them? Should not, therefore, the vigilance of their parents, aided by that of their friends and of the church, be employed to prevent them from being ensnared by bad company, and from contracting bad habits, which might end in their utter ruin and destruction; being equally fatal to their bodies and their souls, their temporal and eternal interests?

Is not an inordinate love of gain, and an unchristian attachment to the world, the natural consequence of that spirit of trade and commerce which distinguishes the present age? Should not, then, a disposition that (unlike the vices of youth) "grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength," and even outlives both, be carefully watched? And would not a wise man wish that other persons would pay some attention to him, in this respect, as well as himself?

In the midst of so many new scenes of business and pleasure, that are continually soliciting our attention, are we not in danger of losing that habitual regard to God and his moral government, which is the best guardian of our virtue? When God is, as it were, banished from our thoughts, and we can pass days and weeks without giving any attention to our relation to him, as our creator, preserver, benefactor, and moral governor, we shall certainly be in great danger of losing our reverence for his authority; and *the fear of God not being before our eyes*, we shall have nothing left to restrain us from abandoning ourselves to any vice or wickedness.

Certainly, then, in this state of things, we have as much occasion as ever for some provision for admonishing us of our duty, and for *establishing, strengthening, and settling us* in all Christian virtues. The truly wise will be thankful for such a provision, and the foolish and profligate certainly stand in most need of it. They must even approve of it, whether, for the present, they would like it or not. But this business of advising, admonishing, &c., is, as I have largely explained before, of a very different nature from that of preaching or praying. It requires very different talents, and a very different situation in the society.

These being the chief wants of a Christian church, if I were to give my opinion concerning the best method of providing for the supply of them, it should be as follows:

Let a Christian society, who would *re-constitute* themselves upon a plan as near to the primitive one as their circum-

stances will permit, set out with, and keep in view, this leading idea, that they associate together for the sole purpose of promoting Christian knowledge and practice. Let them consider themselves as *citizens of heaven*, travelling through a foreign country, and who mean to give one another all the assistance in their power to quicken their progress, to keep up their attention to their proper country; their home, their dearest connexions and most important interests; that, in the language of the Scriptures, they may be assisted in having *their treasure, their hearts, and their conversation in heaven*.

To gain these ends, let all the members of the society meet, and, in the first place, make choice of a person to officiate among them as a *public instructor*. He must be capable of composing sermons, and of leading the devotions of the congregation. If he be skilled in Christian literature, as it was explained above, it will be an advantage to them and himself, but a great degree of eminence in it is not necessary. These objects, however, are very consistent, and if a person have had a liberal education, and give his time to his profession, as a Christian minister, it may well be expected that he be sufficiently furnished for all these purposes, so as to be able to serve both his own society, and also the cause of Christianity more at large.

Being provided with a minister, corresponding to the office of *bishop* in the primitive times, let the society, in the next place, choose a number of the more elderly, grave, and serious persons, and withal, if possible, the more wealthy of their own members, to bear the title and office of *elders*, as explained above [p. 390]. Let every person have leave to propose, and let the choice be made by lot or ballot. Let there not be fewer than ten or twenty of these in a society of three or four hundred.

I mentioned *wealth* as a circumstance which, other things being nearly the same, should be a recommendation to the office of elder, because it will give a man more influence. He will certainly admonish with more freedom and authority, when he runs no risk from the displeasure of the person he admonishes. He will even be less likely to give offence. In every thing relating to society, we must go upon the supposition that we are *men*, as well as Christians. Besides, a regard to wealth is well known to have had weight in the choice of elders in primitive times. Indeed, it is sufficiently implied by *St. Paul*, when he says, [1 *Tim.* iii. 2,] that they should be "given to hospitality."

Let these *elders*, with the minister at their head, (but with no more power than any other of them,) form a *consistory*, and meet about once a month, (but to be assembled by the minister on any other particular occasion,) to consult together concerning the state of the church, and the best method of promoting its real interests; but let them have no power to proceed farther than to an admonition, without the consent of the people at large.

Let it be the business of every elder to admonish all the members of the society that live within his district or neighbourhood, of every irregularity, or tendency to it, with prudence and discretion; taking the opinion of his brethren, or of the minister, in difficult cases; let notorious offenders only, and those who have rejected the repeated admonitions of one or more, be proposed to the whole society for public censure; and when a person incurs the last sentence, excommunication, let him not, however, as in the primitive times, be excluded from the benefit of public worship, but let some other method be taken of letting it be known, that he is no member of the society. For this, and other purposes, let a register be kept of all public proceedings. In very difficult cases, let the minister and elders of one church consult with the minister and elders of other churches, and give one another mutual advice.

I should think it advisable, that every member of the society should formally give in his name as such, that it be entered in the public register, and that this act be considered by the rest as an admission to communion with them in the celebration of the *Lord's Supper*, and also as a promise on his side, that he will communicate, provided he really believe the rite to be an institution of Christ. But let not this or any other *opinion* exclude a person from the benefit of the society, if he be a believer in the Christian religion, and profess obedience to it, as far as he understands it; and let not any persons, though they be no Christians, be at all discouraged from attending any religious exercises of the society, as often as they please.

If it should happen that the minister be absent on a *Lord's-day*, and no other person, equally qualified, can be conveniently procured to officiate in his place; and if it be thought that the society would suffer by being dispersed, let one or more of the *elders* supply his place, by reading the Scriptures, and distinctly pronouncing prayers and discourses, generally approved.

I would advise, that, the *elders* and *deacons* of a church

make use of the compositions of others, whenever they do any part of the ministerial duty. It is barely possible that persons who have had no liberal education, should acquit themselves with propriety and decency, either in prayer or preaching, without that assistance. It is very possible, indeed, that, in their attempts at *extempore* prayer, or preaching, they may please themselves, and some of the more ignorant of the people; but that success is very apt to fill them with vanity and self-conceit, for want of that just view of things, and that knowledge of themselves, which it is hardly possible to acquire, without more reading, thinking, and conversing with the world, than generally falls to the share of the private members of Christian societies. In this case, it is almost always found, that the ignorant and conceited are the most forward, while the truly modest, and best qualified, are the most backward to shew their talents in public; and many are the mischiefs that I have known this custom to have produced in societies.

There will be a particular propriety in the *elders* visiting the sick and afflicted, as they will generally be their neighbours, and persons to whom they will be able to unburden their minds with more freedom than they can to a minister.

As to the necessary *civil offices* of the society, such as making collections, distributing the bread and wine, &c., I imagine that persons of an age inferior to that of elders, will be the most proper to discharge them. Let them, however, be young men of sobriety and good character, bearing the title of *deacons*, and let this office be considered as a rank in the church, preparatory to that of elder.

In general, let no elder be under thirty, or perhaps forty, and no deacon under twenty years of age.

Let both the *elders* and *deacons* be ordained to their office by the prayers of the congregation; and, if it be convenient, let the *ministers* of other societies be invited to attend and assist.

Lastly, let this newly-formed society imitate the primitive Christians and modern *Quakers*, in attending to the temporal welfare of the members of the society; particularly in encouraging industry, discountenancing idleness and profligacy, and effectually relieving the industrious and helpless poor. For this purpose, let collections be made, as in the primitive times, and among the modern *Methodists*, much more frequently than is usual among us: for by this means greater sums are raised with less difficulty. If it be thought proper, let an institution of later ages be adopted, and *stewards*

of the public funds be appointed, who, in their general rules of distribution, shall be governed by the votes of the people.

Such, my brethren, are the constitution, order, and discipline, that I could wish, but despair ever to see established in Christian churches. Were I a member of such a church, I should rejoice in its privileges, and I should dread its censures.

If the whole of this scheme of church discipline cannot be adopted, I should think, however, that there could be no great difficulty in establishing a part of it, and so much as could not fail of producing very good effects. To make the business easier, let the proper form of ordaining *elders* and *deacons* by prayer, be omitted. Only let the *minister*, in concert with those persons who have the most influence in any place, fix upon proper persons for discharging the duty of elders; and when they have agreed to it, let nothing be required of the people but a tacit consent.

That no unnecessary alarm be given, let the only object of discipline be confined to *advice* and *admonition*; but let the elders make a point of this, that no young people belonging to the society frequent bad company, or get bad habits, and grow dissolute and profligate, without some attempt being made to reclaim them; at least, by advertising their friends of their danger, and engaging those who, on any account, have influence with them, or authority over them, to attend to their conduct and restrain their excesses. Let the elders, also, see that no master of a family neglect the moral conduct and religious instruction of his children, without serious admonition.

These cases are of infinitely more consequence than any other that can occur in Christian societies, and they are cases in which a minister, situated as Dissenting ministers generally are, can seldom interfere to advantage; but in which many other persons might. If but one young person be prevented from becoming abandoned to vice, and lost to society, and but one master of a family be engaged to take proper care of the education of his children, a great and good end will be gained; and these things might often be effected, if any person made it his *business* to attend to them, and took proper measures for the purpose.

When a trial has been made of this looser form of discipline, and the effects of it have been experienced, the society may proceed farther, as they shall judge it to be expedient.

SECTION VII.

Objections to this Scheme of Church Discipline considered, and some of its Advantages more distinctly pointed out.

MANY objections, I doubt not, may be raised against the scheme of church discipline I have proposed ; and it is possible there may be more weight in some of them than I am aware of. At present I can only think of three, that deserve particular notice.

1. Many persons will be apprehensive, that such church officers as I have described will be apt to be conceited and arrogant with respect to the people, and to neglect and despise the minister. But I think that any inconvenience of this kind will be sufficiently obviated by providing against the ostentation of their talents in religious exercises, and by appointing a considerable number of persons in each rank: Many ministers, I am persuaded, would have been less incommoded by twenty ruling elders, than they have sometimes been by a single *clerk*, who is no more than the *precentor* in a congregation. Were all source of uneasiness arising from difference of opinion between ministers and people cut off, I should think that nothing of consequence was to be apprehended from the office of elders, as such.

In fact, no inconvenience whatever arose, for many ages, from this part of the constitution of the primitive church ; but infinite corruptions from the encroachments of the *bishops*, who, by dispersing their *elders* and *deacons*, to preside in dependent churches, did, in reality, annihilate that order at home, and made them subservient to the extension of their authority abroad : and though the elders rose above their original rank with respect to the people, the bishops rose in the same proportion, above them. We may see the progress of *episcopal* pride and usurpation in the style in which the bishops addressed their presbyters. At first they called them *fratres*, brethren ; but in the third century, *fili*, sons.

2. In many of our societies it will not be easy to find persons willing to accept of the office of *elder*, on account of some peculiar sanctity of character that is supposed to be necessary to support it.

It must be allowed, that the *elders* in a Christian church should be men of the more respectable, exemplary, and un-

exceptionable characters in the society; but if we attend to the description that the apostle *Paul* gives of them, in his epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, I think we need not doubt; but that we may find a sufficient number in almost any Christian society. I shall recite all the particulars for that purpose.

“A bishop,” or elder, (*Tit. i. 6—8*), “must be blameless” (*ανεγκλήτος*); but this doth not mean *perfect*, but *free from reproach*, or *scandal*; one whom no person can justly accuse of any immorality. He must be “the husband of one wife,” because polygamy prevailed more or less, in all countries, at that time. He must have “faithful children;” that is, his children must be *Christians*, as well as himself, that his whole family might be regular and exemplary; “not accused of riot, or unruly, not self-willed, not soon angry; not given to wine, no striker—not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, temperate.”* In 1 *Tim. iii. 1—6*, the same qualifications of an *elder* are repeated, with the addition of some characters more, viz. “no striker—not a brawler; one that ruleth well his own house,” and “not a novice,” or new convert.†

Now what idea do all these characters give us, but that of a man free from gross vices, and particularly such as would render him exceedingly disagreeable in society, and therefore peculiarly unfit to bear rule in it. It is added, indeed, among other properties, that an elder should be “holy” (*ἅγιος*); but, considering the rest of the description, we cannot suppose it to mean more than *not profane*; for had it conveyed the idea that is now commonly annexed to the term *holy*, it would have been manifestly superfluous to admonish such a holy person not to be a brawler, quarrelsome, obstinate, or a drunkard. Strictly speaking, the word that we render *holy*, in the *Old Testament*, (the idea belonging to which has been transferred into the *New*,) means *consecrated*, or, *devoted to God*. In this sense even the garments of the priests, as well as all the priests themselves, whatever was their moral character, as also the tabernacle, the temple, and the whole Jewish nation, are said to be holy. So that, probably, the term *holy* is applied to an *elder*, as a person who devotes himself and his time to the service of God and his church.

It is also added, in *Titus i. 9*, that he should hold “fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers;” that is, he must be a firm believer in Christi-

* See Vol. XIV. p. 146.

† See *ibid.* pp. 129—131.

anity, and well acquainted with the principles of it. Lastly, it is said, [1 *Tim.* iii. 6, 7,] that he should be "not a novice", or new convert; lest he be "lifted up with pride," and that he must have a good report of them which are without." Very young or ignorant persons would be apt to be conceited with such a rank in the church; and if they were not men of a general good character, the reputation of the society would suffer.

Putting the whole together, I do not see that, in any of our societies, we should be at a loss to pitch upon such men as the Apostle had in his eye, when he wrote the descriptions above recited.

It cannot be expected that even the *elders* of a Christian church on earth, should be perfect characters. All that is necessary is such a situation as will naturally give a man influence in the society, and such a character as will enable him to admonish with propriety and good effect, in those cases in which a person would be in danger of incurring the censure of the church; and the primitive churches did not take cognizance, except of such vices and follies as were manifestly contrary to some known rule of morality, or precept of the gospel; and seldom or ever except in such cases as would have brought scandal upon the Christian name. Any man, therefore, who supports what we call a *decent character*, is sufficiently qualified for the office of elder in a Christian church. The exercise of his office would continually improve his character, and much good might be done in every society, if all such persons as have been described, would exert themselves only so much as they clearly might do, without exposing themselves to the reproach of "physician, heal thyself."

3. It may, perhaps, be objected, that this scheme of church discipline will confine the attention of the members of particular societies too much to themselves, and alienate their affections from other Christian churches, and from mankind in general. To this I answer, that, as far as a closer attention to the interests of any particular society will serve to rouse a generous emulation, to excel the members of other societies, in Christian knowledge and practice, the consequence is desirable; and that I should not apprehend that it would, in general, produce any other effect.

The great object that would be continually kept in view, in every society, would be the proper character and views of the members, as *Christians*, and not as persons living in a particular town, or assembling in a particular place. The

preacher who should exhort upon any other principles would not be heard, and the most extensive benevolence could not fail to be every where inculcated ; so that, not only would the interests of particular societies be more attended to, but the neighbourhood, and the world in general, would be gainers by these regulations.

Particular Christian churches have no interests peculiar to themselves. Every thing they have in view is common to them and all other Christians. Besides, we see, in fact, that other societies and combinations of mankind are of great service to one another, when, as in this case, there is no competition of interest among them. Thus philosophical societies, and societies for encouraging agriculture, &c., in different places, having the same object, have, along with a generous emulation, the sincerest friendship for one another ; and we see that philosophy and agriculture, &c., are gainers by such associations.

Upon the principle of this objection we might, with more reason, complain of the connexions of private families, as tending to interfere with the interests of more extensive relations ; whereas it is known that the best husbands, fathers, and masters, are always the best subjects, the best citizens, and the best members of society in all respects.

When we consider the many capital advantages of such a scheme of church discipline as I have been describing, I cannot but think that all the objections that can be made to it would soon vanish. For this purpose I shall, in this place, distinctly enumerate the principal of them.

1. The first and capital advantage of this scheme of church discipline is, that the proper and great ends of a Christian society would be effectually answered by it ; the best interests of the members of it would be consulted, and every person would be in the way of receiving instruction, admonition, reproof, or censure, as his circumstances, his character, and conduct should require.

2. In such a constitution of church government, the members of every Christian church would look upon themselves as more closely united to one another, by their common relation to the same regular society. Having this bond of union frequently in view, they would become attached to one another, and be in a situation exceedingly favourable to the increase of the genuine principle of brotherly love.

What is it that unites mankind to one another more closely, and makes them more disposed to love and assist one another, than an equal relation to some common society, or fraternity ;

as their being inhabitants of the same country, living under the same constitution and form of civil government; being of the same tribe, the same family, and even the same occupation, if their interests do not thereby interfere? In short, the more things we have in common, the more we consider others in the same light with ourselves. Besides, an union in society is an union of interest; it is a strengthening of some common cause, which is a matter of very great consequence when there are many adversaries to it.

In this regularly-constituted church, therefore, Christians would have a new and strong bond of union, of brotherly love and friendship. The members of such a church would consider themselves as one body, closely united together to promote their common salvation, as citizens of heaven. They would mind, "not every man his own things" only, "but also the things of others."* Every individual in the society, like a limb of the body, would have particular attention paid to him, according to his occasions. They would "exhort one another daily—lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." They would "consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works." They would *not suffer sin in their brethren*, but would continually study the "things wherewith one may edify another." The adversaries of any one member of such a society as this would, for the same reason, be the adversaries of all, and all would join to repel the common danger.

2. Had the form of church government that was in use among the primitive Christians been strictly adhered to, almost every corruption of Christianity would have been prevented, especially those that were occasioned by the encroachments of the ecclesiastical upon the civil powers. A scheme of this kind is so far from being favourable to the ambition of priests, that wherever it is established, that excessive and superstitious regard that is paid to the character and office of a minister, when he alone engrosses all the power of a church, and is the only conspicuous person in it, cannot subsist. The power of the society being divided among a number of persons, the whole body would be more respectable, but any individual would, certainly, be less so. In a society thus constituted, the great object of attention and respect would be *the consistory of elders*. The minister would only rank as one of them, with that additional reverence, which his learning, abilities, and talents as a speaker,

* *Phil.* ii. 4. See Vol. XIV. p. 310.

would command ; and since the respect that was paid him would depend solely on these qualifications, he would be the more solicitous to improve them.

Far better, however, were it for any society, that the power of church discipline be lodged in the hands of the minister, and he be the only object of reverence, than that there should be no such power in any hands at all. The former of these situations may be said to approach to *tyranny*, or despotism ; but the latter tends to *anarchy* and dissolution.

3. I cannot help thinking but that, if Protestant churches had all been formed upon this plan, or as near to it as the prejudices of Christians would have admitted, it would have been favourable to the progress of Christian knowledge ; and that the remaining corruptions of Christian doctrine would have been reformed with more ease, and less disturbance in Christian societies ; at least, in a manner less hurtful to the interests of vital and practical religion. When every circumstance is taken into consideration, I am of opinion, that Dissenting Ministers, instead of contriving to abolish the forms of church discipline, when they found themselves incommoded by them, would have acted more wisely, if they had endeavoured to make them subservient to their purpose ; at least, that, if the ministers had in some places been the sufferers, the cause of truth would, in general, have been a gainer by this plan. To enable us to judge of this, I shall briefly describe what generally happens with us in these cases.

It happens almost universally, that the minister, being the person who reads and thinks the most in the society, has his mind first enlightened. He begins to call in question the truth of those opinions in which he has been educated, and which he has hitherto preached ; and in the progress of his inquiries, his suspicions are confirmed. If he be a man of integrity, he will always preach, at least, consistently with his real sentiments, which are now considerably different from those of his hearers ; and while so much of the business of the society is in his hands, so that himself, his performances and opinions, are almost continually in their view, it is impossible but that, notwithstanding all his care, the change in his sentiments will be perceived. If he be a young man, and zealous for the propagation of newly-discovered truth, he will be apt, of his own accord, and sometimes unseasonably, to obtrude his favourite opinions on his hearers ; perhaps

even preach on those subjects ; and in other respects he will not always take the most prudent methods of propagating truth.

The usual consequence of this is, that the congregation, and especially the elder part of them, whose prejudices are most riveted, take the alarm ; while some, at least of the younger part of the society, adhere to the minister, and adopt his sentiments. Disputes unavoidably arise, and in the heat of debate, the importance of the opinion contended for is greatly magnified. Be the thing ever so trifling in itself, the whole of religion will soon be made to depend upon it, by those who adhere to the old opinions, while the abettors of the new will plead for moderation.

In this case, if the society be large enough to bear it, they often divide into two ; or the minister, though every way qualified for the discharge of his duty, if he be not absolutely dismissed, finds himself at length under a necessity of relinquishing his office, and often without any resource for a maintenance. If he stand the opposition, great numbers withdraw themselves and their subscriptions, and he is often, on many other accounts, rendered miserable for life ; not unfrequently is his life manifestly shortened by the state of anxiety and distress in which he is involved ; while many of the people are greatly dissatisfied, and more strongly attached to their old opinions than before.

Too often the minister, thus circumstanced, not having the choice of a catechism, neglects the catechizing of children, and the instruction of youth altogether,* and for the same reason omits other parts of his duty, in which his sentiments would be more particularly conspicuous, to the great detriment of practical religion. This situation of things has been peculiarly unfavourable to church discipline, as was explained above.† Few, indeed, are the cases in which, through the prudence of the minister, and a happy concurrence of other circumstances, a congregation of Dissenters gets over this *great crisis* without any diminution of their strength, or any injury to the interests of real virtue.

On the other hand, in a society governed by *elders*, single persons, or their opinions, do not make so great a figure, or occasion so great alarm. They are not of so much importance in the society. And in the primitive church, the business of *preaching* was so inconsiderable, that, provided the usual portion of the Scriptures was read in the society, they

* See Vol. XV. pp. 50, 51, 470, 471.

† See *supra*, p. 433.

might be the better content to prefer that interpretation which they liked best.*

In this manner, truth might be propagated more silently, † and if once the *elders*, or the majority of them, were convinced, there would be less difficulty in bringing over the rest; and the society being very firmly bound together by the forms of church government, few would think of quitting it; and therefore they would endeavour to make their situation in it as easy as they could.

Among the *Quakers*, who have no *ministers* so conspicuous as ours, but who are governed, as it were, entirely by *elders*, differences of opinion occasion no disagreeable altercations or schisms; ‡ and there have been, and are, considerable differences of opinion among them.

Lastly, to sum up what I have advanced, concerning the advantages resulting from the form of church government I have been recommending. Such a Christian church as this would be an interesting object of attention to all the members of it. It would be a society in which every man would have a certain place and rank, a certain estimation and character, and a certain employment. He would constantly feel himself subject to the friendly inspection of others, and he would, in his turn, habitually attend to them.

Every officer would vie with the rest in diligence, in prudence, and in the faithful discharge of his duty; and no person or thing would be overlooked, or neglected, because it would be some person's known duty to attend to them.

To adopt a description which some think, but which I do not think, to have been originally intended for it; such a Christian church would be "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." § None but the openly abandoned and profligate, and those who would soon be

* They had "two distinct orders of church officers; the one appointed to read the prophets and apostles, with the writings of other eminent and godly men, and the other, to explain or expound a part, or the whole of what was read." *Reading no Preaching*, p. 11.

† On "the silent propagation of truth" and the alarm occasioned by the author's illustration of the subject, see Vol. XVIII. p. 544.

‡ However correct this statement in 1770, the *Quakers* have deprived themselves of any right to such commendation since 1814, when they persecuted, by *disownment*, one of the most respectable members of their society, under no charge whatever, but that of professing and conscientiously inculcating the *Unitarian* doctrine. See Mr. Thomas Foster's *Narrative, Appeal, and Sequel*, 1815—1816, already noticed, Vol. X. p. 421, Note*.

§ *Cant.* vi. 10. "Dazzling as all the starry hosts." *Percy*. See his "Song of Solomon newly translated," 1764, pp. 32, 81, 82; Harmer's *Obs.* 1776, I. p. 478, his *Sol. Song*, 1763, pp. 328—331. Dr. Gill, one of the most eminent spiritualizers of the

considered by the world as such, would cut themselves off from such a church; and the privileges of it would be courted by all serious and thinking persons, who valued their real improvement, and who had any idea of the superiority of things unseen and eternal to those of time and sense.

Should any society of rational Christians, despising the insignificant censures of the world, form themselves upon this model, having no other object than the genuine simplicity of Christian doctrine, and the native purity of Christian manners, they would do themselves immortal honour. Should their example be generally followed, they might be said, in a manner, to *re-christianize* the world.

SECTION VIII.

Additional Considerations in favour of Church Discipline, as Motives to the Establishment of it.

ALL that has been advanced on the subject of church discipline in this Address, may be considered as *motives* to the establishment of it in Christian societies; but there are some considerations peculiarly adapted to this purpose, and which could not have been introduced with advantage in any of the preceding Sections. I have, therefore, reserved them for the conclusion of the Address.

If we consider what provision is made for the improvement of men's minds in other respects, and, more especially, in what manner good dispositions are formed, and mankind are actually trained to virtue, we shall find, that, in all cases, the chief instrument is *discipline*, or something equivalent to it. In what manner is it that any art, liberal or mechanical, is acquired? It is seldom or never by instruction only, but chiefly by the attention of those who are skilled in it to the trials and exercises of those who are to be instructed. It is well known that without some superintendence of this kind, bad habits will inevitably be formed, and the scholars will make no true proficiency in any thing. Even *science*, where practice is not concerned, is never taught to any purpose, without frequent and careful examinations, in which actual proofs are given that the principles of it are understood, and that progress is really made in the attainment of it.

Canticles, "explains the morning, moon, and sun, of the three states of the church; the patriarchal, the dawn; the law, a light reflected; the gospel, the sun of righteousness." *Song of Sol. Paraph.* Edinburgh 1775, p. 131, *Note*.

In what manner is it that children are taught good behaviour, moral or civil, but by what is properly called discipline; that is, by the authority of a parent, constantly attentive to them, and admonishing, reproofing, correcting, or commending them, as there may be occasion?

By what means is it that mankind are taught regularity of behaviour, as good citizens, but by a much more rigorous discipline? Not only are laws promulgated, but a variety of officers are appointed, to take cognizance of offences; and in every state there are honours and emoluments of various kinds, that may be attained by those who have ability and skill to conduct the affairs of the community.

Let us consider, moreover, in what manner the Divine Being has made provision for the good conduct of his children and subjects, of mankind in general. Is it not by placing them in a state of moral discipline, and so constituting them and the world, that they cannot but feel the inconvenience of vicious habits and conduct, and find themselves easy and happy in a course of virtue? The hand by which they are thus trained and disciplined is invisible, but the effects of it are visible enough; it being evident to every observer, that mankind are taught wisdom and virtue by their feelings and experience more than by instruction. It is by the admonitions and reproofs of their consciences, by the censures of the world, and their general condition in it.

In all the voluntary combinations of mankind, that deserve the name of *societies*, or even of *clubs*, there are rules and orders, officers and penalties, or the ends of the society could not be answered, and the community would be dissolved.

Can it be supposed, then, that, contrary to what we are taught by nature, experience, the conduct of Divine Providence, and the custom of mankind in all similar cases, a Christian society can flourish, and the great ends of it be secured, without a similar provision? Is the object and end of these associations of less moment, or to be compassed with less attention? In both respects the very reverse is the case. In Christian societies the most important instruction is to be communicated, the most excellent maxims of conduct are to be inculcated, and the best habits are to be formed. It is the object of these societies to counteract the strongest influences to which men are exposed through life, namely, temptations to vice and excess from every quarter,

and, in the midst of a thousand difficulties and discouragements, to train them up to virtue and immortality.

To gain these great ends, ought we not, if we be wise, to adopt such rules and such systems as we see universally adopted in all similar cases, and without which similar ends have never been gained? Our Christian societies, therefore, should be regularly constituted; there should be a subordination of one to another; there should be the governors and the governed, the masters and the scholars, the fathers and the children; and there should be authority, not *nominal* only, which is all that Dissenting Ministers are now possessed of, but *real*, as it might be in the hands of persons more independent of the people. There can be the less difficulty in this, when every thing that is called authority in this case is of the most gentle and salutary nature, consisting of nothing but instruction, friendly admonition, faithful reproof, or just censure; and when all that any man has to fear, is to lose his rank and name in the society.

I would add another argument and motive for the regular constitution and just discipline of Christian churches, from the authority of the Scriptures; that is, of Christ and his apostles. It is plain that our Lord, when he gave such particular instructions how to behave with a refractory offender, in what manner to admonish and reprove him, in what case his conduct should be reported to the church, and when he should be expelled from it, and considered "as an heathen man and a publican,"* took it for granted, that his disciples *would* form themselves into such societies, and that those powers of admonition, censure, and excommunication, would be assumed and exercised. We may, therefore, conclude with certainty, that the great lawgiver and judge of Christians really meant, that such churches, with such provisions and powers, should be erected; and we ought to consider this as a sufficient authority, and even as equivalent to an express injunction, to form them.

At the first planting of Christianity, we find that the apostles actually did introduce this order and discipline wherever they established a Christian church. We have in their writings a clear description of the powers of the officers they appointed in it, and of the nature and conduct of their discipline; and their history affords examples of the exercise and use of it.

* *Matt.* xviii. 17. See Vol. XIII. pp. 198, 202.

It seems, from some passages in St. Paul's epistles, and is, indeed, probable from the nature of the thing, that while some of the *elders* of the primitive churches applied themselves chiefly to the business of teaching, others attended to matters of discipline, having a particular talent for it. "Having, then," says he, *Rom. xii. 6—8*, "gifts differing, according to the grace that is given to us; whether prophecy,* let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; HE THAT RULETH, WITH DILIGENCE." He also mentions *governments*, that is, probably, the talent of conducting church discipline, among the different powers communicated to the members of the Christian church. *1 Cor. xii. 27, 28*: "Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, GOVERNMENTS, diversities of tongues."†

Now, though it be acknowledged, that the *particular form* of church discipline may vary according to circumstances, yet it cannot follow that, in any circumstances, it should entirely cease. There ought, therefore, certainly, to be shepherds to "feed the flock of God," till Christ, "the chief shepherd, shall *personally* appear" [*1 Pet. v. 2, 4*]; and those only can be considered as *shepherds*, who are in circumstances in which they can assume the power of shepherds, and act as such; which cannot in reason be expected of those who are called *ministers* among the Dissenters.

We find no time in ecclesiastical history in which Christian churches were not regularly constituted, having in each of them a number of *elders*, whose business it more especially was to advise and admonish the rest of the society, and in which a person was not liable to be excommunicated for scandalous immorality. We can trace the *corruptions* of this discipline, but the *institution* of it must be referred to the times of the apostles. The earliest and universal custom of the church is a sufficient proof of this; and it should seem that the sentiments and practices of the apostles, by whatever medium of proof they be ascertained, should be the rule by which we

* See Vol. XIV. p. 247.

† See *ibid.*, pp. 101, 102.

are to form our own.* The Scriptures themselves are of no other authority with us, than as they supply the best arguments of what was taught, established, or enjoined, by men who were inspired of God, and therefore not liable to be mistaken.

Thirdly, to excite us to more attention to this business of church government and discipline, let us consider the good effects of it where it is, in some measure, practised. In former times, Christians of other denominations might have learned the mode and effect of discipline from us, but now it is to be looked for any where but among us; and let us not think ourselves disgraced by the imitation of any sect of Christians, in a thing that is really useful, how despicable soever their principles or conduct may appear to us in other respects.

The *Presbyterians* in Scotland are very attentive to matters of discipline, and have several ecclesiastical courts, subordinate to one another, for that purpose. The *ruling elders* assist the minister in overseeing and correcting the manners of the people, attend upon them in visiting and catechizing their districts in the parishes, in praying with the sick, in private admonitions, and at the communion table. In all matters of government and discipline they have an equal vote with the ministers.†

Before every *communion*, the minister visits and examines every family in his parish once, at least, of which notice is given the preceding Lord's day, that every district may know when he intends to visit them. The minister, on his

* "The primitive church discipline," says Mr. George Dyer, "is past and gone; many upright men have laboured to revive it, but, till they are precisely in the case of the primitive church, they cannot attain it." He further conjectures, that "on a conviction of the indeterminateness of church discipline, so called, an excellent and judicious person (Mr. Lindsey) acted at the chapel in Essex Street." *Inquiry on Subscription*, ed. 2, 1792, pp. 386, 387.

† *History of Religion*, IV. p. 98. (P.) "The officers of a particular congregation, and their respective and collective duties" are thus described:

"There ought to be one at the least, both to labour in the word and doctrine, and to rule. It is also requisite that there should be others to join in government; and likewise it is requisite that there be others to take special care for the relief of the poor; the number of each of which is to be proportioned according to the condition of the congregation.

"These officers are to meet together at convenient and set times, for the well-ordering of the affairs of that congregation, each according to his office. It is most expedient that, in these meetings, one whose office is to labour in the word and doctrine, do moderate in their proceedings." See "the Form of Presbyterian Church Government, agreed upon as a Part of the covenanted Uniformity in Religion betwixt the Churches of Christ in the Kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland. With an Act of the General Assembly, Anno 1645, approving the same." *Glasgow*, 1753, p. 521.

visit, marks, and enters the children in his examination-book, if they be of fit age. He then exhorts every one to a strict observance of their respective duties, and particularly to family prayer, reading the Scriptures, and singing of psalms. At parting, the minister usually prays with every family. Visitation being over, the minister gives notice when he will examine the persons marked in his book. Every district comes to church by themselves, at the time appointed, and the minister, accompanied by the elder and deacon of that district, examines them in the order in which they stand in his book. He marks at every person's name how they answer. Grown persons, who have been often examined, are not catechised when they are found to be sufficiently knowing.*

Nothing is deemed scandalous, or subject to church censures, but what is accounted so by the word of God, or by some act or universal custom of the church of Scotland, agreeable thereto.† In cases of drunkenness, disobedience to parents, sabbath-breaking, swearing, cursing, scolding, fighting, lying, cheating, or stealing, the persons guilty are ordinarily admonished in private only, for the first offence; for the second offence they are rebuked by the kirk session, and, on promise of amendment, there they are to stop. If no amendment follows, the kirk session proceeds to the sentence of *lesser excommunication*, under which the person is to lie till the amendment appears. If the guilty person neglects to take the sentence off, and relapses into the vices for which he is censured, it may be construed into such a degree of contumacy as may merit the *greater excommunication*, or the absolute cutting off from Christian communion; a sentence to be passed in a higher court.‡ All the Dissenting congregations in the northern counties of *England*, and generally in *Wales*, are constituted in the same manner as the churches of *Scotland*; with this advantage, arising from their situation, that their regulations are purely ecclesiastical; § no

* *Hist. of Relig.* IV. p. 101. (P.) "The ruling officers of a particular congregation have power, authoritatively, to call before them any member of the congregation, as they shall see just occasion; to enquire into the knowledge and spiritual estate of the several members of the congregation; to admonish and rebuke." They have also power of "authoritative suspension from the Lord's table, of a person not yet cast out of the church." *Form of Church Government*, p. 523. Such powers are too well calculated to produce or encourage the opposite vices of servility and assumption.

† *Hist. of Relig.* IV. p. 104. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 107. (P.)

§ Such are those of the Presbyterian church in the *United States*, where the civil power has sufficient occupation without assuming, or being entrusted with, a *cure of souls*. See Hannah Adams's *View of Religions*, 1805, pp. 456—458.

church pretending to a right of interference with another; and no aid of civil power being used, or wanted.*

It is, in a manner, by the force of discipline alone, that the *Quakers* exceed almost all other sects of Christians in an uniform decency and regularity of behaviour. One of the principal uses of their *monthly meetings*, as described by George Fox, was, that the poor might be better taken care of, the younger sort instructed, and informed in the way of God, and the loose and disorderly reprov'd, and admonished in the fear of the Lord.†

The power and authority exercised at those meetings, says Mr. Penn, is such as Christ has given to his own people to the end of the world, in the persons of his disciples; viz. to oversee, exhort, reprove, and, after long suffering, and waiting upon the disobedient and refractory, to disown them as any more of their communion, or that they will any longer stand charged, in the sight and judgment of God or men, with their conversation or behaviour, until they repent.‡

The crimes and irregularities which render the *Quakers* liable either to be admonished or disowned as brethren, are, a neglect of the meetings appointed for the worship of God, injustice and frauds of all kinds, defamation, breach of the marriage covenant, whoredom, drunkenness, gaming, and swearing. They also strictly admonish against the unnecessary frequenting of ale-houses or taverns; the abuse of time in diversions, as cock-fighting, horse-racing, play-houses, &c.; extravagance in dress, and also in trade; one brother going to law with another; and other things peculiar to them as *Quakers*.§ In all these cases, advice and admonition are given with the greatest tenderness and prudence, and in due gradation. If the offender after all, prove refractory, and they be obliged to disown him, they record the same, as a testimony of their care for the honour of the truth they profess.||

Among the *Methodists* of Mr. Wesley's denomination, ¶ there are what they call *United Societies*, instituted, as he

* On the contrary, as Robert Robinson remarks, the Presbyterian government which "John Knox established in Scotland," which "the Scots brought into England, and the Long Parliament established here, in lieu of Episcopacy, is equally intolerant with episcopacy, and cannot stand without civil power." *Plan of Lectures*, ed. 5, 17 81, p. 59.

† *Hist. of Relig.* II. p. 247. (P.) See *Adams's View*, pp. 155, 156.

‡ *Hist. of Relig.* II. p. 250. (P.) § *Ibid.* p. 254. (P.) || *Ibid.* p. 251. (P.)

¶ Who now bear that name almost exclusively, the *Calvinists*, formerly called *Methodists*, having generally assumed the name *Evangelical*.

says, "to watch over one another in love." For this purpose each society is divided into *classes*, according to their places of abode. There are about twelve persons in every class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his business to see each person in his class once a-week, at the least; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; and to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd.* After the enumeration of a great number of duties, Mr. Wesley concludes with saying, "If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any one of them, let it be made known unto them that watch over that soul, as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways, we will bear with him for a season; but then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls." †

The *Herrn-hutters*, or *Moravians*, soon established among themselves a sort of discipline, which closely unites them to one another, divides them into different classes, puts them under an entire dependence on their superiors, and confines them to certain exercises of devotion. The difference of age, sex, and the situation their members are in with respect to matrimony, constitute those different classes. Each has its director, chosen by its members. Every member is daily visited by one of his class, who gives him exhortation, and makes a report of his conduct to the elders. Frequent particular assemblies are held in each class, and general ones by the whole society. The overseers, or leaders, have also their private meetings, to instruct one another in matters concerning the guidance of souls; and they pay uncommon attention to the instruction of youth. Besides those who have the care of orphans, there are others that are entrusted with that of all the other children. ‡

That these three last-mentioned sects of Christians do at all hold together, and that the practical purposes of Christianity are at all answered in them, appears to me to be owing to nothing but their regular forms of discipline. Were they reduced to the same condition with us, and to have no provision except for public instruction, they would, I doubt not, decay, and be extinct in a very short time.

That we, who are called *rational Dissenters*, hold together,

* *Hist. of Relig.* II. p. 323. (P.)

† *Ibid.* p. 325. (P.)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 340. (P.) See Adams's *View*, pp. 226, 227.

in our present loose and undisciplined state, is owing, in part, to our having been a body of considerable standing, which gives us some of the advantages of an establishment, and, in some measure, to the connexions the Dissenting families have with one another; connexions which many persons do not choose to break by leaving us. But this is a tie that has less force every day, as indifference to the Dissenting interest becomes more general, and desertions from it become more frequent, and, consequently, less noticed.

Not a few, I hope, adhere to us from *principle*, but less care is continually taken to instruct our youth in the true principles of our dissent; and since the subject seldom comes in view, in peaceable and quiet times, numbers of the more polite part of our young gentlemen see no difference between the service of the *Church of England* and that of the *Dissenters*, except such as, to outward appearance, is in favour of the former; and seeing it to be, withal, a more fashionable, splendid, and less expensive mode of religion, it is no wonder that many of them, who think and reflect very little, secretly incline to it, and are ready to take any favourable opportunity of going over to it; especially as it may be done without any censure, and almost without notice.

With us a great deal too much depends upon the merit and abilities, or rather the popular talents only, of our ministers. In these circumstances, it is very little that can be gained, but a great deal that may be lost; and I believe it is fact, that for one person who is brought over to us by the reputation of any good preacher among us, there are ten that leave us through a disgust with our bad ones. If the very best preachers among us, and those who have the most popular talents, (which are very rare among mankind,) barely keep up the numbers of their congregations for a considerable time, they can boast what very few can do; and many societies might be named which are dwindling to nothing, under preachers whose compositions are excellent, and whose delivery is much above mediocrity. The temporary increase of particular societies in London is only at the expense of others; and this shifting from place to place makes it the more easy for them to shift into the church, or *infidelity* at last.

It is certainly much to be regretted, that, with so many solid advantages as the rational Dissenters, at least, think themselves possessed of, with respect to the purity of Christian faith, and their freedom from the superstition and enthusiasm that disgrace so many other sects of religion, they

should be destitute of the common requisite for the growth and even the continuance of any sect or society whatever. But it is no uncommon thing for persons who are possessed of superior knowledge to want what is called common sense.

The Dissenting interest (besides its being favourable to civil and religious liberty) can only be truly valuable as the cause of truth and virtue, or as far as it is subservient to the genuine purity of Christian *doctrine* and *discipline*. With respect to the former, I, as one of the denomination, cannot but think we have great advantages; but with respect to the latter, I, though one of them, am sensible that we are greatly deficient; and, as a friend to the cause of truth and liberty, I most earnestly wish that something may be thought of, and done, towards supplying the defect.

I am afraid that the circumstances of things among us are not favourable to the introduction of the discipline I have been recommending. Indeed, it is almost universally easier to establish a new society, than to reform an old one, especially one of a long standing. I have not the least doubt, however, but that a true Christian church will at length appear, free from all corruptions in doctrine or discipline, when its doctrines will be pure, and its discipline equally free from rigour on the one hand, and remissness on the other. I hope that this happy period is advancing apace; and whether any of the forms of Christian churches now subsisting will serve for a *basis* of such a church, or not, is of small consequence. Let the cause of truth, of virtue, and of Christ prevail, whoever be the instruments of it.

In the mean time, let the serious members of all Christian churches attend to the reformation of them, and attempt every thing that shall appear practicable; and if no external reformation be advisable, let them, however, make the best they can of their situation. If it would be in vain to attempt the revival of the forms of church discipline with us, or if this be judged inexpedient, let us, however, revive the spirit of them. Let every member of our societies consider it as his duty to promote the proper ends of them, and let his ability and opportunity be considered by him as the measure of his obligation to exert himself. Let us all, without distinction, *watch over one another* with a friendly concern, to check every thing that is bad, and promote every thing that is good in one another. Let ministers imbibe from the spirit of their religion, and of their office, that intrepidity and independence of mind, which a regard to their situation in

other respects would not give them. Let them, in the language of St. Paul to *Timothy*, "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." If they cannot both "command and teach," let them, however, be examples to "believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;" that, *taking heed to themselves, and to their doctrine, they may both save themselves, and them that hear them.**

* 1 *Tim.* iv. 13, 11, 12, 16. See Vol. XIV. pp. 137, 138.

DEVOTIONAL OFFICES

AND

Catechisms.



A

SERIOUS ADDRESS

TO

Masters of Families;

WITH

FORMS OF FAMILY-PRAYER.

“If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!”

JESUS.

[London, 1794.*]

PREFACE.

THE great end of religion is a good life, and the highest happiness of man in consequence of it. Christ came to bless us in turning us away from our iniquities, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The connexion between virtue and happiness is evident. Without the due government of our passions and of our conduct, we can neither be truly happy in this life, nor in that which is to come. If, therefore, we be wise for ourselves, and be Christians in deed and in truth, and not in name only, we shall cease to do evil and learn to do well; we shall be careful to discharge the proper duty of every station in which it shall please Divine Providence to place us. And if we have any concern for the welfare of others, we shall diligently exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We shall, as the apostle directs us, consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.

This is the truest friendship, and it was in order to fulfil this duty of *a friend* as well as of *a minister*, that the following Address was drawn up; at first, for the use of one par-

* Ed. 3. The first edition appeared in 1769.

ticular congregation,* and afterwards made more public. Happy will the author think himself if it at all contribute to make ever so few persons more attentive to their duty in so important a relation, on which the virtue and happiness of others, as well as of themselves, so much depend.

That other persons may have an opportunity of exercising the same kind of benevolence, the Address is purposely short, and the forms of prayer subjoined to it few. By this means the price will not be considerable, and more persons may be induced to buy it, and give it to poor families, where there may be a prospect of its being useful.

The two first prayers are very short, plain, and general, being intended for common and daily use. The third is the composition of my worthy friend the Rev. Mr. Turner of Wakefield.† I think it excellent for a rich variety of sentiment, and for propriety and force of expression. It is con-

* At Leeds, whither Dr. Priestley removed from Warrington in 1767. See Vol. XV. p. 8.

† The Rev. William Turner died Aug. 28, 1794, when he had nearly completed his 80th year; having "obtained a release from the infirmities of old age, strikingly correspondent with the gentle serenity and peaceableness of his life." Thus the enviable decease, "in full age and hoary holiness," of this exemplary Christian minister is described by a descendant who well sustains the just reputation of his paternal name. See *Memoirs*, by V. F., annexed to "A Sermon on Occasion of the Death of the Rev. William Turner. By William Wood." 1784, p. 53.

To these *Memoirs* (p. 33) I am indebted for the information that Dr. Priestley's acquaintance with Mr. Turner commenced while he resided at Namptwich. (See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 61, 78.) When he "came, in the year 1767, to settle at Mill-hill Chapel, in Leeds, their acquaintance was renewed, and improved into a very intimate friendship; which was daily receiving additional strength from an uninterrupted literary intercourse during the whole of Dr. Priestley's residence at Leeds." (V. F.'s *Memoirs*, p. 37.) See the affectionate acknowledgments, Vol. XX. p. 509.

Mr. Turner, it appears, was the "learned friend" (Vol. II. p. 362) by whom the "interpretation" of *Phil.* i. 21 was "suggested," instead of "that which Dr. Priestley had adopted from Alexander's Comm. on 1 *Cor.* xv." (V. F.'s *Memoirs*, p. 43.) I ought also to have named Mr. Turner among the visitants "of Archdeacon Blackburne" in 1769 (Vol. V. p. 3, *Note*). "This memorable interview," says Mr. Belsham, "made a favourable and lasting impression upon the minds of all the parties, and was followed with very important consequences. It gave birth to friendships between the strangers who were then first introduced to each other, which improved rapidly upon further acquaintance, which were ever afterwards a source of the highest mutual satisfaction and improvement, which continued unimpaired to the end of life, and will no doubt be resumed under happier auspices in a better and immortal state." *Mem. of Lindsey*, 1812, p. 34. "The company of such worthies as Mr. Turner and Dr. Priestley," says the Archdeacon, on this interview, "is one of my luxuries; and the last small taste I had of it will make me long till another opportunity affords me a second course." *Ibid.* p. 35. I cannot better conclude this note than by quoting the following paragraph:

"In 1768, Mr. Turner became acquainted with the excellent Mr. Lindsey, at that time vicar of Catterick. Their minds were too congenial not to feel a reciprocal attachment; and a close and intimate friendship was quickly formed. The consequence was, a more frequent and longer-continued correspondence than he ever maintained with any other person, his sons only excepted; to whom it is a source of great satisfaction to find that venerable confessor frequently acknowledging, in that part of the correspondence which is preserved among their father's papers, the support which he derived, in his most trying season, from the considerations suggested to him in the letters of his friend." V. F.'s *Memoirs*, p. 55.

siderably longer than either of the others, and therefore will, perhaps, be thought more proper for Sundays, when families have leisure for longer exercises of devotion. The forms for *particular occasions* may be used along with any of them, at the discretion of the person who conducts the service.

To those persons who can afford to purchase books, I would recommend other *sets of family prayers*, containing a greater variety of forms, out of which they may be more likely to select such as particularly suit their own circumstances and turn of thinking. A sufficient variety will be found in those composed by Mr. Bourn, Mr. May, Dr. Leland, and other ministers in Dublin, and especially a set lately published by the Rev. Mr. Enfield of Warrington.*

It seems to me, that there is a great want of books of practical religion, free from superstitious notions, and recommending no superstitious practices. I earnestly wish that ingenious and pious persons would attend to this circumstance. They cannot employ their talents to better purpose than by enforcing, like our Saviour, the practice of genuine virtue and piety, and, at the same time, dispelling that unnatural gloom and horror, that weak or wicked men have thrown over those things which, though truly serious, are in themselves so cheerful and engaging. Treatises on these important subjects, respecting the supreme happiness of man, both in the present and future world, could not fail to be acceptable and useful.

Had we ever so many books of this kind, there would always be sufficient reason for publishing more. Old books will be neglected, and new ones, with no other recommendation but that of being new, will be bought and read. Besides, while every mode of false religion is continually presented to us in some new form or modification, should not their effects be counteracted by the exhibition of truth and virtue, in all the variety of dress they will naturally and easily admit of?

N.B. In those occasional forms in this work in which particular persons are referred to, it will be easy for the person who reads them to change the words *servant, he, him, or his*, into *servants, she, or her, they, their, or them*, as the occasion may require; and they are printed in *italics*, to make them the more easily distinguished, and, thereby, less liable to occasion any embarrassment to the reader.

* Dr. Enfield now resided at Norwich, whither he had removed in 1785, and where he died in 1797. The other authors are not mentioned in the first edition.

A

Serious Address

TO

MASTERS OF FAMILIES.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

I TAKE the liberty to address you at this time, under the respectable character of masters and heads of families; hoping that some good may be done by informing those who are ignorant, and exhorting those who are negligent, in the discharge of the important duties of that relation; and that no offence will be taken by those who are not inattentive to them, if they be hereby reminded of their obligations.

Every family is a little society within itself, and has a system of government peculiar to itself, the laws and regulations of which are wholly in your own power. This is an authority which is, in its own nature (as far as the laws of our country permit it to extend) more absolute than that of any civil government in the world can possibly be; and in the administration of it you are accountable to none but to God and your own consciences.

Be sensible, then, of the importance of your character and station, and be solicitous to fulfil the proper duty of it. And, as the only true guide to discover what the duty of your station is, consider what *good* you are capable of doing in it, and what are the most probable means of producing this good. For a *power* of doing good, and an *obligation* to do it, are, in the eye of reason and religion, of exactly the same extent, and it cannot be conceived to be otherwise under the moral government of God, who has given us all our powers for that and no other purpose.

Think not, my brethren, that you have discharged your duty to your children and servants, when you have behaved towards them and made provision for them in such a manner as law or equity (as it is commonly understood) requires of you. There are transgressions and neglects of duty, of which human judicatories can take no cognizance, and

duties of indispensable obligation in the sight of God. Nay, these duties are of more importance with respect to happiness, and therefore of more indispensable obligation, than many of those of which men do take cognizance.

Yourselves, and the members of your families, have not only bodies, which must be supplied with food and raiment, and other conveniencies of this mortal life, but you have immortal souls, which must be happy or miserable after death; and the discipline by which we are formed to that temper and trained to that conduct which will ensure everlasting happiness, is exercised to the most advantage in family relations. The influence of a master of a family, in this respect, is of far more importance than that of a minister or magistrate. Your children and servants are always under your eye. You see all their behaviour; and therefore may, in general, check whatever is wrong and vicious in both, before it be fixed into a habit.

With respect to your children, nature has given you an uncontrolled authority over them at a time when their minds are exceedingly pliable; so that it is in your power, almost, to mould them as you please. By all means then improve this advantage, which nature and the God of nature gives you, to the best of purposes. Be particularly attentive to every step that may lead to a moral habit. Teach them betimes their duty to God and to their fellow-creatures. Inspire them with an abhorrence of profane swearing, lying, and stealing. Encourage whatever you see that is gentle, tender, and compassionate, in their nature; and check every thing that may lead to cruelty, malice, and revenge.

This, in general, is no difficult, but an easy and pleasant task, when your children are young, and their minds apt to receive new impressions. It requires, indeed, an uniform and steady conduct; and sometimes a considerable degree of severity may be necessary; but consider, that if your authority be once lost, your child may be undone. If you indulge or neglect your children, till bad habits are formed, there will be a time when it will be too late to do them any real service, though you may earnestly wish to do it; and Divine Providence is often awfully just, in permitting wicked children to be a curse to their criminally indulgent parents.

Indeed no pains you can take can absolutely ensure success; for notwithstanding (to allude to our Saviour's parable) you may sow good seed, an enemy may sow tares. Your

children are subject to a variety of influences, of which no person, and more especially a man of business, can be sufficiently apprized; and the foundation you have been laying for their virtue and happiness may be secretly undermined. But by proper attention, and the usual blessing of God upon your good endeavours, this evil may generally be prevented. *Solomon* says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

But supposing the worst that can happen, there is a great difference, with respect to the peace of your own minds, between seeing your children turn out corrupt and vicious, notwithstanding your best and most vigilant endeavours; and the same thing happening in consequence of your manifest neglect. In the former case, you are disappointed indeed, and greatly disappointed; but still you have the satisfaction to think that you have done your duty, and that you could do no more. In the latter case, nothing can alleviate your distress. If you have a just sense of things, such an event, brought on in such a manner, must bring your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

The virtuous and religious education of your children, besides being the best method of providing for the peace and comfort of your own future lives, and the most important service you can do for your beloved offspring, is a duty which you owe to *God*, the father of their spirits, who hath, as it were, committed them to your care for their improvement; and, likewise, a debt you owe to *society* and the civil government under which you live, to the good laws and wise administration of which you owe the peace and security of your lives. If your children be well educated, they will be an honour and an advantage to your country; but except they be well principled, and have acquired good moral habits, they may prove the greatest pests to society; and it might have been better for the world, if they or their parents had never been born.

Think not, my brethren, that you have discharged your duty to your **SERVANTS**, when you have fulfilled the legal contracts you have entered into with them. The authority and influence which all masters have over servants, and especially domestic servants, as they give you a *power* of doing more, do, therefore, according to the general rule above laid down, include an *obligation* to do more. Be attentive, therefore, to check any irregularities you may see your servants running into. Allow of no methods of spending their

time that are likely to lead them into bad company, and make them contract bad habits. Take proper opportunities of discoursing with them about their moral conduct, and the consequences of it. See that they attend some place of divine worship. If they can read, put good books into their hands, and let them want no means of improvement, in any kind of knowledge proper for their station, that you can conveniently procure them.

When your servants see you thus attentive to them, and that you have their interest, their best interest, at heart, it is more probable that they will have your interest at heart, and serve you with more attachment and fidelity. The growing complaint, that servants have no care of their masters' interests, may have a variety of causes; but it appears to me, that one of them is the little attention that masters pay to the interest, the morals, and the religious instruction of their servants. This last part of the duty of masters is much easier to discharge when the servants are of the same religious persuasion with themselves. When the case is otherwise, servants who are at an age to judge for themselves, will less bear to be advised in any thing that has the least relation to religion. However, in this case, a great part of the duty above-mentioned may be discharged with the utmost strictness, without seeming to impose, in the least, in matters of religion.

* I would observe in this place, that masters of families have many opportunities of making useful reflections upon particular occurrences, and that they ought carefully to improve them, in order to give young persons and servants a turn for thinking and reflecting themselves. In this manner the probity, good character, and success of some, and the profligacy, infamy, and ruin of others, of their neighbours and acquaintance, may be turned to good account. Moral instructions, thus exemplified, have a double force upon the mind. Also, by attending to particular events, an habitual regard to God, both in gratitude for his mercies and a fear of his judgments, may be most advantageously inculcated. In consequence of frequent reflections of this kind, persons may be taught to see the hand of God in every thing they observe or hear of, and so come to have *his fear at all times before their eyes*; and this great principle cannot fail to operate as a powerful motive to virtue, and a most effectual restraint against vice and wickedness.

* This paragraph is not in the first edition.

In order to make your duty to your children and servants the easier and more effectual, be careful, in the first place, to set them *a good example*. Let the strictest sobriety accompany your cheerfulness and good-humour. Let condescension go hand in hand with authority. Let integrity and the strictest honour appear in all your dealings between man and man; and let it be seen, that you make conscience of doing your duty to God, your father and master in heaven, at the same time that you require the duty of your children and servants to you, as their father and master on earth. This duty of *example* alone is more than a thousand exhortations. These can only be repeated occasionally, whereas the other is seen and has influence every day, and every hour of the day. This cannot fail to have the happiest effect upon a family, and operate equally to your benefit and that of all who are under your care.

Besides this principal article of good example, I shall only recommend to your attention two things, which have so good an effect with respect to the religious instruction and improvement of your children and servants, in every thing that is virtuous and good, that I do not scruple to call them two important branches of family duty.

The first is **CATECHISING**; but as I have urged this in the Preface to my small *Catechism*, I shall say nothing about it here.

The second is **FAMILY-PRAYER**, which, I am afraid, is growing into neglect with some of the politer part of this age, who have seen or heard so much of the appearance of religion in former times, that they seem ashamed to leave any trace by which it might be known, to their most intimate acquaintance, that they have any religion at all.*

I do not pretend to produce any express scripture authority for the observance of this duty. One of the excellencies of our religion consists in the small number of its positive institutions. The observance of the Lord's day, for the purpose of religious worship, cannot be directly proved from the *New Testament*, but the moral and devotional tendency of the Christian religion is evident; and therefore we ought, of ourselves, to adopt those customs which, without being superstitious, do really tend to promote the purposes of virtue and devotion in our own minds, and the minds of others. And, in this rational view of things, the observance of family prayer seems to want no other recommendation.

“This practice,” says the excellent Archbishop Tillotson; “is so necessary to keep alive and maintain a sense of God and religion on the minds of men, that, where it is neglected, I cannot see how any family can, in reason, be deemed a family of Christians, or indeed to have any religion at all.” I do not join in all the severity of this censure, but I think there is the greatest reason in the remark which introduces it.

In a multiplicity of worldly affairs, we are certainly too apt to forget God, and the *one great business* on which we are sent into this world; but we cannot help being reminded of it, if it be our custom to assemble in families every day, to read some useful portion of scripture, and to join in an act of rational devotion, expressing the sense we have of our dependence upon God, our maker and benefactor, our reliance upon his mercy, our confidence in his providence, and our resignation to his will, in all the events of this transitory life, in which we are to be trained up for a better life after death.

This practice, my brethren, will naturally prevent much of the irregularity into which we are apt to be betrayed by the impetuosity of our passions. By this means we may have the fear of God always before our eyes, and walk with God all the day long. By this means we may go through the business of the day with greater pleasure, in humble expectation that, while we thus acknowledge God in all our ways, he will direct our paths, and make every thing that befalls us subservient to our real good. And, lastly, your children and servants, seeing you regular and devout in the performance of this duty, cannot fail to conceive a greater reverence for religion; and by this means its sanctions, and the obligations of virtue in general, will have a stronger influence over them as long as they live. I may add, that you yourselves will appear more respectable in their esteem, and your authority will have greater weight on that account.

Every family is so much a separate and independent society, that no argument can be produced for *public worship* of any kind, that will not even more strongly enforce *family worship*. The connexion between members of the same family is closer and more intimate than the connexion between the members of the same political society, and the subjects of the same civil government. They are naturally more united both in interest and affection. A family, therefore, being so much one person, the obligation to family worship approaches to the obligation of private devotion.

Moreover, the members of the same family, having such intimate intercourse, and so many things in common, have, consequently, many relative and reciprocal duties; and the sense and obligation of all these must be greatly strengthened by joint prayer.

The difficulties attending the performance of this duty, appear to me to be such as might easily be surmounted, by men who are not altogether destitute of firmness of mind, and whose conduct in life would be no reproach to the forms of rational devotion. The service itself, when conducted with propriety, is a decent and becoming thing, nor does it need to take up much time. Long prayers, we know, were particularly objected to by our Lord himself; and in all cases, the benefit of the exercise must be derived from the propriety and the fervour of our devotions, and not from the length of them. If it be inconvenient for the family to assemble for this purpose twice every day, particularly in the morning, let it be done in the evening, after the business of the day is over. To avoid ostentation, which is so hateful in religion, it may be deferred till any company that do not spend the night in the family be gone home; or if it be omitted occasionally, still let it be done whenever nothing extraordinary prevents it, and when the family can be alone. The real good effect of family devotion will not be sensibly lessened by those omissions and interruptions which are either casual or are evidently made to avoid the appearance of ostentation.

After all, I do not expect that I shall be able to recommend this duty to those who give into the gaities of this luxurious and dissipated age. It will not suit with a master of a family being much from home, with his generally keeping bad hours, and much less bad and rakish company. It is a serious thing; but it ought to be remembered, that we come into the world upon very serious business, and must give a serious account of the manner in which we acquit ourselves in it.

Religion, my brethren, is the great business of our lives. Our abode in this world is short and precarious. In the beautiful and expressive language of the Scriptures, "We have here no continuing city," and are only "strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" but we are to be somewhere else for ever, and our happiness or misery in a future and unknown state of being depends upon our behaviour here. In this situation, it is certainly our wisdom, *in this our day, to mind the things that relate to our everlasting peace and welfare, be-*

fore they are for ever hid from our eyes. If you be laughed at for the appearance of decent and rational devotion, consider who they are that ridicule you on this account, and of how short continuance, and of what little moment, is the *laughter of fools*. The beginning of any new, though laudable practice, may require some degree of courage; but the exertion of that courage is virtue, and it is glorious for a man to be singular in that which is good.

According to the maxims of the present age, it is possible, that even for the common decencies of religion you may be censured by some, as precise, and righteous over-much; and you may pass for men of no spirit or taste; but consider, the time is coming, when many of our present notions and maxims will vanish like a dream; when he only will be accounted a man of true spirit, to have acquired a just sense of honour, and to have formed himself to a just method of thinking and acting, who has had the resolution to subdue his passions, who has had the fortitude to resist the solicitations of bad company, and the steadiness to act a wise, moderate, and virtuous part through life; whereas he who has suffered his vain mind to be carried away by the current maxims of a licentious age, who has suffered himself to be seduced by the artifices of his vicious and profligate companions, who could not stand the shock of ridicule and reproach, but has been laughed and bantered out of his virtue, will be ranked among the meanest; the most abject and contemptible of all wretches. And this day, which will try every man's work what it is, and shew who have acted the truly sensible, wise, and spirited part, is not far off; for after *death* comes the *judgment*; and "what is *our* life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

I shall close this Address with a few passages selected from various parts of the Scriptures, expressing the duties of masters with respect to their families.

Gen. xviii. 19: "I know him," (says God concerning *Abraham*,) "that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." *Deut.* vi. 6, 7: "And 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 thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." *Joshua* xxiv. 15: "As for me, and my house," (saith *Joshua*,) "we will serve

the Lord." *Psalms* ci. 2, 6, 7: "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.—I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me. He that walketh in a perfect way he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight." *Job*. xxxi. 13—15: "If I did despise the cause of my man-servant or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up; and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb, make him; and did not one fashion us in the womb?" *Col.* iv. 1; *Eph.* vi. 9: "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven,—neither is there respect of persons with him." *Prov.* xxii. 6, xiii. 24: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes." *Eph.* vi. 4: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." To assist you in the proper conduct of family prayer, I shall subjoin a few forms composed for that purpose, with the addition of *shorter forms* for some particular occasions, which may be introduced when they are found to be expedient.

As it will seldom be convenient to read more than one chapter at once on these occasions, I would advise, that, in general, choice be made of the *four Gospels*, the *book of Acts*, and the *practical parts of the apostolical epistles*. These contain what is most fundamental and useful in Christian knowledge, and in them the great duties of the Christian life are inculcated with clearness and energy. Several of the *Psalms* may also be read with peculiar advantage at these devotional exercises.

PRAYERS FOR FAMILIES.

THE FIRST PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, we, thy dependent creatures, present ourselves before thee, under a deep sense of our manifold obligations to thee, as our maker, preserver, and benefactor. Thou art he who hast made us, and not we ourselves. We are the workmanship of thine hands, what thine own fingers have framed; and we are curiously and wonderfully made, every part of our bodies bearing evident marks of thine infinite wisdom and goodness. More especially do we rejoice in the rank which thou hast been pleased that we should hold in thy creation, as rational and immortal beings, and thank thee for those powers whereby we are capable of attaining to the knowledge of thee our God, and of understanding and doing thy holy will.

We thank thee for all thy goodness to us in this life, and that the earth, which thou hast given us to inhabit, is so full of the riches of thy goodness. We thank thee for the bread that we eat, for the raiment with which we are clothed, for the blessings of society and friendship, and for every thing that contributes to make our situation in this world comfortable and happy. But, above all, do we thank thee for the revelation of thy will to mankind, in order to recover men from that state of vice and misery into which they were fallen, and for the gracious promises thou hast made us, by thy Son Jesus Christ, of the free forgiveness of all our sins, of a resurrection from the dead, and a life of immortal happiness in a future state, if we repent of what we have done amiss, and endeavour to live according to the precepts of his gospel.

We are sensible that in many things we have all broken thy holy and righteous laws, so as justly to have incurred thy displeasure; but do thou, we humbly intreat thee, according to thy abundant mercy declared to mankind in the gospel of thy Son, blot out all our transgressions, and receive us into thy divine favour; and may we be enabled, from the motives of our holy religion, to walk more circumspectly and unblameably before thee for the time to come.

May we love thee, the Lord our God, with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves, doing to others as we would that they should do to us; and may we in all things live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present evil world.

In a faithful and cheerful endeavour to discharge this our duty, and to preserve our consciences void of offence so long as we shall live; may we be enabled, according to thy gracious encouragement, to cast all our cares upon thee who carest for us, depending upon thy promise, that if we, in the first place, secure that good part which can never be taken from us, all other things shall be added unto us; and that, after having seen thy goodness in the land of the living, when we shall have fought the good fight of faith, and finished our Christian course with joy, an abundant entrance will be administered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

(In this place may any of the occasional forms be introduced.)

Hear us, Almighty God, in these our requests, as the disciples of thy Son Christ Jesus, through whom to thee, O Father, be glory for ever. *Amen.*

THE SECOND PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD and heavenly Father, we adore thee as the greatest and best of all Beings, entitled to the highest reverence, love, and confidence of all thy rational creatures. Thou art the maker and preserver of all things. Thou spakest and it was done, thou commandedst and all things stood fast, and they still continue according to thy first wise appointment, for all are thy servants. As thou hast made all things, so thou hast abundantly provided for the supply of all the wants of thy creatures. They all have their eyes up unto thee, and thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

We also have largely shared thy bounty; yet, with shame and confusion of face, we acknowledge, that the God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways, have we not glorified. In many things we offend all. Shouldest thou be strict to mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? But it is our happiness to have to do with a God who is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in mercy and goodness and truth; who is not willing that any should perish, but had rather that all should repent and live.

Being encouraged, in the gospel of thy Son Jesus Christ, to expect the free forgiveness of all our sins, upon our sincere repentance, we would resolve, that wherein we are now convinced we have hitherto done amiss, we will, for the future, do so no more, and endeavour to walk in all the commandments of God blameless. Do thou assist us to fulfil these our resolutions ; and, lest the cares of this world should overpower the good motions of our minds, may we ever have present to our thoughts the most important motives to a virtuous life and conversation. In a more especial manner, may we live under a strong sense of thine universal presence ; and while we consider that thine eyes are in every place, beholding both the evil and the good ; that thou knowest even the thoughts of our hearts, (for all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do,) and that, as thou now seest in secret, thou wilt one day reward openly, may we keep the strictest watch over our thoughts, our words, and our actions ; and may no temptation seduce us from the path of our known duty.

Professing ourselves to be the disciples of Christ, may we make his instructions the rule of our lives, and carefully copy after his great example ; that we, like him, may be holy, harmless, and undefiled, intent upon fulfilling the will of him who sends us into this world, and finishing his work ; and maintaining a perfect resignation to thy righteous will in all the events of life. Being Christians, may we consider that, like our Lord and Master, we are not of this world. May we, therefore, as strangers and pilgrims on earth, be endeavouring to raise our affections from all things here below, that we may have our treasure in heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change these our mortal bodies, and fashion them like to his own glorified body, in that day when corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal be swallowed up of immortality. Animated by this glorious hope, set before us in the gospel of thy Son, may it be our daily endeavour to abstain from all the corruptions of this world, and to cultivate that holiness of heart and life, without which no man can see the Lord.

(In this place may any of the occasional forms be introduced.)

These our petitions we humbly offer up to thee as the disciples of thy Son Jesus Christ, who has taught us, when we pray to say,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE THIRD PRAYER.*

ALMIGHTY GOD, and most merciful Father! the maker, preserver, and governor of all things; who neglectest nothing that thou hast made. In thy hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. Thou givest food unto all flesh; and we observe, with admiration, the suitable provision thou hast made for the support and comfort of all thy wanting creatures.

We desire to be at all times very sensible of, and to rejoice in our own state of dependence on thee; for we also are the work of thy hands, and under the care of thy providence. May we never fail to glorify thee, in whose hand our life and breath are, and whose are all our ways.

Deeply impressed with this conviction, we desire to unite in grateful acknowledgments of thy manifold and great benefits to us. We praise thee for the gift and preservation of life; for the wonderful and useful frame of our bodies, for the excellence and soundness of the capacities of our minds, for that measure of health which thy good providence continueth to us, and for the many comforts which flow from thence. We thank thee for a daily supply of many things needful for our support and conducive to our delight.

We gratefully acknowledge the kindness of thy providence in all the comforts and services we derive from society, neighbourhood, and friendship; for the daily endearments of relative affections, and the good offices resulting from our domestic connexions one with another; and also for the security to our persons and properties, together with the other manifold and great advantages we enjoy by means of our situation in this land of religious and civil liberty, and of the protection of the equitable constitution and good government under which we live. Surely, the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heri-

* By Rev. W. Turner, of Wakefield. See *supra*, p. 450.

tage. Blessed be the Lord, who hath shewn us so largely of his goodness in the land of the living.

But, above all, would we praise thee, with our whole hearts, for thy great mercy manifested to mankind by thy Son Christ Jesus; whom thou hast given, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We thank thee for the heavenly instructions, the holy precepts, and the exceeding great and precious promises delivered to us in the gospel. We thank thee for the benefits of our Lord's excellent and persuasive doctrines; his amiable and perfect pattern; his plain and profitable institutions, his exemplary obedience, even unto death; his glorious resurrection, which is a pattern and assurance of that resurrection which he hath promised to us; and for his triumphant ascension, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Having such an high-priest over the house of God, we would at all times draw near to thee, our Father in heaven, with pure hearts, in full assurance of faith; believing that thou art a bountiful rewarder of all them that diligently seek thee.

May it be the earnest desire of our hearts, and our continual endeavour, to walk worthy of the holy vocation wherewith we are called, as the children of thee, our God and Father, and the disciples of thy holy and beloved Son Christ Jesus. To which end dispose us diligently to read and consider, and enable us to understand the word of thy truth, especially the gospel of our Lord Jesus. May we receive the good seed of thy heavenly word in the love of it, cherish it in good and honest hearts, and bring forth the proper fruits of it in all holy dispositions, and a sober, righteous, and godly conversation.

Incline us to reverence and love thee above all things; to maintain a continual regard to thine authority and inspection over us; to rejoice in our dependence on thy government; to be satisfied with thy disposals, thankful for thy mercies, patient under thy corrections, confiding in thy promises, that all things shall work together for good to them that love thee. In all the events and employments of life may we set thee, the Lord, always before us; making thy perfections our confidence, thy precepts our counsellors, thy promises the rejoicing of our hearts; and the hope of thine acceptance, and of glory, honour, and immortality in thy heavenly kingdom, our animating motives to a patient continuance in all well-doing. And O! that there may be such an heart in us, that we may fear thee, and keep all thy commandments always, that it may be well with us.

Assist us to cherish all kind and good affections towards

all men ; and to suppress and root out of our hearts all bitterness, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Enable us to maintain, at all times, truth in our words, sincerity in our professions, faithfulness to our engagements, and integrity and righteousness in all our dealings. Whatsoever we would that men should do unto us, may we do even so unto them, in serious expectation of thy righteous judgment, wherein there will be no respect of persons.

Animate us with a spirit of unconfined love and good-will, that we may be ready to do good and to communicate, as we have ability and opportunity, to whomsoever we can serve or oblige. Especially may we never fail in sincere gratitude to our friends and benefactors ; and as we hope that thou, our most merciful Father, wilt forgive us our sins, if we be penitent, may we also, from the heart, forgive those who have offended or injured us, when they turn to us ; in the mean time guarding against malice, and forbearing revenge. May we be always ready to perform with cheerfulness all good offices towards our neighbours and acquaintance ; and, if it please thee, make us instruments of thy gracious providence for real benefits to those among whom we dwell.

We farther beseech thee, O most pure and holy God, the Father of our spirits, to enable us to purify ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in thy fear. May we continually preserve a due government over our affections and passions, be watchful against all pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy, and suppress all foolish opinions and hurtful lusts. May we regulate our spirits by humility and meekness, keep our bodies in purity and temperance, and use the good things of this world as not abusing them ; but so as that we may give a good account of them to our own reflections, and to the final Judge. May we be prudent and circumspect in our conduct, contented in our lot, industrious in our callings, and both in our present and every future station of life, maintain consciences void of offence towards God and towards man ; that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

May we at all times consider seriously, and feel the powerful influences of the prospects set before us by the gospel of thy Son Jesus. Firmly persuaded of the truth of all thy promises delivered by him, may we behave as pilgrims and strangers upon earth, where we have no continuing city ; but seek for a better country, even an heavenly one, a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. May the supreme desires of our hearts, and our unwearied endeavours, concur with the methods of thy providence and

grace, to complete our meetness for the inheritance prepared for us.

Finally, O thou Father of all the families upon earth, we commit ourselves unto thee in our domestic capacity and family relations. Be thou the guardian of our common interests; bestow upon us all needful supplies and blessings, and protect us from real evil. Assist us all to discharge the duties we severally owe one to another, as the servants of God our common master in heaven. With kind affections one towards another, may we mutually share in prosperity and adversity, and be helpful one to another in every temporal and eternal interest. May we live in love and peace, and may the God of love and peace dwell with us; and, in the end, make us all sharers in eternal life and happiness, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now unto him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever. *Amen.*

FORMS

FOR

PARTICULAR OCCASIONS,

TO BE USED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PERSON WHO
CONDUCTS THE SERVICE.

1. *To be used in the Morning.*

WE thank thee, heavenly Father, for thy care over us the last night; that we were preserved from disagreeable accidents in the hours of sleep, and that we are brought to see the light of another day in such comfortable circumstances. May we be in thy fear all the day long, and may this fear be an effectual restraint upon us, that we commit no sin or folly.

2. *To be used in the Evening.*

WE thank thee, heavenly Father, for thy goodness to us this day past. Through thy good hand upon us we continue hitherto; and we commit ourselves to thy care and protection this approaching night. May thy good providence be our guard from all the dangers to which we are exposed in the

defenceless hours of repose; and make us to awake in the morning, rejoicing in thy goodness, and refreshed with moderate rest, for the discharge of the duties of the day ensuing.

3. *To be used on Sundays.*

BLESS, we intreat thee, most merciful Father, our attendance on the public worship of Christians this day. We thank thee for the opportunity we enjoy of worshipping thee according to the dictates of our consciences, without any to molest us, or make us afraid. May we be careful to improve this great privilege in the best manner. May thy word, which we read, and which is explained to us, be a light to our feet, and a lamp unto our path. May it enter deep into our hearts, and bring forth fruit in our future lives and conversations. When, upon these occasions, we join with our fellow-creatures and fellow-christians in one common address to thee the Father of our spirits, expressing our joint sentiments, desires, and expectations, do thou hear in heaven, and grant us an answer of peace. And by worshipping thee here below, with reverence and godly fear, may our minds be formed for the delightful exercises and enjoyments of a future world.

4. *For Relations, &c.*

BLESS, we intreat thee, heavenly Father, all our relations, our friends, neighbours, and acquaintance. May we so live together in thy fear, in a mutual intercourse of good and kind offices, and a regard for each other's best interests, that, when we have been separated by death, we may meet again in thy glorious and everlasting kingdom; where we shall be happy in the enjoyment of thee our God, and of each other, to all eternity.

5. *For Persons of different Conditions in Life.*

CONSIDERING this world as a state of trial and probation, may we cultivate those virtues which our situation and circumstances peculiarly require, and learn wisdom and instruction from all the dispensations of thy providence. If we be rich in this world, may we consider every thing we enjoy as the gift of thy bounty, and endeavour to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up for ourselves a good foundation for the time to come. If it seem good to thy wise and righteous providence, that we be poor in this world, may we be humble and industrious; rich in faith, and heirs of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.

6. *For Persons of different Ages.*

TEACH those who are young to remember thee their Creator in the days of their youth, to avoid the snares of bad company, and to employ the morning of their life in acquiring that knowledge and virtue which may make them useful members of society, and fill them with pleasing reflections when they come to die. Bless the aged. Support their minds under the decays of nature, that, as their outward man grows weaker and weaker, their inward man may grow stronger and stronger; till, in thy due time, they obtain their dismissal from the infirmities and troubles of this mortal life, and be admitted to the joys of thine heavenly and everlasting kingdom.

7. *For Husbands and Wives.*

MAY those who are engaged in the conjugal relation live in perfect love and harmony. May all their thoughts and actions tend to advance their common interest and happiness. May they walk before their house in a perfect way, be examples of sobriety, and every virtue, to their dependants; and, having faithfully discharged all the important duties of the family relation on earth, may they be admitted members of the great family of thy children in heaven.

8. *For Parents and Children.*

TEACH parents, by a proper mixture of gentleness and severity, to train up their children in the paths of wisdom and virtue, and thereby to make the best provision for their temporal and eternal welfare. And may children be taught to honour and obey their parents, and be the comfort and support of their age, in return for the obligations conferred upon them in their early years.

9. *For Masters and Servants.*

INCLINE the hearts of masters not to rule with rigour, but to give to their servants that which is just and equal, remembering that they also have a Master in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons. And may servants be obedient unto their masters, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God; knowing that whatever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive, whether he be bound or free.

10. *For Persons under Affliction in general.*

SANCTIFY to us, heavenly Father, the afflictive dispensation of thy providence, with which thou hast visited us.

We bless thy name, that, in the midst of judgment, thou rememberest mercy, and afflictest us less than our iniquities deserve. We would endeavour to humble ourselves under thy mighty hand, and to learn patience and obedience by the things which we suffer. By all the vicissitudes of this mortal life, may we learn to raise our affections from all things here below, and be taught to look for our chief portion and happiness in a future and better world. If it be thy pleasure, remove this stroke from us, that we may again rejoice in thy goodness, and bless thy name.

11. *A Thanksgiving for the Removal of Affliction in general.*

WE thank thee, heavenly Father, for the favour thou hast shewn to this family, in removing the afflictions under which we laboured. What shall we render to thee, the God of our mercies, who crownest our lives with thy goodness? Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us bless his holy name. Write upon our hearts a law of love and gratitude, and may our lives be devoted to thy service.

12. *In case of dangerous Sickness.*

Do thou, our most merciful God and Father, who art a present help in time of trouble, and who hast, in thy word, particularly encouraged those who are afflicted to pray, have compassion on thy *servant*, on whom thou hast laid thine afflictive hand. Thou sayest to diseases, Go, and they go; Come, and they come; to answer the wise and gracious purposes of thy providence. If it be thy pleasure, restore thy *servant* to *his* health, and a capacity of usefulness in life. But, above all, do thou fit him, and all of us who are concerned for *him*, for thy holy will; and whatever be the issue, may all these afflictions, which are but for moment, be a means of working out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory, by making us to look not so much at the things which are seen and temporary, as at those things which are unseen and eternal.

13. *A Thanksgiving for Recovery from Sickness.*

WE join with thy *servant* in returning thee thanks for the great mercy thou hast shewn to *him* in *his* recovery from a dangerous disorder. May a grateful sense of this thy goodness deeply impress *his* mind, and all our minds; and may *his* life which thou hast spared, and may our lives which thou preservest by the watchful care of thy providence over us, be devoted to thy service.

14. *To be used after the Death of a Relation, or in the Time of great Sickness and Mortality in the Neighbourhood.*

Do thou, who hast, in great wisdom and justice, appointed unto all men once to die ; who hast said to the children of men, Dust ye are, and to dust ye shall return ; grant that when we see this awful sentence put in execution ; when we attend our friends, relations, and acquaintance, to their last and silent habitations, we may be seriously reminded of our own mortality ; and, considering the uncertainty as well as the shortness of our abode in this world ; considering that we cannot tell what a day or an hour may bring forth ; that, perhaps, even this very night our souls may be required of us, may we be excited to use all diligence in working the work of God while it is day, knowing that the night of death comes, (and may surprise us,) in which no man can work : for there is no work, or device, or knowledge, or wisdom, in the grave, whither we are hastening.

Duly influenced by these considerations, may we be enabled to live the life of the righteous, that so our latter end may be like his, full of hope and joy. Having retained our integrity so long as we live, at the hour of death may not our hearts reproach us ; but on leaving this world, may we be able to sing the Christian triumphant song, O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? And, finally, when we, with the rest of mankind, shall stand before thy righteous tribunal at the last day, may we hear this joyful sentence pronounced upon us, Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.

15. *To be used before a Journey.*

Do thou, who preservest man and beast, protect thy *servant*, who is undertaking a journey, from all the dangers to which *he* may be exposed in the course of it. Teach *him* to acknowledge thee in all *his* ways ; do thou direct *his* paths, and cause *him* to return in health and safety to *his* family and friends.

16. *A Thanksgiving after a return from a Journey.*

WE join with thy *servant* in returning thee thanks for preserving *him* from all the dangers to which *he* has been exposed in a journey, and for restoring him to his family and friends in health and safety. While we rejoice in thy goodness on this account, may we be careful to express the sense we have of our obligation to thee, by a suitable life and conversation.

17. *To be used before a Voyage.*

Do thou, who sayest to the sea, Be calm, and its waves obey thy commandment, preserve thy *servant*, who is undertaking a voyage, from the dangers to which he will be exposed on that unstable element; and give his friends an opportunity of rejoicing with him, and praising thy name, on his safe return.

18. *To be used after a Voyage.*

WE thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, who raisest and stillest the waves of the sea, that thou hast graciously preserved thy servant from the dangers to which he has been exposed in his voyage. May he be duly sensible, of his obligation to thee, the author of all good, and live to thy praise.

19. *For a Woman near the Time of Delivery.*

MAY thy favour and blessing attend thy handmaid, who is expecting the painful hour of child-birth. Bring her to her proper time, and make joy and gladness succeed to anxiety and pain.

20. *A Thanksgiving after a safe Delivery.*

WE join with thine handmaid, in returning thee thanks for delivering her in the perilous hour of child-bearing, and making her the living mother of a living and perfect child. Do thou perfect her recovery, and may a sense of this thy great goodness to her, deeply impress her mind, and all our minds. May thy servants be enabled to educate their child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and may it live to be the joy of its parents, and a blessing to society.

21. *Another Form, to be used when the Child is dead.*

WE join with thine handmaid in returning thee thanks, for delivering her in the perilous hour of child-bearing, though it hath seemed good to thy wise providence not to spare the life of the child. Sanctify the affliction. Perfect the recovery of thy servant, and may a sense of this thy goodness deeply impress her mind, and all our minds.

22. *For the whole World.*

Do thou, who art the Father of all the families of the earth, extend thy compassion to all our brethren of mankind. May the great blessings of thy Son's gospel be universally diffused. Purify Christian churches from every thing that

debases their religion, and obstructs its efficacy on the minds of men; and may it finally prevail, to the extirpation of idolatry, Mohammedan delusion, and Popish superstition. May thine ancient people the Jews be at length brought within the pale of the church of Christ, together with the fulness of the Gentiles; that, in thy due time, all thy rational offspring may be worshippers of thee, the only living and true God, by Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

23. *For our Country.*

SHEW thy favour to this land of our nativity, the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, and all our colonies and plantations abroad. Pardon our many sins, which might justly bring down upon us thy heavy judgments. Promote the great work of reformation among all ranks and degrees of men among us; and may we continue to be a people highly favoured of thee our God, in consequence of our being to thee a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Bless thy servant our sovereign King George. Establish his throne in righteousness, and may the present reigning family be the instruments, in thy hands, of continuing to us our invaluable liberties, civil and religious. Bless the Queen, and every branch of the royal family, and make them as eminent for their princely virtues and accomplishments, as they are for their high stations in life. Give peace in our times, O Lord, or grant success to our arms in every just and necessary war. May our manufactures and commerce flourish. May we have proper weather for bringing to perfection and for gathering in the fruits of the earth. Thus may our poor be satisfied with bread; and while we live in the enjoyment of every temporal blessing, may we not abuse thy goodness by indulging to luxury and excess, but may we express our gratitude to thee, the Giver of all good, by the temperate and generous use of all our blessings.

24. *For the Parliament and the King's Ministers.*

BLESS, O Lord, we intreat thee, the great council of the nation, and make all their consultations to issue in the public good. May those who are entrusted with the conduct of national affairs be endowed with wisdom and integrity, proper for their important stations. Succeed their just and good designs, and over-rule all their measures for the real good of this people.

FORMS OF PRAYER,
 AND
 OTHER OFFICES,
 FOR
 The use of Unitarian Societies.

“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”
 MATT. iv. 10.

“The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the
 Father seeketh such to worship him.”
 JOHN iv. 23.

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 [Birmingham, 1783.]
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PREFACE.

THE propriety and obligation of public worship in general, I must here take for granted. It is the universal practice of Christians in every part of the world; and it is the most natural method of making that *public profession* of our religion, that is required of all Christians. In the most hazardous circumstances, we must shew that we are not ashamed of Christ, as we expect that he will not be ashamed of us; and as we hope that he will acknowledge us for his true disciples and followers, before his heavenly Father, the holy angels, and the assembled world at the last day.

One great end of this public profession of Christianity is to make it conspicuous to the world; that it may engage the attention of mankind, and afford them an opportunity of examining it, in order to their embracing it, and deriving from it that advantage which it is designed and calculated to impart to all the human race. And for the same reason that we ought to make a public profession of Christianity in

general, we ought to exhibit it in its greatest purity, and what we apprehend to be its most advantageous form; such as will best recommend it to the acceptance of the serious and rational part of mankind; and we ought not, by stated attendance, to countenance any mode of public worship that we think exhibits our religion in a light that is really injurious and disgraceful to it; such as we must think is more likely to procure it enemies than friends.*

Besides, it is contrary to the plainest rules of morality, directly or virtually to affirm what we do not believe to be true, and especially to do this repeatedly and habitually. No *Protestant*, for instance, can think himself justifiable in receiving the consecrated wafer at the hands of a *Popish* priest; because by that action he must be understood to consider the eucharistical elements of bread and wine as the real body and blood of Christ, and proper objects of worship. It is, in fact, to profess himself a member of the Church of Rome, and to hold all her distinguishing tenets. Every person, therefore, who is convinced of the absurdity of considering bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ, and proper objects of worship, is bound in conscience to abstain from the *Popish* mass, and profess himself a *Protestant*.

For the very same obvious reason, therefore, every member of any Christian church, in which Christ is considered as an object of worship, though not in the form of bread and wine, and in the daily service of which he is addressed as our maker, and a being capable of hearing and answering our prayers, ought, in conscience, to cease to be a member of such a church, and renounce her communion, upon being convinced that Christ is not an object of worship, that he is not our maker, or capable of hearing and answering our prayers.

If there ever was, or can be, any such thing as *idolatry*, it is paying religious worship to any other than the one only living and true God; and if it be of any consequence to preserve inviolate the first article of all revealed religion, viz. the unity of God, and the exclusive worship of him, (which was the one great object of the *Jewish* religion, and continues to be so in the *Christian*.) it must be incumbent upon us to frequent no society of Christians, however pious and sincere they may be, if we be convinced that they err in so essential an article of faith as this. It is innocent in them who are ignorant, and act agreeably to their consciences: but it is

* See "Letter to a Layman," *supra*, pp. 29—42.

criminal in us, who know better. There are, no doubt, differences in lesser matters which may be borne with, in members of the same society; but if any difference in opinion or practice will justify a separation, it must be this.

That such a corrupt mode of religion is enjoined by the civil powers under which we live, will no more authorize or excuse our conformity to it, than the same consideration would have justified the primitive Christians in conforming to the rites of the Pagan worship, which were enjoined by the laws of the *Roman* empire. The answer of the apostles *Peter* and *John* to the Jewish high-priests, [*Acts* v. 29,] should be adopted by all Christians: "We ought to obey God, rather than men."

If we make profession of any religion at all, we ought to be serious and consistent in that profession; and, as the nature of it necessarily demands, make all other things subservient to it, not it to them. For, if we really believe that there is another and an endless life, to which the present life is only preparatory, all the things of the latter bear no sensible proportion to those of the former; so that it must be the extreme of folly and inconsistency to hesitate a moment which to prefer, or to make a primary object. The advantages or the authority of this world will not even be attended to by one whose mind is duly impressed with a sense of the infinite superiority of things eternal to those that are temporal. But for a full and judicious account of the reasons why *Unitarians* should dissent from *Trinitarian* worship, I refer my readers to an excellent tract lately published, intitled, "A free and serious Address to the Christian Laity, especially such as, embracing Unitarian Sentiments, conform to Trinitarian Worship. To which is prefixed, an Introduction; wherein the Worship of the Holy Scriptures is contrasted with the Worship of the Church of England, and of Dissenters."*

These considerations will abundantly justify me, in the opinion of serious persons, in this attempt to excite all Christians who are *Unitarians*, to a just sense of the importance of their principles, to distinguish themselves in the eye of the world by their profession of them, and to remove, as far as I can, every obstacle to this public profession of pure Christianity; by making it easy to all *Unitarians* to form separate societies, and to enable them to conduct their public worship, though there should be no persons of learning among them; and though, by reason of their small numbers or low

* By Dr. Toulmin. This Tract has been circulated by the Unitarian Society.

circumstances, they should be unable to engage the services of any person liberally educated.

Such Christian societies as I wish to see established, need give no alarm to politicians. They will never create any disturbance in a state, and will only add to the number of intelligent and conscientious members of the community, which must ever be an advantage to any country. No reformation can ever proceed with more quietness and tranquillity than this; and these *Unitarians*, disclaiming all aid from civil power, will thereby give the greatest security against any attempt to supplant Christians of other denominations in the exclusive favours of the civil magistrate; though they cannot help wishing, that the time may come, when the body of the people of this and of every other country, shall be so far enlightened as to see that civil and religious matters have little or no necessary connexion; and that, in reality, the civil magistrate has no more occasion to embarrass himself with any thing relating to religion, than he has with medicine, or philosophy.

From the nature of the things, individuals are much better qualified to provide for themselves in all these respects, than the united wisdom of the whole community; as I have shewn at large in my "Essay on the First Principles of Government."* And the time will certainly come, when mankind in general will not only see things in this light, but when they will view with astonishment what their ancestors have suffered by their ignorance in these matters; and feel how dearly they have paid for something bearing the name of *assistance in matters of religion*,† when it has only contributed to keep them in the most deplorable darkness, and the most disgraceful servitude.

However, though this be a subject which I cannot help wishing that all men of enlightened minds may ever keep in view, in order that no opportunity may be lost of bringing forward so great a reformation in the state of the world, my present views are much more limited, and terminate in what we are, in this country, abundantly ripe for; and which every serious and rational Christian must rejoice to see carried into immediate execution. For it is certainly desirable, that those who, from a principle of conscience, cannot at present join in any mode of public worship within a convenient distance from them, may have that advantage; and

* See Vol. XXII.

† See, on this subject, Mr. Belsham's Sermons, entitled "Christianity pleading for the Patronage of the Civil Power, but protesting against the Aid of Penal Laws," and the remarks in *Mon. Repos.* XV. pp. 277, 291, 456, 655; XVI. p. 77.

this with the least trouble and expense possible to themselves, and none at all to the state, or to any other persons whatever.

A few things more I would observe in this Preface with respect to the *prayers* and *offices* themselves.

1. The first is, that the reader must not be offended at a few repetitions of the same sentiments or expressions that may occur in different services of a similar nature. When there was an equal propriety for them in their respective places, I did not always think it necessary, merely for the sake of *variety*, to introduce others that would have been less proper for the purpose.

2. I could not conveniently provide forms for all particular situations of *public affairs*, in the intercessory part of the devotions for the Lord's day; and have therefore contented myself with some general expressions, which will hardly ever be wholly improper, but which may be omitted whenever they are perceived to be so. Thus the part that relates to *harvest** may be omitted, except during the time of harvest, or a month or two preceding it; and, in like manner, other expressions, not distinguished as this clause is by the *Italic* character, may be omitted, and others inserted in the same part of the prayer. As for the cases of *individuals*, there will perhaps be found a sufficient number of forms for the purpose, and a proper place is marked for the introduction of them.

3. I have provided more forms than were absolutely necessary for the Lord's Supper, not only for the sake of variety, but also to make this work of some use in a practical respect to individuals, independently of the proper use of it in religious societies. Those addresses to the communicants, and also that which is inserted in the *office for adult baptism*, contain such views of things as Christians cannot too carefully impress their minds with. And though the societies which I wish to see established are to be formed upon an important *speculative principle*, we should ever bear in mind, that matters of speculation (though they may recommend our religion to others) are of no use to ourselves, but as they are subservient to *practice*; tending to inspire good dispositions of mind, and leading to a right conduct in life.†

* See *Concluding Prayer*.

† "Learn," says Dr. Jebb, "to consider acts of piety, humanity, and justice, as of the highest consequence to thy well-being;—they are the genuine fruits of a lively faith in the promises of the gospel." He adds, "If a superior knowledge of thy duty, if a clearer prospect of thy great reward, if the bright example of thy Saviour, be in thee productive of a purer life, rejoice in the name of Christian; thou hast reason for thy joy." *Works*, 1787, pp. 105, 106.

THE
INTRODUCTION.

SECTION I.

*Reasons for forming Unitarian Societies for Public Worship,
without a Learned Ministry.*

IT is the duty of every person who is apprized of an evil, freely to propose whatever shall appear to him to be a proper remedy for it. I shall, therefore, without any further preamble, mention what I think to be wanting with respect to RATIONAL CHRISTIANITY, the cause of which I hope I have at heart; and I shall then make a proposal of what I flatter myself may contribute to the greater extension and the more permanent establishment of it in this country.

Now, though it cannot be denied, that, in consequence of freedom of inquiry and the force of truth, numbers are continually brought over from the rigid doctrines of *Calvinism*, and become *Unitarians*, there are few societies openly professing those sentiments, with whom they can conscientiously join in public worship, so as to make their opinions as conspicuous as, for the honour of pure Christianity, it is desirable they should be.

The established churches of *England*, *Scotland*, and *Ireland*, are avowedly *Trinitarian*. In the Liturgy of the Church of England, divine worship is perpetually paid to Jesus Christ, so that no serious, consistent *Unitarian* can join in it; and as to the Dissenters, there are few of their societies that are clearly and professedly Unitarian; nor, indeed, could it be expected that they should be so, when the change from rigid *Calvinism* has been a gradual thing, and they were not originally formed upon that principle. Besides, it is too evident to be denied, that the societies of those who are called *rational Dissenters*, whether they be properly *Unitarian*, or not, do generally decline; many of them having become actually extinct, and others being in such a condition that they cannot be supported much longer. This is more especially the case in London, and in the

South of England; but, from the same causes, it may in time extend to the North.

On the other hand, though the *Calvinistic Dissenters* are frequently losing the younger, the more thoughtful and inquisitive part of their congregations, numbers of the more illiterate people are continually joining them, and societies of *Calvinistic Baptists* are readily formed, and easily extend themselves; so that of late years their numbers are very considerably increased. This is, in some measure, owing to the zeal of those who hold such tenets; a zeal which is easily accounted for, from the stress which they have been led to lay upon them; imagining that men's future happiness depends upon their holding the right faith: whereas the *rational Dissenters* do not think that the future state of any man will depend upon his opinions, but only on his disposition of mind and his conduct in life. They have, therefore, naturally less zeal for all matters of opinion than the Calvinists have, and for the same reason they are less solicitous about making converts.

Another reason why the *Calvinistic* societies are more easily kept up is, that, consisting for the most part of persons of little reading or knowledge, they do not make so much account of the articles of learning or knowledge in their ministers; and often keep together in societies without any regularly-educated ministers at all, or with persons whose education has been so superficial, that it cannot raise them much above the level of their ordinary hearers in that respect; and if they be entirely destitute of ministers, they still meet together for mutual edification, by prayer, reading the Scriptures, and other religious exercises. Now in this it is my earnest wish that the *rational Dissenters*, and especially the *Unitarians*, would imitate them.

It is rather unfortunate, that the principal members of most *Unitarian* societies, being persons of some reading, education, and taste, cannot bear with any thing mean or low in the performances of their ministers. They must, therefore, have such as have had an expensive education, and these have generally no resource for a maintenance but from their salaries as ministers, which, I may say, are no where adequate to their support, except while they continue single.*

* It is supposed that the proper salaries of Dissenting ministers do not much more than half support them. Consequently the ministers do, from other resources, either their private fortunes, or their industry in some other way, nearly half support the cause in its present state. I do not know any place that will enable a minister

Consequently, whenever the funds of such societies are too small to enable them to keep such a minister, they are broken up and dispersed.

For the same reason, no *new* societies of *rational Dissenters* can be formed except in large towns, where a sufficient number (and among them some persons of opulence) adopt the same sentiments, and likewise agree in seeing sufficient reason for separating from the societies with which they have been connected. And many of these persons, considering all matters of speculation as only of secondary importance, and influenced too much by the force of habit and the influence of former connexions, will bear a great deal before they can bring themselves to do this. Also, men of some figure, and filling conspicuous stations in life, are peculiarly sensible of the *ridicule* that they may draw upon themselves by any singularity in their conduct, while persons of no education, and of no conspicuous rank in life, feel less restraint in following their real inclination in matters of religion, as well as in things of less moment; which is one of the happy privileges attending mediocrity of fortune. A little reflection, however, may, I hope, be sufficient to induce many persons to think and act differently from what they have hitherto done in this respect.

Much of the difficulty in the way of such an undertaking as I would recommend, viz. the forming of *Unitarian* societies, consisting of *laymen* only, will arise from the habit of attending upon *ministers* regularly educated, though a great deal of the notion of their importance is nothing more than the remains of that superstition with which the *clerical* character was so long respected in the dark ages. On this account, however, even many liberal-minded persons would feel some reluctance to receiving the *Lord's Supper* at the hands of a layman,* or having a child baptized by such a

even to maintain a family, in a manner in which his congregation expects him to live; much less will it enable him to make any decent provision for a family. (P.)

Dr. Priestley, whatever were the appearances, in 1783, would have found in 1822, that the *Christian Ministry*, among the Dissenters, was become in many places, not only a genteel, but a sufficiently lucrative profession.

* See *supra*, p. 286, Note *, and *infra*, p. 484. *Grotius* has the merit of having counteracted this superstition in his "Dissertatio de *Cenæ Administratione*, ubi *Pastores non adsunt*," written in 1638. "The design of this pernicious work," according to *Burigny*, "is to shew, that laymen, in the absence of priests, and in cases of necessity, may do their office."

Burigny adds, "Rigault had already maintained this error, and been smartly attacked by M. De Laubespine, Bishop of Orleans: all the defenders of the hierarchy were scandalized at it, and Father Petau [*Petavius*] among the Roman Catholics, and Dodwell among the English clergy, have refuted it." *Life of Grotius*, 1754, pp. 274, 365.

Nicholas Rigault died in 1654, aged 77. He retracted his opinion, according to

person; though there is nothing more sacred in those offices than in any other Christian duty. But men of understanding should endeavour to get above such weak prejudices as these, and, as we continually do in other things, learn to sacrifice small things to great.

What were those persons whom we now call the *Clergy*, originally, but the more reputable members of Christian societies (all of whom we should now call *laymen*) to whom the government of the Christian church was delegated? They had no particular *character* but what the votes of their fellow-christians invested them with, and what they could at pleasure deprive them of. All the rest of what is now called a *spiritual character* has been the addition of men, in times of gross ignorance and superstition.

If we consider the occasions of the Christian church at large, learned men are certainly of very great use. It is from men of learning, leisure, and inquiry, that we must expect an accurate investigation of the doctrines of the gospel, after the gross corruption of it in the dark ages, and a just stating of its evidence in answer to *unbelievers*.* It cannot be denied, also, but that such men would be of great use in every place; † but they are by no means necessary in

his biographer: "Il prétendit prouver dans une de ses remarques sur *Tertullien*, que les laïques ont droit de consacrer l'Eucharistie, en cas de nécessité lorsqu'ils ne peuvent recourir aux ministres ordinaires de l'église. Le savant *Laubespine* lui prouva la fausseté de cette assertion, et *Rigault* se rétracta." *Nouv. Dict. Hist.* 1772, V. p. 177.

On *Dodwell* "De Jure Laicorum Sacerdotali," against *Grotius*, though not published till 1686, see *Biog. Brit.* V. p. 322, Note m. For a translation of *Grotius's Dissertatio*, see "Defence of the Rights of the Christian Church," ed. 2, 1709, pp. 179—192.

* It is, however, justly observed, that "this evidence has been so amply detailed by English authors, whose correctness and fidelity not even the Deists will deny, that the study and knowledge of them will be sufficient to qualify a preacher of Christianity for a defender of his religion." See "Remarks on the very inferior Utility of Classical Learning, by W. Stevenson," p. 25.

† If my author here design to maintain the "great use" of "learned men" as *preachers* "in every place," his opinion may, I think, be fairly controverted. We may indeed go further, and conjecture, that in the attempt to reach the understandings and the hearts of the large majority, in many, if not in most Christian congregations, "learned men" will be too often unsuccessful, when compared with sensible and industrious *English* scholars, who have availed themselves of the very large assistance which *English* literature now offers to the Biblical student.

Such *English* scholars are well described by Robert Robinson as "men of good natural abilities and sincere piety," who "have a thorough knowledge of the practical part of Scripture, just notions of civil and religious liberty, an unblemished moral deportment, and an honest and good heart. When we allow," he adds, "that some of our ministers are *illiterate*, we do not mean to allow that any of them are ignorant. Our churches would not choose him for a minister, who was ignorant of religion, that only science which they elect him to teach." *Claude*, 1779, *Advertisement*.

Preachers such as *Robinson* has described will be as likely as any to exemplify Bishop Burnet's advice to a clergyman: "As to the *style*, Sermons ought to be very

every particular congregation ; especially since there have been so many valuable publications on all the subjects that can interest the members of Christian societies. For it will hardly be denied, that by means of a proper choice of printed compositions, a Christian congregation, consisting of laymen only, might make a better provision for their instruction, than they could do by engaging the services of the generality of persons educated for the ministry as a profession, provided they were confined (as indeed it is generally expected) to give only their own compositions. Let a Christian society of laymen have the assistance of ministers, and other learned Christians, in pointing out to them the best illustrations of the Scriptures, the best printed sermons, and also the best forms of devotion for all their occasions, and whether they can bring themselves to think so, or not, they will certainly have a better fund of rational instruction, and also of useful devotion, than is to be had in most Christian societies.

Another and principal use of Christian societies is, that the members of them may *watch over one another*, to see that the principles of Christianity have their proper effect in reforming the lives and manners of men ; that others, seeing their conversation, may be led to think well of Christianity. This, in my opinion, is too little attended to in all Christian societies. But in this respect learned ministers are of very little use, and indeed it requires talents that cannot well be expected in men of a studious and retired life, because it requires some knowledge of the world, and also an influence, and an authority, which mere learning not only cannot give, but which it often unqualifies men for. The business of discipline, therefore, or of good order in Christian societies, does not require learned ministers. Indeed, we no where see more attention to discipline, and the decent conduct of the members of Christian societies, than among the *Quakers*, who have not only no learned ministry, but who have very often no sermons, or speaking at all ; and who frequently meet without any public devotional exercises.

I would therefore earnestly exhort all serious *Unitarians*,

plain.—The words must be simple, and in common use, not savouring of the schools nor above the understanding of the people.—In short, a *preacher* is to fancy himself as in the room of the most unlearned man in his whole parish ; and therefore he must put such parts of his discourse as he would have all understand in so plain a form of words, that it may not be beyond the meanest of them. This he will certainly study to do, if his desire is to edify them, rather than to make them admire himself as a learned and high-spoken man." *Pastoral Care*, pp. 198, 199.

who cannot with satisfaction, or indeed with a good conscience, join in worship with *Trinitarians*, to form themselves into separate societies, though their numbers in any place should be ever so small, or even though there should be no more than a single family in a place, and to observe the Lord's day for the purpose of public worship ; always letting it be known that there is such worship, and admitting and encouraging any persons who may choose it, to join with them.

If there be many persons nearly equally qualified in any one place, let a proper number of them be chosen to conduct the affairs of the society, with the title of *Elders*, or any name of a similar import ; and let these persons either themselves read the several offices, or appoint other persons to read them : for the qualifications of a public reader, and those of a proper governor of a society, are very different. It will be desirable, however, for some of these elders to go through several of the offices themselves, especially that of public prayer, in order to give more solemnity and dignity to them.

As there is nothing peculiarly sacred in the offices of *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*, let the elders of such societies by all means perform those services, whenever there shall be occasion for them, without having recourse to ministers of neighbouring places ; and let those of the elders who have most leisure and ability catechize the children, and instruct young persons belonging to the society.

By this means every thing will be done that the real occasions of a Christian church require. I should also think it advisable, if there should be no great objection to it, that all the members of such a society should have their names regularly entered in a *register* ; engaging at the same time to have their children brought into the same system of catechetical instruction, and to take in good part such admonitions, with respect to their conduct, as any member of the society may think proper to give them. If any cause of more public censure should occur, let the proceedings be according to the direction of our Saviour ; [*Matt.* xviii. 17 ;] and if any offending member should, notwithstanding, prove refractory, let his name be struck out of the register, and let him be declared to be no member of the society.

Such discipline as this would preserve the reputation of the society, and would deter no person whose connexion would be desirable ; and as wealth is not wanted in such societies as these, there would be little temptation to bear with the

rich more than the poor; a circumstance which has principally contributed to the ruin of church discipline, and has been a disgrace to Christianity. I should greatly rejoice to hear of such regular societies of serious *Unitarians* being formed in different places, and should think it to be the commencement of a new and important æra in the Christian world.

However, as the prejudices against every thing that can be called *church discipline* (arising from the gross abuse of it in past ages) are so very great with many rational and well-disposed persons, I would be far from making this a necessary article to the formation of *Unitarian* churches. Let them only unite upon that single great principle of Christian faith, viz. that there is one God, and that Christ is the creature, the servant and messenger of God; and let them afterwards add others, relating to church government, &c. as they shall find them to be expedient.

It is only from persons in the middle, and rather the lower classes of life, that any important reformation, such as I have now proposed, can be expected. These have the most leisure for reading and reflection, and consequently their minds are, in general, the best informed; and what is of particular consequence, they have the fewest obstacles to prevent their doing what they really think to be the best. Persons of wealth and fashion cannot be expected to come into such a scheme as this till it shall begin to be fashionable; and the government of a country cannot be expected to countenance any mode of religion, till a considerable majority of the subjects shall shew a disposition to conform to it. But it is to be hoped that the civil powers will never do more for such a religion as this, than merely let it be unmolested; * and there can be no more reason why they should concern themselves at all about it. It will never want any thing from government besides protection from insult; and it will repay this obligation by a greater attachment than can be secured by any unreasonable preference or partiality; because such societies will consist of persons governed by better principles than that of worldly interest.

While the principles on which these societies are formed are the same, and so great and important as that of holding up to the world the great doctrine of *the unity of God*, it may be hoped that all matters of mere *form*, and every thing of less moment, will be easily accommodated. For my own

* See *supra*, p. 477.

part, I would recommend to such societies as these to conduct their public devotions with the help of a *liturgy* and *responses*; that all of them (especially as they would be nearly upon a level) may bear their parts jointly in the same service. This will tend to make it more animated and interesting; and either the *Litany* used by Mr. Lindsey in his Unitarian chapel in London,* or that which was used in the Octagon Chapel at Liverpool,† may answer the purpose very well.

But lest those persons who have been used to the mode of worship among the *Dissenters*, should not be able to reconcile themselves to the use of a *liturgy* I here present them with a *set of forms for all the parts of public worship*, and also for all the other occasions of a Christian society, such as are commonly used by Dissenters; that no persons may be prevented from forming such societies by the want of such helps as may be most agreeable to themselves. I think, however, that it might have a good effect, if both a liturgy, and also these forms, were sometimes used in the same society.

The greatest difficulty in the way of the scheme which I would now recommend, will arise from the modesty and diffidence of temper of many persons, producing an aversion to making themselves so *conspicuous* as it must do to take the lead in any thing that is new and singular; and others will even be ashamed of societies so inconsiderable as these must be in their infancy. We naturally like to see ourselves surrounded by numbers in whatever we do, and then we can proceed with more cheerfulness and confidence.

To this I can only reply, that the greater the *effort*, the greater will be the *merit*; and that where *duty* is concerned, all other considerations, be their weight greater or less, ought to be postponed to it. As to the figure that these societies may make, it should be considered, that great things have often very unpromising beginnings; and if reputation be an object, poor as it is, and improper in a case of this nature, it may however be suggested to those who make it one, that no man ever distinguished himself much, and acquired great fame, who had not the courage to be *singular*, and to bear opposition even for a considerable length of time.

We Christians ought to be thankful that we have nothing more difficult to encounter. What should we have done in the day of adversity, if we cannot bear prosperity? And it

* See "The Book of Common Prayer, reformed according to the plan of the late Dr. Samuel Clarke," 1774, pp. 57—66.

† See *Mon. Repos.* XVII. pp. 22, 23, 75.

ought not to be forgotten, that none will be distinguished by our Saviour as his worthy disciples and followers but those who shall be ready to risk and to abandon every thing in the world, and even to *take up their cross* for the sake of his gospel. Every situation and circumstance of things has its peculiar difficulties, which wise and conscientious men will lay their account with meeting, and be prepared to bear. This, in fact, must be done by every man who does not adopt the principle of universal *conformity to the world*, and who will not make his religion subservient to it. But what will such religion do for a man, when the world, and all the follies and vanities of it, shall be no more?

Let every man of sense but have an opportunity of seeing what is commonly called *the world*, or *the great world*, and of considering what are the pursuits, the enjoyments, and the turn of thinking, that are most prevalent in the fashionable and splendid circles of it; and let him compare them with the pursuits, the enjoyments, and the turn of thinking in those men who are governed by a principle of perfect and fearless integrity, who habitually respect not *the world*, but the great *Maker of the world* and of themselves, and who dread nothing so much as his displeasure, and the disapprobation of their own consciences: let any person, I say, attentively consider these two classes of men; and he cannot long hesitate which to follow. In the latter, that is, among true Christians, who are not moved by the censures of this world, or ashamed to be singular in a good cause, he will find a real and inestimable *superiority of mind*, and an inexhaustible source of the truest enjoyment, even in this life. I need not say how little there is to balance this, on the side of the *men of the world*; and with respect to distant prospects, especially the great distant prospect of a *future life*, the object of the Christian's firmest faith and hope, the latter hath every thing, and the former nothing to look to. A little reflection of this kind, of which any person of understanding is capable, if he will give himself time for it, will enable him not only not to fear, but even to despise the censures of the world, when they would deter him from the practice of his duty, or from doing any thing in which he apprehends the honour of religion, and the great, though distant interests of mankind are concerned.

I am sensible, however, that it is one thing to write these things in one's closet, and another to act upon them in real life. I am far from saying what I myself should have been able to do in the case proposed, and I am truly thankful that my situation hath never laid me under any temptation

to act otherwise than I think my duty required, I mean in any great and conspicuous transaction. Still, however, I doubt not but that this difficulty, like most others, will be found not quite so great in reality as it may appear in prospect. At most, every difficulty that can arise from mere *novelty* and *singularity* is, of course, the greatest at first, and afterwards entirely vanishes; and I am willing to hope that this in a short time will disappear by the forming of Unitarian societies, consisting of laymen only, in several places; and then it will be inquired who was the first to establish them. A society of this kind has been formed by Mr. William Christie; jun. of Montrose, in Scotland.*

Were this scheme to be adopted by all who, being *Unitarians*, cannot but think it right, such societies of Unitarian laymen would soon be very numerous, so as to hold all ridicule in contempt. For it is notorious, and lamented by the *Trinitarians* themselves, that men of learning and inquiry in theological matters are now generally Unitarians, and that learned Trinitarians are comparatively few. But the cause of truth has suffered greatly by the pains that *Unitarians* seem to have taken to reconcile to themselves the modes of *Trinitarian* worship.

It is particularly to be lamented that the excellent Mr. Firmin,† and other acknowledged Unitarians, about the time of the Revolution, when it appears that they were sufficiently numerous, were not aware of the great impropriety, to say nothing worse, of such conduct. Had they gone upon a different plan, openly avowing their opinions, and acting upon them, separating themselves from all public worship

* Now (1822) of Philadelphia, whom I have quoted, Vol. IX. pp. 19, 20. To this society at Montrose, I have referred, *supra*, p. 286, Note*. I subjoin an authentic and interesting account of the circumstances under which it originated. Speaking of a correspondence with Dr. Priestley in 1781, to request a favour of him, Mr. Christie adds, "He complied with my request, and wrote me a full and kind letter from Birmingham in course of post. In this letter, he strongly enforced the necessity of keeping up some form of public worship on the Lord's day, (for at that period of time, from a principle of conscience, I attended no religious society whatever,) and also of administering the Lord's Supper.

"Dr. Priestley's admonition, in connexion with other circumstances, induced me to become a preacher. A religious society was formed at Montrose that very year, and even month, in which I received the Doctor's letter. Thus, all that ever I did as preacher, and all that my friend *Thomas Fyshe Palmer* ever did in the same capacity in Scotland, may be indirectly ascribed to Dr. Priestley as the cause. For probably, without the strong stimulus of the Doctor's letter, I should never have had resolution to become a preacher, in which case Mr. Palmer could never have heard of me, consequently would not have come to Scotland; and thus not only the society at Montrose, but those of Dundee, Forfar, Arbroath, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, would have had no being." See "a Speech delivered at the Grave of the Rev. Joseph Priestley," *Northumberland in Pennsylvania*, 1804, pp. 9, 10, Note.

† See Vol. X. pp. 360, 361, Note †.

that was not strictly Unitarian, and forming societies, whether they could have been served by men of learning or not, the state of Christianity in general would by this time, I have no doubt, have worn a very different aspect, and would not have been so open as it now is to the objections of *unbelievers*; who, in this age of good sense, will never be reconciled to such doctrines as the Trinity, Original Sin, Atonement, &c. &c.

Unbelievers, being then better informed than they now are concerning what Christianity truly is, would have found that their former supposed triumphs had no consequences, and that they had another, and a much more difficult combat to sustain. It is not even impossible, but that *Jews* and *Mahometans* might before this time have been brought to entertain a more favourable opinion of Christianity than they now do, and consequently the time of their conversion, to which all Christians look with the most earnest desire and the firmest faith, would have been nearer than it now is.

If this, or any of my publications, should, in the smallest degree, promote so great and desirable an end, as the better understanding and the more general spread of Christianity, which is destined to be the greatest blessing to all the world, I shall think myself happy. But with whatever success I have laboured, I shall have the satisfaction to reflect that it has been my *object*, and my *wish*; and, considering myself as a fellow-labourer with Mr. Lindsey,* and other Unitarians, I may certainly add that our *joint labours* have not been wholly in vain.

SECTION II.

Observations on the several Parts of Christian Worship, and the different Offices for Christian Societies, contained in this Work.

I. Of the Public Worship of the Lord's Day.

THE proper object of public worship on the *Lord's day* is to preserve in our minds the knowledge and influence of the great principles of Christianity, to join in acts of devotion to the common Parent of the universe, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and withal to bear a pub-

* See *supra*, p. 29; Vol. V. pp. 3, 85.

lic testimony to the truth and importance of the Christian religion, in what we deem to be its purest state.

The knowledge of religion is best taught by the frequent reading of the books of Scripture, which are the original records of it, and especially by making the historical parts of Scripture, and, more particularly still, the history of our Saviour in the Gospels familiar to us. This, therefore, I consider as a most valuable part of the business of public assemblies of Christians. It is of less consequence to those who have sufficient leisure and inclination to read the Scriptures every day in the week; but many of those who compose our assemblies, have little leisure for reading; some are not able to read; and many, being men of the world, and having no more knowledge of religion, or regard for it, than is barely necessary to bring them to attend Christian worship, will really *want* the instruction which they may derive from this part of the service. It may also serve to excite their attention, and induce them to read and study the Scriptures at their own houses afterwards.

This end I conceive would be still more effectually answered, if the public reading of the Scriptures was accompanied with a short *explanation* of such passages as must be difficult to be understood by the unlearned of the present age. Such explanations will be found in the Notes to my "Harmony of the Evangelists,"* a Section of which, together with the principal of the Notes, I would therefore take the liberty to recommend for this purpose. In future time I may perhaps enlarge those Notes, and prepare others for the more useful parts of Scripture, such as are most proper to be read in the public assemblies of Christians.† A principal advantage which attends this *expounding* of the Scriptures is, that it gives the minister an easy opportunity of informing his audience of many things, which it may be very useful and proper for them to know, but which he could not easily find an opportunity of introducing into his sermons, or which might give offence if they were so purposely introduced.

I used to have much objection to the recitation of the *Apostles' Creed*, or any creed, in public worship. But when I consider that the object of Christian assemblies is not merely *devotion*, but likewise *general instruction*, and that the great principles of Christianity, and especially the out-

* Now comprised in Vol. XIII. See Vol. XX. pp. 6, 16, 17.

† See Vols XI.—XIV.

lines of the gospel history, cannot be too firmly impressed on the minds of all, I now think that the short time that is taken up in the recital of that Creed, as corrected by Mr. Lindsey,* is very well employed. The recitation of the *ten commandments*, as a compendium of the most important moral duties,† may also have a similar good effect; and some select passages from our Saviour's *Sermon on the Mount*, and other parts of the *New Testament*, of a comprehensive nature, and practical tendency, might with much advantage be joined to them, and be recited about once a month.

I also think that the recitation of some particular *Psalms* in which the verses have the least connexion, by the minister and the people jointly, or even alternately, may be of use, though it has an awkward effect when it is applied to all the *Psalms* indiscriminately. But of this practice different persons will judge differently, according to their education and habits, and we should endeavour to accommodate to one another in every thing of this nature.

On the use of *Sermons*, or regular discourses, either in illustration of particular passages of Scripture, or of separate articles of Christian faith, or practice, I have no occasion to enlarge. I shall therefore only mention a few sets of those that may be most proper for the use of *Unitarian* societies. But of these there will be few that it may not be advisable for some of the more intelligent members of those societies previously to look over, in order to omit what may be reprehensible in them, and perhaps to make some alterations. In sermons, however, it is by no means necessary that every thing should be what the audience will approve, as they may edify by what is unexceptionable, and should learn not to be offended with the rest. Whereas in *Prayer*, every word should be such as all persons may, without scruple, make use of, because they are supposed to adopt it, and thereby make it their own; and to be employed in selecting what they can

* Who assigned the following reasons: "The old word *Ghost* is changed, because liable to mislead some readers. *Quick* is grown quite obsolete, or never used on grave subjects. *He descended into hell*, was not inserted in the Creed till 400 years after Christ. *The holy Catholic church*, was at first only *holy church*, *Catholic* not added to it till upwards of 300 years after Christ. *The communion of Saints* came in some hundred years later.

"Therefore these three articles of the Creed, being of so low a date, and also obscure, and of undeterminate meaning, can have no place in a solemn declaration of our faith before Almighty God." *Common Prayer Reformed*, 1774, p. 19, *Note*. See *supra*, p. 486, *Note* *. Mr. Lindsey then retained the expressions "conceived by the Holy Spirit," and "born of the Virgin Mary." In 1793 he omitted the whole Creed. See his Preface to ed. 4.

† See Vol. XI. pp. 158—160. On the reasons why "the Ten Commandments do not oblige Christians," see Hallett's *Discourses*, 1729, l. pp. 152—174.

use, and what they cannot, would be to interrupt and spoil the effect of their devotion.

Among the sermons or discourses which Unitarian societies may in general make use of are *Tillotson's*, *Clark's*, *Balguy's*, *Pyle's*, *Jortin's*, *Foster's*, *Duchal's*, *Lardner's*, *Bourn's*, (father and son,) *Holland's*, and *Dr. Enfield's*. I would also recommend his collection of sermons, called *The English Preacher*, and some of Bishop Wilson's, which are excellent for their plainness and energy, in enforcing moral duties; but in the best of them it will be necessary to leave out what relates to church power, and to alter expressions savouring of *Calvinism*.

SINGING I consider as a most useful part of public worship, and indeed of private; but different persons will be very differently affected with respect to it, according to their different sensibility as to music in general. For my own part, I am by no means of opinion that Psalms or Hymns should be confined to the celebration of the praises of God, or the purpose of thanksgiving, though singing is peculiarly useful when so applied. For music, being an aid to express any emotion of mind, may be of use in sorrow, as well as in joy.

The Psalms of David are of a very mixed nature, a great number of them expressing the deepest humility and contrition (the language of some of them even bordering upon despair), while others are expressive of the most pleasing emotions of mind, indicating the firmest confidence in the Divine favour and blessing, and a joyful persuasion of the Divine power, wisdom, and goodness, as displayed through all his works. Others again are of a moral nature, inculcating useful moral precepts, and expressing proper resolutions agreeable to them; and several of them are historical. Exclusive of religion, we see that poetry and music have, in all ages, been applied to the purpose of morality and history, as well as for the expression of all the affections of the mind. I appeal to the experience of those who judge by their *real feelings*, whether they do not sing Psalms and Hymns of all the kinds above-mentioned, with advantage.

There are several collections of Psalms and Hymns sufficiently correct for the purpose of *Unitarian* worship, as those for the use of the Octagon Chapel at Liverpool, Mr. Lindsey's, and that which Mr. Christie has compiled for the use of his society at Montrose.*

* See *supra*, p. 488.

PRAYER has always been considered as an essential part of the business of Christian assemblies; and in this it is desirable that all who attend should visibly, if not audibly, bear their part. I therefore very much approve of all the audience joining in such parts as are more particularly interesting to all, as the general confession of sin, (which, however, for this reason, ought to be very general,) and in the petition for mercy; and if proper responses cannot be introduced into the service, without too much interrupting it, and spoiling its effect, I should approve of proper pauses, as at the end of each of the paragraphs in the following Prayers, to give the audience an opportunity of saying *Amen*, which might serve to keep up their attention, and interest them the more in what the minister was reciting. For want of something of this kind, there is too visible an indifference and inattention during prayer in most of the congregations of Dissenters. To make this most important business in less danger of becoming languid, I do not think it advisable that any prayer should take up more than ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, though I do not admire the very short *collects* in the service of the Church of England. The *general confession*, the *general thanksgiving*, and the *prayer for all conditions of men*, are excellent models, and the *litany* with its responses, as corrected by Mr. Lindsey, I much admire.

In praying for particular persons, I would advise the omission of all proper *names*, even that of the king; and complimentary epithets should be avoided with more care than names, as peculiarly improper in the presence of that great Being before whom all kings and princes are, like all other men, as *dust and ashes*.* The terms *thy servant our sovereign*, † the *queen, the heir apparent of the crown*, &c. are sufficiently characteristic.‡

* "Right reason would suggest to us, to be very sparing in compliments when we address the Deity: and the less we use, undoubtedly the better." *Free and Candid Disquisitions*, ed. 2, 1750, pp. 116, 117.

† "Thy servant King Edward," was "the style in *Edw. Vith's* first Common Prayer.—The title [*our most religious King*] was inserted in King *Charles II's* time;—the less to be wondered at, considering the high opinion the clergy of those days had of that prince. Dr. Matt. Morgan (dedication of *Plutarch's Morals*, 1684) says, 'The image of the Deity is so closely impressed on him, that the idea comes very near the original.' [See *Mon. Repos.* XV. pp. 142, 143.] The whole clergy of the diocese of *Lichfield* were of opinion, 'that his Majesty had still the old apostolical spirit of discerning, having sent them a prelate so wise and learned as Dr. Hacket.' See his *Life* by Dr. Plume, 1675." *Ibid.* pp. 322, 323. On *Charles II.* "so good a king," see Bishop Taylor, *supra*, p. 369, *Note*.

‡ "On the manner in which the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States," have altered and accommodated to their use the *Common Prayer* of the

Besides my own compositions, I have here printed the excellent large form of prayer in Bishop Hoadley's "Plain Account of the Lord's Supper," with some little alteration, and a new arrangement of the several parts of it. As it seems intended to contain every article that can with propriety be introduced into a prayer, it is much too long to be used at any one time; but it will be very easy to select from all the different heads as many paragraphs as will suffice for the time mentioned above; and by using some of the paragraphs at one time, and others at another, this prayer alone will furnish matter for a very great variety. For still greater variety, recourse may be had to Mr. Holland's *Prayers* for public worship which accompany his *Sermons*, in two volumes; and also to Dr. Foster's in his *Discourses*.

I have added prayers for such *particular cases* as are most frequently brought before Christian societies, of which several are taken from those which are inserted in the *Forms for Families*, annexed to my "Address to Masters of Families."* There is a great propriety in bringing such cases before Christian assemblies, as they tend to make the situation of the several members of them known to each other, and to interest them one for another.

As these forms are intended for the use of *Unitarian societies* only, I think it may not be amiss once in every year to make use of a prayer peculiarly adapted to their views of Christianity, and expressive of their wishes with respect to the general prevalence of it in the world. I have therefore inserted for this purpose that which I subjoined to the "Illustration of Particular Texts of Scripture," which is a sequel to my "Short Appeal to the Serious Professors of Christianity." †

I cannot say that I would recommend the observance of any other time for public worship, except that of *Sunday*, or the *Lord's day*. If any other be thought proper, I should have the least objection to *Easter*, for the purpose of leading the meditation of Christians to the subject of the resur-

Church of England, I had occasion, in 1819, under the signature of *Anglus*, to offer the following remarks:

"The *Congress* is recommended to the Divine protection without any adulatory epithets, while for 'all nations' are implored 'unity, peace, and concord.' The Episcopal Church in America has no king to flatter with the unconstitutional declaration that God is 'the only ruler of princes;' nor a magistrate who has always *enemies* to 'vanquish and overcome,' against whom the Church must ever pray the Almighty to 'assuage their malice' and 'confound their devices.' The *Royal Martyr* and the *Restoration* of the blessed race are idle tales in America." *Mon. Repos.* XIV. pp. 407, 408.

* *Supra*, pp. 467—473.

† Vol. II. pp. 480—484.

rection of Christ, and the blessings of Christianity. On this account, however, it might not, I think, be amiss to make use of the prayer above-mentioned on the morning of that day. Every serious *Unitarian* must approve of the sentiments of this prayer, and the occasional use of it may be the means of reviving a just zeal for the purity of our religion, and may excite us to use our most active endeavours for the propagation of what we apprehend to be truths of such importance as those of the unity of God, the placability of his nature, and the equity of his moral government, together with that of the proper humanity of Christ, and his subordination to God, as his creature, servant, and messenger.

One service in the year will hardly be thought too much to appropriate to such a purpose as this, in societies professedly *Unitarian*, and the morning of *Easter Sunday* may be as proper for it as any other. In general, I think it right that the whole service of the usual assemblies of Christians should be adapted to promote the ultimate end of them, in explaining the general principles, and inculcating the moral duties of Christianity, from a respect to that future state of retribution with which it brings us acquainted.

It has always been the custom to dismiss Christian assemblies with a solemn *benediction*, recommending the congregation to the Divine blessing, with an implied prayer, that they may derive the proper benefit from the services they have been attending. This is certainly very decent and proper. The only difficulty respects the choice of a proper form. There are several in the Scriptures, of which the minister may take which he shall think the best: and though there is no reason why he should be confined to them, yet they will generally be preferred because they are scriptural, and have been long used for the purpose.

The most usual form of benediction is, *May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with us all ever more*; and this I have used among others, though I own I have some objection to it, as the *communion of the Holy Spirit* appears to me to allude to the miraculous gifts, of which it is probable that all Christians partook in the age of the apostles. However, as the words are not now understood in that sense, some will not be moved with this objection, nobody being misled or deceived by it. Those who think it universally wrong to use any scripture phrase, except in its original and proper sense, may avoid this, and take any other.

II. *Of Baptism.*

I DO not see any reason why Unitarian Christians may not assemble together for the purpose of public worship, though some of them should think proper to baptize their children, and others should omit it; leaving it to their children to apply for it themselves, when they shall be of adult age; also why they should not form one society, and receive the Lord's Supper together, though some of them should think the rite of baptism not obligatory on the descendants of professing Christians; or, lastly, why they should not worship together, and form one society, though some of them should think both Baptism and the Lord's Supper not to have been intended as standing ordinances in the church. For my own part, I much approve of both those ordinances, and think them very valuable, for the reasons which may be found in my "History of the Corruptions of Christianity,"* and, I have accordingly drawn up forms for the administration of them.

In the form for Baptism it will be perceived that I consider it not as any thing done *in the name of the child*, that can lay him under any obligation, or properly entitle him to any privileges afterwards; but simply as what belongs to the profession of Christianity in the parent; † as Abraham's circumcising his slaves was a thing simply incumbent upon *himself*, and in which *they* were not at all interested. But when by doing any thing that is peculiar to Christians, a man declares himself to be one, he necessarily lays himself under an obligation to act as becomes a Christian, and consequently to educate his children in that faith. I therefore make this the principal object in the form for the administration of Baptism; and the exhortation to the parents is simply to discharge their duty to their children in that respect.

It may be thought singular, that in the administration of Baptism, I have not directed the child to be baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." ‡ But I do not understand that our Lord, when he gave his commission to the apostles to proselyte and baptize all nations, meant to prescribe any particular *form of words*, so as that they should be absolutely confined to the use of

* See Vol. II. pp. 334, 335.

† Vol. V. pp. 268—275. See Vol. II. pp. 332—335; XX. pp. 465—492.

‡ *Matt.* xxviii. 19. See Vol. XIII. pp. 385, 386.

them; and we find no example in the book of *Acts* of any person being baptized with that form, but several instances of baptism *in the name of Christ* only. I also dislike it on account of the abuse that has been made of it, it having been used as a charm, and been thought to have some peculiar virtue in it; on which account it has been introduced into all the seven sacraments of the Church of *Rome*, and has been used on various other occasions in a superstitious manner. However, it may not be amiss to say the same thing in other words, or a kind of paraphrase, which I have therefore set down, to be used by the person who officiates, if he should think proper; that if there be any propriety in that form, it may at least be expressed in such a manner as that its meaning may be understood, which certainly cannot hinder any good effect that it may have.

I think it would be very proper for baptism to be administered, sometimes at least, in public; that the whole congregation may be reminded of their obligation to educate their children as become Christians. But if this should be inconvenient, it is still advisable that a number of the person's friends be present, to give it more of the appearance and use of a public religious ordinance, and that there may be, as it were, witnesses of the engagement which the parents lay themselves under for the Christian education of their children.

III. OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THIS ordinance being particularly appointed by Christ as a memorial of himself, and especially of his death, it is natural to consider it as the most proper and public declaration of our being Christians, and as an opportunity of impressing our minds with a sense of the great objects and value of Christianity. These ideas I have therefore kept in view in the forms that I have drawn up for its administration. I have a still greater variety, but these appear to me to be quite sufficient for the purpose.

Most persons choose to read the scripture account of this institution, especially that very full and distinct one which is given by *Paul* in his epistle to the *Corinthians*, [1 *Ep.* xi. 23,] as an *authority* for the practice; but this being admitted by all the communicants, I do not think it necessary. There cannot, however, be any thing amiss in it, and it may be introduced after the first address, and immediately before the first prayer.

Several psalms, or hymns, may be proper for this occasion, but I have printed one which I generally make use of myself, as peculiarly suited to the purpose; being expressive of the proper and great views of Christians, with respect to the present life of trial and discipline, and to a future happy state to which it leads. With such sentiments as these the minds of Christians cannot be too strongly impressed. In a time of outward peace and rest we mix with the world, and are apt to conform too much to it. It is of more consequence, therefore, frequently to recollect that we are Christians, and what are our great duties and expectations as such.

I cannot help taking this opportunity of expressing my earnest wish, that the celebration of the Lord's Supper may begin at an earlier period of life than has been usual in this country. With foreign Protestants it commences in early youth; and I see no reason why children may not be brought to this, as soon as to any other part of Christian worship.* They are equally incapable of understanding what is said and done in all of them; but their attention is excited, a general idea of reverence and respect for religious ordinances is impressed, and in due time they will enter into them with understanding. Whereas, when communion is omitted till the age of discretion, we have sufficient proof in the conduct of the rational Dissenters, that persons easily fall into a habit of neglecting the service entirely. Had there been any fixed period, and especially an early one, for receiving the *Lord's Supper*, so that it would have been thought singular, and have been particularly noticed, if any person had not then communicated, the attendance upon this ordinance would, no doubt, have been as general as it is upon any other part of public worship. But when the habit of non-attendance is formed, persons have the aversion to any thing which is *new* or *singular* to overcome, before they can bring themselves to it.

It may be sufficient to administer the Lord's Supper once in every month, or two months; and then let part of the preceding service be omitted, so as to bring the whole within the compass of an hour and a half, or at most, of two hours.

IV. OF THE FUNERAL SERVICE.

OF this office no particular account is necessary. I have endeavoured, in the whole of it, to impress the minds of

* See *supra*, pp. 367, 368.

Christians with such sentiments as it becomes them to cherish on the removal of their friends by death; reminding them of the necessary condition on which we hold this life and all its enjoyments, of the certainty of death, the uncertainty that there is with respect to the *time* and the *manner* of it, and of that resurrection and future state to which we should be habitually looking.

I have no office for *marriage*, because, by the laws of this country, no *Dissenters*, except *Quakers*, are permitted to solemnize it. If the legislature should hereafter think proper to remove this encroachment on our Christian liberty,* a form may be drawn up for the purpose; or that which is in Mr. Lindsey's prayer-book may suffice. In the mean time it is to be wished that this office in the Book of Common Prayer (which is but ill constructed, and in some respects rather indelicate) might be revised and improved.

5. *Of Services for Days of Public Fasting and Thanksgiving.*

It may be thought difficult to provide proper services for days of *public fasting* or *thanksgiving*, because they are only appointed on particular occasions, and respect particular conjunctures of public affairs. But notwithstanding this, there is no occasion for the services being very particular. On the contrary, I think it is, on the whole, more proper that the language of devotion on such occasions be general, and capable of being mentally applied to any particular occurrences or events.

Also, whether the occasion be a joyful one, requiring thanksgiving, or a mournful one, requiring humiliation, general thanksgiving for national blessings and general confession of national sins are equally proper; so that, in fact, there is no reason for much difference in the services. However, as forms of devotion are always prepared and published for the use of the Established Church on these occasions, it will be easy for the members of *Unitarian* societies to take whatever may be thought proper from them, and to introduce it into the prayers that I shall insert for those occasions in this work.

It will also be easy to choose *sermons* relating to national calamities, national mercies, or national duties in general:

* On the case of Dissenters, especially *Unitarians*, see *Mon. Repos.* (1819,) XIV. pp. 50, 53, 54, and *Index*.

so that, upon the whole, societies consisting of laymen only, may with great advantage assemble for the purpose of public worship and mutual edification, on days of public fasting and thanksgiving, as a part of the whole community, feeling and expressing themselves accordingly, as well as on the Lord's day.

FORMS

FOR THE

Service of the Lord's Day.

Let the Service begin with singing the Hundredth Psalm, by Dr. Watts, or any other that may be thought more proper; in order to give the Congregation an opportunity of assembling, and of seating themselves with the least disturbance to each other.

THE INTRODUCTORY PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and ever-blessed God: we thank thee that we, who are now assembled in thy presence, have, by the care of thy providence, been preserved through the various employments of the week past, that we now rest from our labours, and can unite, in these favourable circumstances, in acts of public worship; celebrating thy perfections, as the only proper object of religious homage, gratefully acknowledging thy manifold goodness, as the author of all our powers, both of action and of enjoyment, humbling ourselves before thee for our ingratitude and transgressions of thy law, and devoting ourselves to thy service, in the faithful discharge of our duty in life.

May our regular and due attendance upon the ordinances of thy worship on these days be a means of impressing our minds with these just and important sentiments, and thereby equally prepare us for the cheerful and proper discharge of the duties of life, and also for that *rest* which remains for thy people when the labours of life shall be over.

That our waiting upon thee in acts of public worship may answer these valuable ends, we would now exert all the force of our faculties to call off our attention from every foreign and improper object, and to realize to our minds things un-

seen ; that we may contemplate with pleasure and constancy the things that relate to our everlasting peace and welfare, before they shall be for ever hid from our eyes. We would above all things dread to draw nigh to thee with our lips, and worship thee with our mouths only, when our hearts are far from thee.

Bless all the assemblies of thy worshipping people on this day. May thy word have its free course, and be glorified, and may it not be the complaint of thy ministering servants, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" When on this day we join with our fellow-creatures and our fellow-christians in one common address to thee, the Father of our spirits, expressing our joint sentiments, desires, and expectations, do thou hear in heaven, and grant us an answer of peace. And when we thus unite in presenting our supplications to thee, grant to us, we beseech thee, those things which thou knowest to be truly good for us, though we, through our ignorance, should neglect to pray for them; and avert from us those which thou knowest to be hurtful to us, though we, through like ignorance, should earnestly desire them as blessings.

Do thou, we entreat thee, in all respects, more and better for us than we are able to ask or think, according to thy infinite goodness, manifested to us in the gospel of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. This we ask in his name, and as his disciples; and through him we ascribe unto thee, the only living and true God, everlasting praises, Amen.

A Lesson out of the Old Testament, and another out of the New; with Illustrations, if they can be conveniently procured.

A PSALM OR HYMN.

The Prayer before Sermon.

ALMIGHTY and ever-blessed God: we adore thee as a being self-existent, independent, and absolutely perfect, the source of life and of happiness to all that enjoy them. We reverence and adore thee as the maker and constant preserver of all things. Thou spakest, and it was done; thou commandedst, and this goodly frame of nature stood fast; and all things still continue according to thy original appointment, for all things serve thee. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the glory, and the majesty. All things in heaven and earth are thine, and thou art exalted as king over all.

We adore thee as a being who art present through the whole extent of thy works. The heavens, yea the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; but thou art every where, keeping in vigour the laws which thou hast established in nature, and likewise controlling them at thy sovereign pleasure, for thou doest whatever thou pleasest in the armies of heaven above, and among the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay thine hand, or say unto thee, What doest thou?

We rejoice in the consideration of our being the objects of thy care, and the subjects of thy government; for thou art good, and dost good continually. From thy bounty we receive all the blessings of this life, and all our hopes with respect to another and a better. From thee it is that we receive the bread that we eat, the raiment with which we are clothed, the habitations in which we dwell, the manifold advantages which we derive from domestic and from civil society, and whatever tends to make our abode here below in any measure comfortable and happy.

But above all are we indebted to thee for blessings of a moral and spiritual nature, which extend beyond this present transitory life; for the communication of thy will to us, respecting our conduct here and our expectations hereafter; more especially, that in this land of darkness, this region of the shadow of death, where we see that the grave is the house appointed for all living, life and immortality are fully brought to light to us in the gospel; and that in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, we have not only a proof, but also a pattern exhibited to us of a future universal resurrection, when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of man. Hereby we are also abundantly confirmed in our faith in his gospel, which assures us, that whosoever believes in him, and obeys his gospel, shall not finally perish, but shall have everlasting life. We rejoice that by his resurrection we are begotten again to the hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, surely reserved in heaven for us.

What shall we render to thee, O God, for this thy distinguishing goodness to us? Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name. But, alas! when we look back upon our past lives, we must charge ourselves with much ingratitude and disobedience. Of thee, our God, in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, have we been unmindful. Though thou hast nourished, and brought us up as children, we have rebelled against thee. Too often, alas! have we followed the devices

and desires of our own depraved hearts, till we have been betrayed into sinful excesses. We have done many things that we ought not to have done, and have left undone things that we ought to have done; so that, shouldest thou be strict to mark iniquity, no flesh living could be justified, and our future prospects would be most alarming.

All our hope is founded on the consideration of that mercy which is essential to thy nature, as a being infinitely good, and which thou hast published to all the world, in the most satisfactory manner, by thy servants the prophets, and by thy Son Christ Jesus; by means of whose gospel thou art reconciling a sinful world to thyself, not imputing to them those trespasses of which they repent, and which they sincerely forsake. Thou hast said, Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn to thee, his God, and thou wilt have mercy upon him, yea, thou wilt abundantly pardon.

It is upon these merciful terms that we solicit thy favour, repenting of our sins, and endeavouring to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. In whatever respects we are now convinced we have in our past lives done amiss, we will resolve for the future to do so no more, but make it our sincere and our constant endeavour to walk in all thy holy commandments blameless.

Having hitherto lived too much the slaves of sin, we would for the future become the servants of righteousness, that our fruit may be holiness, and our end everlasting life. We would henceforth exercise ourselves unto godliness, in order to preserve a conscience void of offence, towards thee our God, and towards all our fellow-creatures.

In the performance of all the great duties of life, may we derive instruction and assistance from the principles of the gospel which we profess. By its precepts and motives may we be enabled to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and piously here below; ever looking towards the blessed hope which is set before us in the gospel, even the glorious appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and that he might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and who, at his second coming, shall change these bodies of ours, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorified body, even in that day when this corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. While, therefore, we name the name of Christ, by calling ourselves Christians,

and assembling ourselves together as such, may we be careful to be Christians not in name and profession only, but also in deed and in truth; approving ourselves to be the friends and followers of Christ, by doing whatsoever he hath commanded us.

While we thus endeavour to act in all respects as becomes the disciples of Christ, and to approve our hearts before thee by well doing, may we be enabled to cast all our anxious care upon thee who carest for us; not distressing ourselves about what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed; knowing that thou, our heavenly Father, art acquainted with all our wants, and that thou wilt provide for them as far as will be truly fit and proper for us; being well assured that if we, in the first place, secure an interest in thy favour, by the conscientious discharge of our duty in life, every thing that is truly good and needful for us will certainly be added to us; that we shall be fed with food convenient for us, and when we have done thy will, and have seen thy goodness here below, an abundant entrance will at length be administered unto us into thine everlasting kingdom in glory.

Having this great prospect continually before us, we would endeavour to perfect holiness in thy fear, even that holiness of heart and of life, without which no man can see the Lord.

Hear us, Almighty God, we humbly entreat thee, in these our requests. We ask it as the disciples of thy Son Christ Jesus, in whose words we farther call upon thee, as Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

A Psalm or Hymn.

THE SERMON.

A Psalm or Hymn suited to the Subject of the Sermon.

THE CONCLUDING PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God and most merciful Father: we thank thee for all thy gifts; and for all our privileges. We thank thee for the valuable gift of reason, whereby we are naturally

capable of religion, of knowing our dependence upon thee, our Maker, with the various duties arising from our situation; and have the power of fulfilling them. More especially would we thank thee at this time for the advantages which we derive from the Christian religion, and the privilege of Christian worship which we have now enjoyed.

May we return from our meditations upon thy word, and from these exercises of devotion, into the various busy scenes of life, with hearts better able to withstand the temptations to which we shall be exposed, and better prepared for the discharge of every duty; that it may appear to have been good for us thus to draw nigh unto thee; that good impressions having been made upon our minds, we may with greater alacrity run the Christian race that is set before us; and acquiring daily more of a Christian temper and of a divine likeness, we may in due time be ripe for glory and a happy immortality.

Do thou, who art the Father of all the families of the earth, extend thy compassion to all our brethren of mankind. May the great blessings of thy Son's gospel be universally diffused. Purify Christian churches from every thing that debases true religion, and obstructs its efficacy on the minds of men; and may it finally prevail to the extirpation of idolatry, Mohammedan delusion, and Popish superstition. May thine ancient people the Jews be at length brought within the pale of the church of Christ, together with the fulness of the Gentiles; that, in thy due time, all thy rational offspring may be worshippers of thee, the only living and true God, by Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

Shew thy favour to this land of our nativity. Pardon our many sins, which might justly bring down upon us thy heavy judgments. Promote the great work of reformation among all ranks and degrees of men among us; and upon the solid foundation of public virtue, may the public happiness and tranquillity be established. Bless thy servant, our sovereign; establish his throne in righteousness, and may the present reigning family be the instruments in thy hands of continuing to us our invaluable liberties, civil and religious. Bless the queen and every branch of the royal family; and make them as eminent for their princely virtues and accomplishments, as they are for their high stations in life.

Give peace in our times, O Lord, or grant success to our arms in every just and necessary war. May our manufactures and commerce flourish. May we have proper weather for bringing to perfection, and for gathering in the fruits of

the earth. Thus may our poor be satisfied with bread; and while we live in the enjoyment of every temporal blessing, may we not abuse thy goodness, by indulging to luxury and excess, but may we express our gratitude to thee, the giver of all good, by the temperate and generous use of all our blessings.

Bless, O Lord, we entreat thee, the great council of the nation whenever they are assembled, and make all their consultations to issue in the public good. May those who are entrusted with the conduct of national affairs be endued with wisdom and integrity proper for their important stations. Prosper their just and good designs, and over-rule all their measures for the real good of this people.

Bless all ranks and degrees of men among us, from the highest to the lowest. May those who are great, be the more conspicuously and the more exemplarily good, patterns of virtue and of proper behaviour to their inferiors.

More especially, bless thy servants the ministers of thine everlasting gospel, of every denomination throughout the land. Succeed their faithful labours in thy Son's vineyard, and make them mighty, by thy power, in converting sinners from the evil of their ways, and establishing thy people in the ways of truth and of righteousness.

Bless this congregation now assembled before thee. May they be equally distinguished by maintaining and holding up to the view of the world the genuine doctrines of the gospel, and by a life and conversation agreeable to it. May their light so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may glorify thee their Father in heaven; that, at length, they may make part of that church which shall be gathered from all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, complete in Christ their head.

Attend, we humbly entreat thee, to the devout thanksgivings and the reasonable requests of the individuals that compose this society.

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Sanctify to us, we entreat thee, all the dispensations of thy wise and just providence respecting us, that we may grow wiser and better by all that we enjoy, and by all that we suffer here below, being trained up in thy love and in thy fear for a glorious and happy immortality. Now to the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise, living, and true God, be glory for ever, Amen.

† Here introduce the forms for particular occasions. (P.)

The Blessing.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of his holy spirit, be with us all evermore, Amen.

Or,

Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ our Lord, be with us all evermore.

Or,

Blessed are all they who hear the word of God, and keep it.

Or,

May the God of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, make us perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle us. To him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever, Amen.

FORMS FOR PARTICULAR OCCASIONS.*

To be introduced in the last prayer.

IV. *For a Person under Inoculation for the Small Pox.*

BLESS the means that are made use of to lessen the malignity of an infectious and dangerous disorder. Carry thy servant in safety through all the stages of it, and may the life which thou preservest be devoted to thy service.

XI. *For Persons newly married.*

BLESS thy servants who have entered upon a new and endearing relation in life. May they seriously attend to the important duties, that they may enjoy the proper satisfactions of it. May they walk before their house in a perfect way, and live together as heirs of the grace of life, being helpers of each other's joy, and promoting each other's temporal, but more especially their everlasting interest. May they live together in love and peace, that thou, the God of love and of peace, mayest be with them.

FOR THE AFTERNOON SERVICE.

The order the same, in all respects, as in the Morning.

THE INTRODUCTORY PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and ever-blessed Lord our God: we adore thee as the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only living and true God. Thou dwellest in light which no man

* For these XI. *Forms*, except Nos. IV. XI., see Nos. 19, 20, 21, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, *supra*, pp. 470—472. See *ibid.* p. 494.

can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see. Yet, great as thou art, infinitely exalted above all adoration, blessing, or praise, and standing in no need of the services of the most exalted of thy creatures, thou art pleased to extend thy goodness to the lowest of them; and with respect to us, thine offspring of the human race, thou hast condescended to style thyself a God hearing prayer, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; and thou hast appointed one day in seven on which we should worship thee in a more public and solemn manner.

Do thou, whose presence fills heaven and earth, but who art more peculiarly present in the assemblies of thy worshipping people, correct whatever may be amiss in our present dispositions, that we may worship thee, who art a spirit, in spirit and in truth, with reverence and with godly fear; that we may enter with a proper frame of mind into every part of the solemn work before us; confessing our sins with truly humble, pénitent, and contrite hearts; singing thy praises with devotion and understanding; asking favours of thee with a disposition of mind proper for the receiving of them, and offering up our thanksgivings to thee for favours already received with hearts duly sensible of the value of them, and sincerely disposed to make the most proper returns.

We profess thus to assemble ourselves together to render that homage which is due from thy depending creatures to thee who art our creator, preserver, and constant benefactor; to impress our minds with a just sense of the purity of thy nature and the equity of thy moral government, and to acquaint ourselves with thy will and our duty; in order to acquire a habit of obeying thy laws through the whole course of our lives. Grant that our present assembling together may answer these important moral purposes; and to this end may that portion of thy word which shall be recommended to our more particular consideration at this time, be thoroughly understood, be duly meditated upon, and especially be reduced into practice by us.

Grant that by thus waiting upon thee, according to thy wise and gracious appointment, we may improve in every thing amiable, excellent, and praiseworthy, so as to be qualified for the proper discharge of our duty in this life, and to be better prepared for spending an everlasting sabbath of rest and joy with thee in the world above. This we ask in the name, and as the disciples, of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom to thee, O Father, the only living and true God, be glory for ever, Amen.

THE LARGE FORM OF PRAYER BY BISHOP HOADLEY,
WITH THE PARTS TRANSPOSED, TO BE USED BEFORE
THE SERMON.

I. *Adoration and Thanksgiving.*

O GOD, thou maker and governor of the world, who art perfect in all that is truly great and lovely : we, thy unworthy servants, appear before thee under the deepest sense of thy glorious perfections and of our own great and many failings and imperfections.

We know, O God, that thy perfections are far exalted above all that can be conceived or expressed by us ; that thy mercies are above all our thanks, and that thy unalterable attributes stand not in need of any homage that we can pay : but it becomes us to acknowledge and celebrate them.

The glories of thy nature are the glories of perfect power and perfect holiness, adorned with perfect goodness, and guided by unerring wisdom and knowledge ; such glories as are in themselves worthy of our highest admiration and praises, as well as the foundation of all the happiness that we ourselves can possibly enjoy or hope for.

And as it becomes us to celebrate the lovely perfections of thy nature, as it is in itself ; so are we indispensably obliged to pay thee our most grateful acknowledgments for the display of those perfections in all thy dispensations towards thy creatures, and for every instance of thy tender regard to us. Accept, therefore, O gracious Lord and merciful Father, the poor tribute of our unfeigned thanks for the manifold experience which we have had of thy loving-kindness, and the many marks we have received of thine undeserved favour. To thee we owe our existence, and, together with it, all the faculties and powers that distinguish our nature from that of the lower animal world. And as it is impossible to conceive any end in creating us and placing us in that rank of creatures to which we belong, but the glory of communicating thy own happiness in all fitting proportion ; so when we consider what it is to be made capable of knowing thee, the fountain of all good, of imitating thee, the great original of all perfection, and of enjoying thy favour, the foundation of all lasting and substantial happiness, we must acknowledge thy undeserved goodness, and for ever praise thee for making us capable of such inestimable blessings.

We must remember, likewise, with the highest gratitude before thee, that, in order to secure and carry forward this gracious end of our creation 'the more effectually, it hath pleased thy goodness to send thy beloved Son into the world, to teach, and live, and die, in order to save us from our sins, and to conduct us effectually to our true and everlasting happiness. We bless thee for the divine instructions he hath given his followers concerning the certain method of obtaining eternal life ; for the blameless and perfect example of holiness and patience he hath set before us ; for his humbling himself even to the death upon the cross, and shedding his blood in obedience to thy will ; and for his plain declarations of thy gracious acceptance of all such as sincerely receive him as their master, and heartily endeavour to know and comply with his terms. We bless thee for the mighty evidences he gave that he was truly sent by thee on so gracious an errand, by the purity of his doctrine, by the integrity of his life, by the nature and number of his miracles, by the glory of his resurrection after an ignominious death, by his ascension into heaven, and by his pouring down from thence the wonderful gifts of the holy spirit, in order to the propagation of his religion, and the settlement of his church : by all these arguments establishing our consciences in peace and truth.

We bless thee that the joyful sound of thy gospel hath arrived to this part of the world ; that it hath here, by the peculiar favour of thy good providence, been reformed from many gross abuses under which it long laboured ; and now lies open to the study and view of all men : that by thy merciful appointment we have been called to the knowledge of it, as it is in itself, and so are the better assured of the true way to happiness ; the more engaged to follow after it ; and the more likely to obtain great degrees of it, if we be not wanting to ourselves : for all which instances of thine undeserved and inestimable goodness, no words can sufficiently express the grateful sentiments which ought to fill and possess our souls.

Accept, likewise, O God, our most hearty and unfeigned thanks for the constant regards of thy good providence towards us ; to which we are indebted for many singular and peculiar happinesses. To thee we owe that we were born in a country where Christianity is securely professed ; that we have been instructed in the principles of true religion and virtue, and our minds led to the knowledge of the most useful and important truths ; and particularly that we have

been secured by thy goodness from many of those great and hazardous trials which have so often proved fatal to others. To thee we owe whatever opportunities we have enjoyed of improving ourselves in what is truly praiseworthy ; whatever peculiar advantages there are in that condition in which it hath pleased thee to place us with respect to this world, towards the attaining the greatest good and happiness of reasonable creatures. To thee, the great creator and governor of the world, we owe all these blessings ; and to thee we offer up our sincere acknowledgments for them.

We bless thee for that daily care of thy government over this world, by which we have been preserved ever since we were born, from a variety of dangers, many more than we can number, and many more than we know of: a mercy which we ought thankfully to acknowledge, not merely with respect to this life, but to a better; as by these means we have still greater opportunities of advancing yet farther in the paths of virtue, and adding an increase of our happiness in the world to come.

We desire, likewise, to offer up our unfeigned thanks for all those temporal blessings and conveniences by which thou hast made our passage through this world much more tolerable and easy than it could otherwise have been ; for the use of our reason and understanding preserved to us, without which all other blessings are vain ; for that measure of health and strength, that ease and freedom from pain which we have enjoyed ; for the support of friendship and society ; for the comforts of food, raiment, and habitation, and for all the good things with which thou hast in mercy surrounded us, and those in whose good estate we are nearly concerned ; whilst so many others pass their lives under the heavy pressure of the contrary evils.

What can we render unto thee, O Lord, worthy of all the numberless instances of thy favour which we have experienced? We praise and magnify thy great and glorious name ; and acknowledge ourselves under the strictest and most indispensable obligations to live and act, in all respects, as becomes those who have tasted so largely of thy loving-kindness. We profess, O Lord, our hearty resolution of endeavouring to do so ; and offer up our sincere desires, that, by the consideration of what we have now remembered before thee, we may be led to make returns in some degree suitable to so many and so great instances of thy goodness.

Let the serious contemplation of thy glories and perfections, excite us to endeavour constantly to adorn our own

natures with those moral perfections which we acknowledge to be so worthy of praise, and engage us to imitate what appears so truly lovely and glorious. Let the consideration of thy merciful design in making us capable of knowing thee, and being eternally happy in thy favour, powerfully move us to make such an use of those faculties with which thou hast endowed us, that they may lead us to a sense of this happiness, and conduct us safe to the possession of those pleasures which are at thy right hand. Let thy unspeakable mercy in sending thy Son into the world, for the securing and promoting our happiness, effectually influence us to embrace his offers, to fulfil his commands, to imitate his example, and to live in all respects as becomes his disciples. Let the sense of those peculiar advantages which we have by thy special favour enjoyed, lead us to such a careful use and improvement of them, that they may be the happy occasion of more than ordinary degrees of perfection and glory here after.

Let the consideration of thy gracious designs in affording us so many temporal good things, and so many comforts in this imperfect state, influence us to use them all to thy glory, as perishing, uncertain goods, to be enjoyed with temperance, and to be employed for the use and support of others as well as ourselves. And let the serious remembrance of all thy great and undeserved goodness to us, open and enlarge our hearts towards others, lead us to imitate what we praise and celebrate so much in thee, and teach us to be ready to do good to all, to pity the follies and miseries of mankind, and, as far as we are able, to promote the happiness of all around us; that by such a return to all the instances of goodness and mercy, we may shew ourselves truly sensible of them, and sincerely thankful for them.

II. *Confession.*

But, alas! we must acknowledge, and we trust we do it with truly humble, penitent, and contrite hearts, that we have not been sufficiently sensible of our manifold obligations to thee, and have made an ungrateful return for all thy favours. Under the sense of our ingratitude, unworthiness, and disobedience to thy laws, the only support and satisfaction to our minds is, that thou art too just and too good not to accept of the sincere endeavours of thy creatures to reform whatever has been amiss in their past conduct; and that thou hast sent thy Son Jesus Christ into the world to save us from our sins, and to declare to us plainly the terms of thy

forgiveness and favour. In his name, therefore, we present ourselves before thee: and, as his disciples; we entreat of thee the pardon of whatsoever thou hast seen amiss in us from the beginning of our rational lives unto this day. Forgive, O Lord, every wilful thought of our minds which has been disagreeable to thy nature and precepts; every word of our mouths unworthy of men or of Christians, every instance of our behaviour which has been displeasing to thee, or our own consciences, every offence, of whatever sort or degree, against thee, our neighbour, or ourselves. Forgive us all the sins which we ourselves can now call to our remembrance, and forgive us, likewise, all our transgressions of thy holy will, which may now be out of the reach of our memory, but which have been open to thy all-seeing eye, and are known to thee, with all their circumstances and aggravations. Pardon us, O Lord, according to the abundant goodness of thy nature, and the declarations made by thy Son Jesus Christ, and grant us that forgiveness which we neither ask nor expect, but upon those terms and conditions which thy holiness and mercy have laid down in his gospel. Behold, O Lord, we entirely and willingly forgive all who have, in any instance, or in any degree, offended or injured us, without which we ought to entertain no hopes of our own forgiveness. And if we have ourselves injured any person, we are as truly disposed and ready to make all possible reparation, as we are to entreat thy favour to ourselves. And as we are sensible that no forgiveness can be expected, according to thy gospel, without amendment of life, we seriously renounce all communication with whatsoever is displeasing to thee, and sincerely resolve to make it our great endeavour to correct every thing that is amiss in our temper and behaviour, and to bring ourselves still nearer to thy holiness and happiness. Forgive us, therefore, as thou hast promised by thy Son. Accept us to thy mercy, and give success, we earnestly beseech thee, by thy gracious favour and providence, to these purposes and designs of our souls.

III. *Petition.*

AND now, O Lord, according to the same goodness to thy creatures, graciously receive the earnest petitions which we offer to thee for every good that is fit for us to pray for. We acknowledge thee to be the great Author of all our beings, and the original of all our happiness, the giver of all good gifts, and the disposer of all events; and there-

fore we profess our dependence upon thee alone for every thing we ought to wish for or desire. We are sensible, O Lord, that to thee entirely we must owe every degree of happiness we can ever enjoy, or hope for. We are sensible, O Lord, that thou art the tenderest father, and the best friend to thy creatures, disposed to lead them to their greatest good, and ready to promote and assist their sincere endeavours after it. And, therefore, before thee, and in thy presence, we willingly lay open the desires and wishes of our souls, which we think are agreeable to reason and thy holy will. We esteem it the glory of our nature that we are made capable of such an exalted and rational happiness as results from the knowledge of thee, and the imitation of thy moral perfections. And, as thou hast more fully assured us of this in the Christian religion, let the serious consideration of that grace and mercy which hath appeared in that dispensation, effectually lead us to the good end proposed in it. Let the holy precepts of that perfect institution, by which we profess to be guided, and the unspotted example of that great Master, whose followers we desire to be accounted, engage us to live in all respects as becomes the gospel, and disciples of Jesus Christ. Particularly, O Lord, let the consideration of the peculiar genius of that gospel, and of those virtues which the great Author of it accounted the glory of his own life, influence us to endeavour to excel in them, and engage us to love the whole race of mankind with an universal charity and beneficent disposition; to rejoice at all opportunities of doing good either to the souls or bodies of men, and of adding to the satisfaction and happiness of all about us; to stoop even to the lowest offices of kindness to others; to be ready to forgive the sharpest and most undeserved injuries, and to return pity and benevolence for them; and to be ever willing to condescend and yield for the good of others: that so the purest humility, and the most extensive charity, may adorn every action and circumstance of our lives; and all pride and passion and uncharitableness may be checked and subdued by the power of religion, and the loveliness of the contrary virtues.

Let the sense of our own many failings, and the imperfections of our nature, dispose us to be willing to put a candid and favourable interpretation upon all those actions of others which can justly and reasonably demand it, or admit of it, as well as to be ever ready to forgive the offences of others towards ourselves; and let the sense of thy goodness in

allowing still time and opportunity for perfecting our souls in all that is praiseworthy, induce us to study more constantly and uniformly to please and imitate thee.

Our outward condition, with respect to the good things of this world, it is our happiness, as well as duty, to refer wholly to thy will and pleasure. But as thou hast ordained us to belong to this world, as well as to expect another, and hast framed us so that we cannot but be sensibly affected with our good and bad state here below ; of thee, therefore, it becomes us to beg, with submission to thy providence, the security and continuance of the good things which we already enjoy, and the increase of them, if that be truly good and needful. And as, by thy appointment, we have already experienced in this world many evils and afflictions, and have been witness to many more around us, suffer us to implore thy gracious regard, and thy fatherly affection towards us, and to pray to thee, with respect to them, according to the pattern of thy Son Jesus Christ, Father, if it be possible, if it be consistent with, and agreeable to thy wise and gracious purposes, secure us, and all in whose happiness we are most nearly concerned, from all sad accidents and calamitous events, from all tormenting pains and grievous diseases, and from every thing inconsistent with such a happiness as may lawfully be desired in this transitory world. Nevertheless, not as we will, but as thou wilt. And, therefore, O Lord, if thine unerring wisdom shall otherwise determine, let the serious meditation on the example of Christ himself, and that innumerable company of the best of men who have gone before us in this conflict, inspire us with zeal to imitate their patience ; and let the contemplation of thy fatherly goodness engage us to a hearty and rational submission to all thy dispensations ; remembering what a happiness it is to be under the government of a Being who knows what is, in all respects, best, and who cannot afflict his creatures but for wise and good ends. And let the sense of thy gracious designs, in all our afflictions, lead us to the true and right use of them, to disengage our affections more and more from this world, and to seek for happiness in a better and never-changing state.

Let the consideration of the certainty of death, the last of all temporal evils, influence us to endeavour to make it happy, by such a virtuous life as may give us a well-grounded hope in thy mercy. Let the review of those uncertainties and troubles, which we have met with in this world, render us the more ready and contented, at thy appointed time, to

leave it ; and let the prospect of glory and happiness hereafter, exalt our minds above any fond regard to this state of sin and misery ; and enable us to act as becomes those who truly believe that life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel.

Finally, O Lord, our great and chief request is, that by the dispositions of thy good providence, we may attain everlasting happiness hereafter, and that the state of this world, with respect to us, may be so ordered, and the trials to be appointed for us in it may be so proportioned to our condition and powers, as most effectually to promote and secure our eternal and greatest good, after the few days of this life are past away. Deny to us, therefore, out of thy great goodness, whatsoever is truly bad, or unfit for us, though we should be so weak as to desire and wish for it ; and grant to us every thing that is truly good for us, though we should be so blind and so void of wisdom as not to see or ask it. As far as our petitions are reasonable, and agreeable to the eternal laws of wisdom, and the purposes of thy governing providence, and thy holy gospel, so far only we intreat thy favourable consent to them. As far as they are not, so far we utterly renounce them, and submit our own wills entirely to thine ; and, in a sense of our own imperfections, we beg of thee to accept the sincerity of our hearts, and, out of the abundant goodness of thy nature, to overlook and supply all the defects of our services.

IV. INTERCESSION.

Part of which may be used for the concluding Prayer.

WITH our prayers and praises, we beseech thee, O God; to accept the sincere expressions of our charity and good-will towards thy whole rational creation, which we now offer to thee, the Father of all, as members of the whole society of mankind, and more particularly as members of the church of Christ, founded in love and charity. As such, we sincerely rejoice before thee in every degree of happiness enjoyed by any of our fellow-creatures here below ; and we heartily beseech thee to dispense more and larger communications of it to this lower world ; to increase it in all those who enjoy it in any measure, and to impart some portion of it to all who are in any kind of misery or distress.

Look in great mercy upon the sad estate of that part of mankind who know not thy nature, nor worship thee as becomes thy perfections. Put an end to their idolatry and su-

perstition, by shewing them the light and evidence of thy gospel in its simplicity ; and by bringing them to the knowledge of thy truth, lead them to a capacity of a greater degree of happiness than they could otherwise arrive at. Have pity, likewise, on the remains of thy ancient people the Jews, and all others who are better instructed in the belief and worship of thee than the Pagan world, and guide them to a yet greater degree of true knowledge, by directing their way to the knowledge of thy Son, and the practice of his laws ; and bring them by this means to the privileges and happiness of Christians.

Visit with a more special grace and favour the whole Christian world, all who are called by the name of thy Son, and profess his holy religion. Behold, O Lord, a large scene of spiritual evil, worthy of thy great and merciful interposition ; in many places the faith once delivered to the saints in purity and simplicity, enervated by vain and groundless traditions, or darkened by the inventions of men ; the worship of thee, O Father, expressly established by thy Son Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth, clouded by numberless superstitions, and even destroyed by idolatry itself ; the moral laws which thy Son came to rescue from the corruptions of men, and to enforce upon his followers, rendered ineffectual by many human devices, and false notions of religion set up instead of them ; and the progress of thy holy gospel stopped and hindered by the wicked lives and scandalous behaviour of those who profess it.

Interpose, we beseech thee, and put an effectual stop to these great and anti-christian evils. Confound the devices of all such as uphold or encourage any degree of superstition for base and secular ends. Give a powerful check to all sorts and all degrees of persecution and oppression, so scandalous and destructive to thy holy religion, which mistaken or wicked men pretend to promote by such impious methods. Put a stop to all spiritual tyranny, and to all usurpation over the consciences of men ; and dissipate those clouds of ignorance which dispose people to a base and ignominious slavery to the dictates of men, rather than to a rational inquiry into thy holy will, which lies open to them. And, above all, exert thine almighty arm in vindication of the cause of virtue, leading all professed Christians to such a sense of the importance of it, as that they may study to adorn their lives with a behaviour suitable to their holy profession ; and recommend it to the approbation of the unbe-

lieving world by the integrity and unblameableness of their whole conversation.

Particularly grant that all Christians who have departed from the gross corruptions of Popery may depart entirely from the spirit of it; that, as they profess to make the Scripture the rule of faith, so they may, without reserve, leave it as such to all their neighbours; that, as they have nobly contended for their own religious liberties and Christian rights, so they may not lose the glory of this by contradicting it in their behaviour to others, but that they may, by their exemplary deportment, and their steady adherence to the principles of righteousness, peace, and mutual forbearance, manifest to all the world the sincerity of their reformation, and reap the fruit of it, by studying to excel in all that is praiseworthy.

Nor ought we to forget, O thou great governor of the universe, the civil estate of the kingdoms of the earth. Put an end, O Lord, at length, to the disorders and confusions occasioned by the weak and ambitious lords of this world, and shew thyself indeed the King of kings and Lord of lords. Permit no longer the happiness of human society to be, in any part of thy creation, ruined and laid waste by the inferior government of men, which was instituted solely for the support and comfort of it. Bring public disgrace and confusion upon all tyrants and oppressors; and honour with particular marks of thy favour, all those princes; whose sincere study is to answer the end of their institution; that so the triumph of insatiable ambition may at length cease from the earth, and the blessings of good government be felt throughout the world.

Among all the kingdoms of the earth, look, we beseech thee, with a particular favour upon this to which, by the disposal of thy providence, we belong; and for which therefore we are obliged in an especial manner to shew our concern. Pardon our many and crying sins; and, in order to avert thy judgments, lead every sinner amongst us to such a sense of his sins, as may engage him heartily to renounce and forsake them. Continue and confirm to us that peculiar form of government so wonderfully hitherto preserved to us, by which we are secured against the extremes of confusion and arbitrary power, and of which we enjoy the happy fruits every moment of our lives.

Preserve and establish us in the free enjoyment of the light of thy holy gospel, and the secure profession of our

religion. What errors still remain among Protestants, do thou effectually remove by the methods of thy wise providence; and especially such as may have a bad influence on the conduct of men's lives; and do thou strengthen their common interests against their common enemy. To this end give a check to the mutual violences, and hatred, and uncharitable behaviour of men of evil dispositions on every side. Kindle once again the fire of love and charity among us; and permit not our differences in religious matters to extinguish this fire, or to blow up another to our entire destruction.

Pour down the choicest of thy blessings upon thy servant the king. Defend him, by the peculiar care of thy providence, from all attempts of violent and unreasonable men, against his person or crown, and prosper all his good designs and endeavours to preserve his people in peace, liberty, and happiness. Together with him, bless all those who have any part in the administration of our government. Assist him and them in the great and important business of their stations. Guide them into the best and wisest measures, and give success to all their counsels and labours for the advantage of this nation, or for the relief and support of any of our injured neighbours.

Permit not the disposal of the lives and properties of thy people ever to come into the hands of ignorant or partial men; but manifest thy great concern for justice here below, in such a manner, as that the guilty may ever meet with their due punishment, and the injured and oppressed find a sure redress in our courts of judicature. Direct all the magistrates among us to a deep sense of their duty, to give all encouragement to virtue, and all possible discouragement to vice, both by their example and the due execution of their offices.

Lead all those to whom the great concerns of religion are more peculiarly committed, to such a knowledge of all necessary truth, such an exemplary and Christian conversation, such a prudent and constant discharge of their holy office, as may effectually promote the happiness of themselves, and of those committed to their care. Encourage and promote among us the means and methods of such a virtuous and laudable education, as may tend to promote sound learning and religion, to the reformation of this, and the better estate of future generations.

We desire, likewise, to express before thee the real sense we have of the miseries and calamities of the distressed part of mankind, and the sincere desire that we have of contributing to their ease and relief. O thou Father of mercies

and God of all consolation, what can we do for that multitude of deplorable objects of compassion who are out of the reach of our knowledge, or of our ability to relieve, but offer up our earnest wishes to thee, the great disposer of prosperity and adversity, in their behalf? We would sympathise, O Lord, with all the unhappy, and bear a part in all the miseries that are experienced in this world; and we would beg of thee for all the miserable, of what kind or degree soever, whatever we could reasonably beg for ourselves, were we in their condition. Assist them all in their several trials and conflicts; and guide them to such a degree of contentment, resignation, and patience, as may render their present affliction the happy occasion of their greater future glory; and, as far as is consistent with the purposes of thy wisdom, put an end to their present calamities and troubles.

Restore light and comfort to the dark, melancholy, and distracted minds of those who have lost the use of their reason in any instance, or any degree. Pity the destitute condition of those who are in want of any of the necessary supports of life; particularly those who are fallen from the comforts of a prosperous condition to the miseries of adversity; and raise them up friends and patrons in their low estate. Relieve, by thy good providence, the wants of the poor and needy. Be a father to the fatherless, plead the cause of the helpless widow, and regard the unhappy estate of all who mourn the loss of those in whom any part of their happiness was placed.

Strengthen and assist, in an especial manner, all who suffer any where for the love of truth, or the testimony of a good conscience; and do thou so proportion to their strength the measure and duration of their sufferings, that they may work out for them a more exceeding weight of glory. Hear the groans of all who are oppressed and barbarously treated by the tyrants of this world, and grant a redress of all their miseries. Attend to the sighs and tears of such as are in captivity and slavery, and open a way to their future liberty and security.

Visit with thy light and comfort all who are afflicted with bodily pain, or any sort of sickness; and bring to their minds all such considerations and assistances as are necessary and proper to support them in their unhappy condition; or to dispose and fit them for their passage into another state. Remove, in much compassion, all those unreasonable doubts and despondencies with which many innocent and honest minds are, in this world, disturbed and overclouded; and

direct them to such notions of thee, and of thy holy gospel, as may establish them in a course of cheerful and sincere obedience to the laws of it.

Succeed the endeavours of all who honestly and industriously labour after a convenient livelihood in this world, and are useful members of the commonwealth; and bring to nought the designs of those who, either privately or openly, live upon the spoil of their neighbours, and are the plague and terror of human society.

Requite, in the course of thy good providence, the kindness of all who have at any time, or in any degree, endeavoured to contribute to the advantage of our minds, bodies, or outward estates. Upon all who have either done or designed us good of any sort, shower down thy rewards and favour. And, if there be any who have either designed, or done us real mischief, in return to their evil, we beg and entreat for thy pardon and thy blessings. Correct the evil disposition of all such minds, and plant in them, instead of it, a temper worthy of men and of Christians. Let the consideration of their own eternal interest lead them all to charity and love, and engage them to put on those dispositions which only can fit them for the blessed society above.

Bless all in whom we are more nearly concerned, or in whose happiness we take a particular part, with such a measure of health, success, and prosperity, as may best carry forward the designs of thy goodness towards them; and most effectually promote their happiness here and hereafter. But, whatever be thy dispensations towards them with respect to this life, lead them all, we beseech thee, into those paths which will infallibly convey them to thine heavenly kingdom in the world to come.

Finally, O Lord, we wish and pray for all good things to the whole race of mankind. We rejoice in every degree of virtue and happiness to be seen here below. We mourn for every degree and every instance of vice and misery. Let thy kingdom come, we beseech thee; and shew thine almighty power, by establishing true religion amongst men, and putting a stop to all the calamities of this lower world.

The Conclusion.

ACCEPT, O Lord, we most earnestly beseech thee, the sentiments and desires of our hearts, which we have now poured out before thee, under an actual sense of thy pre-

sence, and of thy providence, over-ruling and directing all things. Favourably receive the acknowledgments we have made of our sins and moral imperfections, and grant us pardon and peace upon the terms of thy gospel. Hear and answer the petitions we have offered up for obtaining all things truly good, and averting all things evil. Let the praises and thanksgivings which our hearts have sent up, as the homage due to thy perfections and goodness, be acceptable to thee; and reject not the intercessions we have made for the temporal and eternal happiness of all our fellow-creatures.

And now, O Lord, take us, we intreat thee, into thy powerful and wise protection, and guide us, by the dispositions of thy providence, to the perfect knowledge and performance of thy will here, and to the enjoyment of that eternal and unalterable happiness hereafter, which thou hast reserved for thy faithful servants, and promised by thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ. In his name, and as his disciples, we trust for the acceptance of ourselves, and of all our sincere, though imperfect services; and in his words we continue to entreat thy mercy towards ourselves, and all for whom we are obliged to pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

AN OFFICE FOR INFANT BAPTISM.

The person who officiates and the parents of the child (if convenient) standing up, in the presence of as many of their friends as they may think proper to assemble, let him address them as follows:

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

As you are now presenting this your child to be baptized into the Christian religion, I shall take this opportunity of explaining, in a few words, the nature and end of this ordinance.

* The "Prayer respecting the present state of Christianity, to be used on the morning of Easter Sunday," has been printed, Vol. II. pp. 480—484. See *supra*, p. 495.

When our Lord Jesus Christ gave his commission to his apostles about the propagation of his religion in the world, he bade them *teach* and *baptize* all nations; and he himself, that he might fulfil all righteousness, submitted to be baptized by John in the river Jordan. Now this baptism, or washing with water, properly expresses that purity of heart and of life which is required of all that profess the Gospel of Christ; and, when applied to infants, must be considered as a declaration of the parents that they are Christians, and a solemn promise before God and witnesses, that they will educate their child in the principles of the Christian religion, as contained in the books of the New Testament.

There we learn that God sent his Son Jesus Christ to reclaim the world lying in wickedness, and to reconcile sinful men to God, by assuring them of the divine favour and acceptance, on their sincere repentance, and that he himself is appointed by God to judge the world at the last day; when all mankind shall rise again from the dead; when the wicked shall go to a place of punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. There we also learn that, after performing many unquestionable miracles, such as no man could have done if God had not been with him, in confirmation of his doctrine, he submitted to death, was publicly crucified, and laid in the grave: but that God raised him to life again, after which he was seen and known by many of his former disciples, and in their presence ascended up into heaven.

Now this act of bringing your child to Christian baptism is a declaration that, as Christians, you believe these things to be true, and that you are ready solemnly to promise before God, and us who are here present, that you will educate your child in this faith. Do you make this promise?

Then let the parents (or any other persons who will undertake for the Christian education of the child) signify their assent by saying I do, or in any other manner that shall be sufficiently expressive of it.

After this, let the person who officiates take the child in his arms, and asking its name, say (as he sprinkles it with water, or immerses it, at the pleasure of the parents) This child, whose name is N. M., I baptize in the name of Jesus Christ; adding, if he thinks proper, in order to his being instructed in the principles of that religion which was the gift of God by Jesus Christ, and which was confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

This being done, let him address the parents in the following manner :

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

As you have now devoted this your child to God by the ordinance of baptism, engaging to educate it in the principles of the Christian religion, of which you make profession, I shall endeavour to suggest to you a few motives to the religious and Christian education of your child.

A religious and Christian education is the greatest benefit you can confer upon a child, and all the riches and honours of this world are not worthy to be named with the solid advantages that may be derived from it. It is to teach him so to live here, as to be happy for ever hereafter.

The virtuous education of your children is likewise a debt which you owe to society, and to the civil constitution under which you live ; to the good laws, and wise administration of which, you owe the peace and security of your lives. Now, a virtuous and proper education will make your children an advantage, and an honour to their country ; but, except they be well principled, they may prove the pests of society ; so that it might have been better for the world, if they, or their parents, had never been born.

The religious education of your children is, moreover, a duty which you owe to God and to religion. Your children, Parents, are not your own, so as that you are not accountable for the care and conduct of them to another. You and your children are equally God's. He is their father in the most important of all senses, and he only puts them into your hands for their improvement. Their infant minds are to be formed by you to virtue and immortality. Be sensible, then, of the important trust. Bring up your children as for God ; that when he requires them at your hands, you may deliver them up to him well instructed, and trained up in the best principles and habits ; perfect in those lessons which they were put under your care to learn ; their tempers corrected, and formed to the love of goodness, to the love and fear of God, fit to live with him, and enjoy his favour for ever ; and for this you will receive a glorious reward. Your pious labour, whatever be the result of it to your children, will not, with respect to yourselves, be in vain in the Lord.

Lastly, the virtuous and religious education of your children is the best provision you can make for the peace and comfort of your own future lives ; one of the most important

of all religious duties being the love and respect of children to their parents.

You, Parents, have peculiar advantages for watching over the morals of your children, as they are ever under your eye, and you have a natural and uncontrolled authority over them, at a time when their minds are exceedingly pliable; so that it is almost in your power to make them what you please. By all means, then, improve this advantage, which nature and the God of nature give you, to the best of purposes. And you have this encouragement, that if you train up your children in the way in which they should go, when they are old they will not depart from it; but if you neglect their education in their early years, the task will be peculiarly difficult, and the effect uncertain, afterwards; as you will then have bad principles and bad habits to root out; and Divine Providence is often awfully just, in permitting wicked children to be a curse to their criminally indulgent parents.

Indeed, no pains you can take can absolutely insure success; but by the Divine blessing it generally does; and there will be a wide difference, with respect to the peace of your minds, between seeing your children turn out corrupt and vicious notwithstanding your best endeavours, or in consequence of your neglect. In the former case you are disappointed indeed, and greatly so; but still you have the satisfaction to reflect that you have done your duty; and that you could do no more; whereas, in the latter case, nothing can alleviate your distress.

That the best of consequences, to yourselves and to your child, may follow your endeavours to do your duty in this respect, let us now call upon God.

A Prayer.

ALMIGHTY and ever-blessed God, we acknowledge and rejoice in the consideration of our near relation to thee, as our creator, preserver, and benefactor; our moral governor also, and our final judge. Thou hast of one blood made all the generations of men to dwell upon the face of this thine earth; and we adore the wisdom of thy providence, that as one generation of our race passes off the face of the earth, another still succeeds; to behold thy glorious works, to learn thy will, and to attain to supreme happiness in thy favour here and hereafter.

We thank thee for the rational nature which thou hast given us, whereby we are capable of this excellence and happiness; but more especially we thank thee, that, when mankind had debased and corrupted their nature by an addictedness to vice and folly, when they had lost the knowledge of thee, the only living and true God, thou wast pleased to make the most gracious manifestations of thyself and of thy will to us, in part by thy former servants the prophets, but more clearly and fully by thy Son Christ Jesus.

We thank thee that, in consequence of these revelations of thy will to us, we are now perfectly acquainted with what it is that thou, the Lord our God, requirest of us, in order to live and to die in thy favour; even to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thee our God. More especially do we rejoice that life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel of thy Son.

We thank thee for his excellent instructions for the conduct of our lives, and his perfect example of obedience to thy will, in the course of a most useful life, and in the painful suffering of death. We thank thee also for the positive institutions of our holy religion, *Baptism*, and the *Lord's Supper*, so well calculated to impress our minds with a sense of thy great love in sending thy Son to live and die for us.

Bless, we entreat thee, the present administration of baptism. May thy servants, who, by joining in this rite, declare themselves to be Christians, be careful to live as becomes such; and, as they hereby lay themselves under a solemn obligation to educate their child in the principles of the Christian religion, may they be enabled to fulfil their resolution. May they spare neither correction nor instruction for the real good of their child; and may they enjoy the happy fruits of their pious labours, in seeing him grow up in wisdom and in virtue, in favour with God and with man. May he live to be the joy of his parents, and a blessing to society.

Bless thy servants at the head of their family. May they walk together as heirs of the grace of life, mutually careful to promote each other's temporal, but more especially their everlasting interests; and may they so live together here below in thy fear, and in the discharge of their proper duty in life; that, when they are removed hence by death, they may have a joyful meeting in the regions of bliss above; where they shall be happy in the enjoyment of thee their God, of each other, and of their children and near friends, to all

eternity. This we ask in the name, and as the disciples, of thy Son Christ Jesus; through whom, to thee, O Father, the only living and true God, be glory for ever. Amen.

The Blessing.

MAY the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of his holy spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

AN OFFICE FOR ADULT BAPTISM.

Let the minister address the person to be baptized, and the audience, in the same manner as in the office for infant baptism, omitting what relates to infants, and beginning in the following manner :

MY CHRISTIAN BROTHER (OR SISTER),

As you have expressed your desire of being baptized into the Christian religion, I shall take this opportunity of explaining, in a few words, the nature and end of this ordinance.

Then let him conclude as follows :

By this rite of baptism you declare yourself to be a Christian, and express your resolution to live as becomes that profession. Do you make this declaration; and is this your resolution?

After the administration, by sprinkling water on the head of the person to be baptized, (or by immersion, if he should choose it,) let the minister address him, and all who are present, on the supposition that they also are Christians, as follows :

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHERN,

BY this rite of baptism we make a public profession of our being Christians. Let us, then, endeavour, on this occasion, to impress our minds with a just sense of the proper nature and value of the Christian profession; that we may now, and in future life, think, feel, and act, as becomes Christians.

As Christians, my brethren, our tenets; or doctrines, as you have just heard, are few, but their influence is very

great and extensive; leading to a disposition and conduct entirely different from those of the men of the world, because they direct our views beyond the world. Though, therefore, our *tenets* are few, our *professions* are very large; no less than to conduct ourselves, in all respects, in this transitory life, in such a manner as shall secure to us a happy immortality after death; to pass through an ensnaring world without being ensnared by it; to see vice, with all its allurements, but to abhor it, and to practise virtue; to see others engaged in the eager pursuit of riches, honours, and sensual pleasure, as if they were the chief good of man, but not to join in that pursuit; to give, indeed, some degree of attention to these things, but to set strict bounds to our attachment to them; considering them as things of secondary, and not of primary importance; and keeping all our appetites and passions within the just restraints of reason and conscience.

It must be our care, as Christians, to be affected by the good and evil of this life much less than other persons are; to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and to weep as though we wept not, because the fashion of this world passes away. We must use the world as not abusing it, being influenced by higher and nobler principles, by a supreme regard to God and his authority; wholly devoted to his will in doing and in suffering; and affectionately concerned for others as for ourselves, more especially to guard them from vice, as the greatest of all evils; that they, together with ourselves, may become partakers of a divine nature, and be heirs of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

By this Christian rite we take upon ourselves the name of Christians. But calling ourselves by that name only will avail us nothing; in reality, less than nothing. We must be Christians *in deed and in truth*. We must have in us the same temper of mind that was also in Christ Jesus; that, having the same principles and dispositions, we may walk as he also walked, not being conformed to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our minds. Like him, we must be continually going about doing good, neither seduced by pleasure, nor deterred by the fear of shame or of pain. We must not even hold our lives dear unto us, but freely give them up in the day of persecution, rather than make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience; remembering the solemn declaration of our Lord, "If any man be ashamed of me in this generation, of him will the Son of man be

ashamed, when he comes in his glory, and the glory of his Father.

Our Master's kingdom is not of this world. If, therefore, we be the proper subjects of it, we also must consider ourselves as not of this world, but as citizens of heaven, and only strangers and sojourners here below. We must pass through this life in such a manner as to learn wisdom and instruction by the various scenes and events of it, but we must not *rest* in it, and always direct our views beyond it; looking for that awful period when this world and all things that are therein shall be dissolved, and when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein will dwell righteousness; when Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, shall return in power and great glory; when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and others to the resurrection of condemnation.

Forming our hearts and lives according to the gospel of Christ, may we, my brethren, so behave, 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.

Let us Pray.

ALMIGHTY and ever-blessed God: we, thine offspring of the human race, rejoice in the rank which thou hast allotted us among thy creatures. We thank thee for our prerogatives as men, but still more for our privileges as Christians. We thank thee for the valuable instruction which our Lord Jesus Christ has given us for the proper regulation of our conduct in this life, and especially for the assurance that he has given us of a resurrection to immortal life after death. May we ever bear in mind a just sense of the value of these advantages, and be careful to make a right use of them.

May thy servant, who, by this rite of Christian baptism, has made an open profession of his Christian faith, be careful to adorn his profession by a suitable life and conversation. May his light so shine before men, that others, seeing his good works, may glorify thee our Father in heaven.

May he, and all of us who are here present, making the same profession of Christianity, be enabled, by the principles and motives of it, to discharge with fidelity the duties of our respective stations in life, and be thereby prepared to

meet our Saviour, when he shall come to raise the dead, to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works.

May our lives, and our deaths also, bear testimony to the power and the purity of our religious principles; and having added to our faith patience, godliness, and universal charity, with every other Christian virtue, may we die in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection to that immortal life with which our religion brings us acquainted. Having fought the good fight of faith, and finished our Christian course with joy, at length may an abundant entrance be administered to us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Through him, to thee, O Father, the only living and true God, be glory for ever. Amen.

The Blessing.

GRACE, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, be with us all evermore. Amen.

A FORM FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER.

The bread being broken into small pieces, and the wine poured into proper cups; let the person who officiates stand up, and address the communicants as follows:

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

By joining in the celebration of this rite, we exhibit ourselves in a peculiar character, and therefore shall do well to take this opportunity of considering what this peculiar character and profession is; that we may impress our minds with sentiments and affections proper to it, and thereby prepare ourselves for a suitable conduct in the course of our lives.

By the celebration of this rite we distinguish ourselves from the world, as *Christians*: we recognize our relation to Christ, as his professed disciples and followers; and we do it in the manner in which he has expressly appointed that it should be done to the end of the world. *Do this*, said our Lord, *in remembrance of me*. And by this, says the apostle Paul, we shew forth, or commemorate, his death till he comes, even till his second coming.

Now, in what does the peculiarity of the Christian profession consist? What is it that, as Christians, or in the

character of Christians, we believe and profess to *do*, or to *expect*? The great articles of our Christian faith undoubtedly are, that we firmly believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was authorized by God to instruct mankind in the true way to eternal life, and that, though he is now removed from us, being ascended to the Father, and is now set down on the right hand of God, he will assuredly come again, to raise the dead, to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works.

As Christians, we believe that the time is most assuredly coming, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; some to the resurrection of life, and others to the resurrection of condemnation; that he will then, though not before, take all his faithful disciples to himself, that where he is, there they may be also; seeing and partaking of the glory which he receives from the Father of all; who is equally his Father and our Father, his God and our God; when we shall be one with them, even as they are one.

This, my brethren, is the glorious consummation, to which, as Christians, we ought continually to look. This is that which the apostle Paul calls the *blessed hope*, even the glorious appearance of the great God, and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that is, of Christ coming, as he himself says, in *the glory of his Father*. Looking forward to this great end of our faith, we have even now, but shall then more completely have, fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

It is to this society, this communion or fellowship, that we, my Christian brethren, now give our names; professing to have no interest, no views or expectations, but such as we are authorized to entertain as Christians. Renouncing this world, and all the frivolous enjoyments and pursuits of it, we give up ourselves wholly to God and to Christ, in order to be separate from the world, and a peculiar people, zealous of all good works; having the same temper of mind that was also in Christ Jesus, and walking as he also walked; not being conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of the mind; that our light may truly shine before men, and others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

We do not, my brethren, as Christians, make profession of any peculiar *secret* or *mystery*; we profess no *art*, but that of a holy and good life. We do not hold ourselves obliged to retire from the world. We engage in all its useful and laudable pursuits, and partake of its innocent enjoyments;

using the world, as the apostle says, but not abusing it; remembering that our conversation, or citizenship, is in heaven. We wear no outward badge, but that ornament of a meek, quiet, and benevolent spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

We must love the brotherhood, as such, with a peculiar affection; but we are by no means to hate the rest of the world. Nay, we are to love all men, and to shew our love by endeavouring to bring all men into the same society and fellowship with ourselves; that, *walking by the same rule*, and *minding the same things*, they may partake of our glorious privileges; and that, being more in number, we may with more advantage, and with less obstruction and difficulty, work out our common salvation, and provoke to love and good works; that, when our Lord shall return, we may be found to have made a right use of the talents entrusted to us, and go into the joy of our Lord.

Let us pray.

ALMIGHTY and ever-blessed God: we adore thee as a Being self-existent, independent, and absolutely perfect, the source of life and of happiness to all that enjoy them. Thou art our maker, preserver, and daily benefactor, and we thank thee for all thy gifts, and for all our privileges. We rejoice in the rank which thou hast been pleased that we should hold among thy creatures; that, by means of the rational faculties with which thou hast endued us, we are capable of resembling thee our Maker, of being proper subjects of thy moral government, and fit heirs of immortality.

More especially would we, on this occasion, thank thee, that when mankind had neglected to make a right use of the reason which thou hadst given them, when they had debased their excellent natures by an addictedness to vice and folly, when they were become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened, so that the world by its own wisdom knew not God, thou wast pleased to make the most important and the most seasonable communications of thy will to us; giving us the most valuable information concerning our duty here and our expectations hereafter.

We rejoice, above all, that, in this land of darkness, in this region of the shadow of death, where we see that the grave is the house appointed for all living; yet, notwithstanding these appearances, life and immortality are brought to light to us in the gospel; that, by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, we are begotten again to a new and

most animating hope, even the hope of an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; not, indeed, the object of sight, or of sense, but of the firmest faith, as what is surely reserved for us in heaven.

We rejoice that, in our Lord's resurrection, we have not only the most satisfactory *proof*, but likewise a *pattern* exhibited to us of a future universal resurrection; an assurance that as by man came death, so by man shall also come the resurrection of the dead; and that as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive; that at the last day all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; some to the resurrection of life, and others to condemnation; that then this corruption shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality, and death shall be finally swallowed up of victory.

We thank thee for the excellent instructions which have been given us by our Lord Jesus Christ for the regulation of our lives, for his perfect example of obedience to thy will, and especially his submission to a painful and ignominious death; that for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at thy right hand; angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him. We rejoice in the encouragement which he has given us to walk in his steps; being assured that if we obey and suffer with him, we shall also reign with him, and be glorified together.

We thank thee for the positive institution of his holy religion, so well calculated to bring to our recollection, and to impress our minds with a lively sense of, thy infinite love and goodness in giving thy Son to live and die for us.

Bless the present administration of the Lord's Supper. May we attend upon it with right views of its nature and use, as a memorial of the death and sufferings of our Lord and Master; that, being hereby reminded of our obligation to him, and of the nature and value of our Christian profession, we may be prepared in future life to think, to feel, and to act as becomes Christians; that hereby our Christian faith, hope, and joy may be increased; and, in consequence of it, we may become possessed of that peace of mind which the world can neither give nor take away.

Hear us, Almighty God, we entreat thee, in these our requests; accept of us, and bless us in the discharge of this, and every part of our duty as Christians. We ask it in the name, and as the disciples, of thy Son Jesus Christ, our

Lord, through whom, to thee, O Father, the only living and true God, be glory for ever. Amen.

Then let the person who officiates take the bread, and say as follows :

In obedience to the command of Christ, as a memorial of his death, and more especially of his body being broken for us, we break this bread ; and, professing my own faith in Christ, and my resolution to live as becomes a Christian, I take and eat of this bread. With the same views, and the same resolution, let us all take and eat of it.

Let him then, after eating of the bread himself, deliver it to those who distribute it to the communicants ; saying, Take and eat, in remembrance of Christ.

During the distribution of the bread, the person who officiates may either sit down in silence, till that part of the service be over, or he may occasionally repeat such passages of Scripture as the following :

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John iii. 16.

God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Rom. v. 8.

If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 1 John iv. 11.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you. John xv. 12, 13.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. 1 Peter ii. 21.

He died for all ; that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. 2 Cor. v. 15.

After the distribution of the bread, let the person who officiates pour the wine into the vessels out of which it is to be drank, and say as follows :

In obedience to the command of Christ, as another memorial of his death, and especially of his blood being shed for us, we pour this wine ; and repeating my profession of faith in Christ, and my resolution to live as becomes a Christian, I take and drink of this wine.

When he has taken of the wine, let him deliver the cups to those who are to carry them to the communicants; saying, Take and drink of this, in remembrance of Christ.

During this part of the service, the minister may either repeat some of the preceding passages of Scripture, or remain in silence till the distribution be finished; and then let him address the congregation as follows:

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

We have now made a public profession of our Christian faith, in the proper manner of doing it, prescribed by our Lord himself. There cannot be any occasion, I am persuaded, to admonish any of us who are here present, that the celebration of this rite will avail nothing instead of a life and conversation becoming the gospel; or, that the obligation to live as becomes Christians does not depend in any peculiar manner upon it; when it ought to be considered as only a circumstance belonging to our profession, and of itself implying no peculiar obligation at all. But it is universally understood, that every man ought to act agreeably to his profession, whatever it be. Every man, therefore, who calls himself a Christian, is under an indispensable obligation to live as becomes a Christian; and this obligation (in whatever particular manner we may signify our profession of Christianity) is of the strongest nature.

Much better would it be for us, at the day of judgment, to be able to plead that we had never known Christ, than that we had known him, and professed his religion, unless, in consequence of it, we depart from iniquity, and be unto him a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Without this we acknowledge that light is come into the world, but that we love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil.

Let it appear, then, that we are the disciples of Christ, by doing whatsoever he has commanded us; by adding to our Christian faith fortitude, patience, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity; that these things being in us, and abounding, we may not be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of the gospel; that, when our Lord shall return, to raise the dead and to judge the world, he may say unto us, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Here sing the following Psalm, or any other, expressive of the proper temper, views, and expectations of Christians.

PSALM XVII. BY DR. WATTS.

I.

LORD, I am thine ; but thou wilt prove
My faith, my patience, and my love.
When men of spite against me join,
They are the sword, the hand is thine.

II.

Their hope and portion lie below :
'Tis all the happiness they know.
'Tis all they seek : they take their shares,
And leave the rest among their heirs.

III.

What sinners value, I resign,
Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine.
I shall behold thy blisful face,
And stand complete in righteousness.

IV.

This life's a dream, an empty show :
But the bright world to which I go
Hath joys substantial and sincere.
When shall I wake and find me there ?

V.

O glorious hour ! O blest abode !
I shall be near, and like my God ;
And flesh and sin no more controul
The sacred pleasures of the soul.

VI.

My flesh shall slumber in the ground,
Till the last trumpet's joyful sound ;
Then burst the chains with sweet surprise,
And in my Saviour's image rise.

After singing, let the Minister conclude with the following prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, and most merciful Father : We address ourselves unto thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, and as manifesting thyself, by him, the God of love and of all consolation. We rejoice in the great privileges and blessings of his gospel, and that to us, in this remote corner of the world, so great a light has shined; that to us life and immortality are brought to light.

Grant that we, having this light, may walk as becomes the children of light and of the day, and not be guilty of the works of the night or of darkness. Naming the name of Christ, may we be careful to be Christians, not in name and profession only, but in deed and in truth; approving ourselves to be the true friends and disciples of Christ by doing whatsoever he has commanded us.

As his disciples, we would be careful to copy after his example, to have the same temper of mind in us that was also in him, holy, harmless, and undefiled, that, being actuated by the same principles, and having the same great views, we may walk as he also walked, not being conformed to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Thus may it be our constant study and endeavour to act with his meekness and humility, in the whole of our deportment, and with his steadiness and resolution in the cause of religion and truth. Like him would we be unwearied in going about doing good; fulfilling thy will, and finishing the work which thou hast given us to do. Thus would we confess our Lord before men, by a life and conversation becoming and adorning his gospel, shewing that we are not ashamed to act upon the principles of his holy religion, how contrary soever they may be to the prevailing maxims of a corrupt world; that our Lord may not be ashamed of us, but may confess us to be his true disciples, and worthy followers, before his heavenly Father, the holy angels, and the assembled world, at the last great day.

Ever bearing in mind that we are the subjects of a prince, whose kingdom is not of this world, may we ever consider ourselves as not of this world, but as citizens of heaven, and only strangers and sojourners here below. As such, we would abstain from all fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, and cultivate a superiority of mind to this world, and all the pursuits and enjoyments of it; having our treasures, our hearts, and our conversation in heaven; from whence also we look for the return of our Lord and Saviour; who shall change these mortal bodies of ours, and fashion them like unto his own glorified body, even in that day when corruption shall put on incorruption, and when this mortal shall put on immortality.

While we thus endeavour to act upon Christian principles, and to acquire a truly Christian character, we would avail ourselves of the consolations of our religion under all the difficulties and troubles of this transitory life; knowing that they are but for a time, and that, by patience and continuance in well-doing, under all these trials, we shall, at length, attain to glory, honour, and immortality. We would rejoice, more especially, if we be counted worthy to suffer shame, reproach, or even death; in the cause of Christ and of a good conscience; knowing that blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; and that if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him, and be glorified together.

Hear us, Almighty God, in these our requests; accept of us, and bless us, as the disciples of thy Son Christ Jesus; through whom, to thee, O Father! the only living and true God, be glory for ever. Amen.

The Blessing.

Now, may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

ADDRESSES TO THE COMMUNICANTS FOR A SECOND SERVICE.

Before Administration.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE excellence of our religion is very conspicuous in this institution, which is peculiar to it. It is a cheerful and a social rite, becoming that religion which brings peace upon earth and good-will towards men; that religion the object of which is to extirpate all envy, hatred, malice, and revenge, with every thing else which tends to disturb the happiness of society, and to promote mutual love and good-will among all the human race, as a pledge of their mutual happiness.

Eating and drinking have, in all ages, and among all nations, been considered as an expression of joy; and eating and drinking at the same table, as a mark of friendship, good understanding, and harmony. And what, my brethren, should hinder our celebrating this rite with joy? Great, indeed, are the blessings we now commemorate. They are

the blessings of the gospel of Christ, or the advantages we receive by means of divine revelation; and these consist of such information concerning our duty in this life, and our expectations in another, as we could never have received without divine communications, and which, as rational, and at the same time imperfect creatures, we were most nearly interested in.

As rational creatures, capable of improving in knowledge, and of forming the most intimate and lasting connexions with each other, we cannot help wishing for an opportunity of enlarging our knowledge, and of continuing and extending our connexions among our fellow-creatures. But nature alone gives us little or no hope of surviving the grave, the house appointed for all living; whereas life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is the resurrection and the life; and by the appointment and gift of God, he has the keys of death and of the grave. If any man believe in him, and obey his gospel, death shall not finally triumph over him. Though he shall die, he shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life; for Christ will raise him up at the last day.

Are not these, my brethren, glad tidings of great joy indeed? Here is an immortal existence, and what is more, an immortality of happiness, promised to all the disciples and followers of our Lord; and this glorious promise is confirmed to us by a series of such miracles and mighty deeds, as no man could have done if God had not been with him, and especially by the resurrection of our Lord himself from the dead; so that nothing can be wanting to the full assurance of our faith in an article of so much importance. How does this glorious prospect of immortality raise our hearts above the world, and all the pleasures and pursuits of it! With this hope set before us, we are able to purify ourselves from all the pollutions of the world, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

With this hope we are able to bear all the trials of this life, and make them work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. With this hope we are able to rejoice, if we be called to it, that we are accounted worthy to suffer shame, and even death, for the sake of our religion and a good conscience; and, finally, when heart and flesh, and all the powers of nature shall fail us, with this hope set before us, God will be the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever. Bidding adieu to all mortal things, we may sing the Christian triumphant song; O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is

sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the Jesus Christ whom we now commemorate, whom, having not seen, we have abundant reason to love; and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

After Administration.

Having made this public confession of our faith in Christ, let us for a moment consider what it is to be a Christian, and more especially what particular Christian virtues this institution is calculated to improve us in; and, as I have already observed, they are the virtues of Christian charity, mutual love, and good-will. This amiable spirit breathes in every part of the gospel of Christ. If ye love me, says our Lord, keep my commandments; and this is my commandment, that ye love one another. As I have loved you, do ye also love one another.

As partakers of the same human nature, we cannot want motives for mutual love and affection. For, hath not one God created us, and doth not the same kind Providence watch over us all, supplying our common wants, and guarding us from the dangers to which we are in common exposed? Are we not all placed in the same state of trial, probation, and discipline? Is not the great business of all our lives the same; and is not our interest in a thousand ways connected with that of others; so that we cannot live, much less comfortably, without the assistance of each other? Shall we not then love one another, and study to promote the happiness and comfort of all that we are connected with, and to whom our influence can extend?

But, my brethren, the gospel of Christ brings us still nearer together. As Christians, we have the same faith, and the same great hopes and expectations. We are, as it were, travelling the same road to glory, honour, and immortality. As Christians, we alike profess to be not of this world, but to be citizens of heaven, and to be strangers and pilgrims here below. Let us, then, cherish that mutual love, affection, and confidence, which fellow-citizens and countrymen are always known to have for each other, when they are travelling through distant countries.

We may, in a thousand respects, assist and comfort one another. We have the same enemies to guard against, which are the temptations to vice and excess that the world abounds with. As brethren, then, let us watch over one another with brotherly love, and not suffer sin in each other; but be

continually provoking, that is, exciting, to love and to good works; animating one another, in our Christian course, by the prospect of the glorious rewards which await our patient continuance in well-doing.

Our Lord always laid particular stress on the mutual love and friendship of his followers. If any man, says he, shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck; and he was cast into the midst of the sea; but whosoever giveth so much as a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward. And at the great day of judgment, it should seem that this will be the particular subject of inquiry, viz. whether we have behaved in a kind and benevolent manner towards our brethren of mankind, and especially to our fellow-christians; and at that time our Lord represents every kind office that is done to a disciple, as done to himself; and every affront offered to a disciple, as offered to himself.

Offences, alas! will arise, while we are all subject to various infirmities and passions; but let it be our business to repress all the irregular workings of our passions. For what else was our reason, for what else was Christianity given us?

Let us mutually forgive, as we ourselves hope to be forgiven; and since we expect to arrive at the same place at last, let us see that we do not fall out by the way.

Let us, therefore, strengthen one another's hands, and edify one another with these words; continuing steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

ADDRESSES TO THE COMMUNICANTS FOR A THIRD SERVICE.

Address before the Administration.

It becomes us, my Christian brethren, whenever we engage in any service peculiar to Christians, and belonging to our profession as such, to impress our minds with a just sense of the nature and value of that profession. We are now assembled as *Christians*, for the celebration of that religious, but cheerful rite, which our Lord enjoined upon all his disciples. Let us, then, endeavour to turn our eyes from the world; the civil, the mercantile, the political, and the scientific world; a world of bustle, distraction, and danger, in which we are only *strangers*, and where we are

only placed as in a school of discipline, to train us up for a better state. Let us, I say, turn our eyes from this world, towards that world and state for which we are training; and that is a world of rest and enjoyment; though, no doubt, a scene of sufficient activity, of mutual benevolence and usefulness.

In this life our ranks, situations, and conditions, are very different; and, no doubt, they will be so hereafter: but all distinctions will then be regulated on a different plan. Here, by the wise appointment of a superintending Providence, some are poor, and others rich: some occupy a lower, others a more exalted station, without the least respect to their moral worth, but only as occasions and opportunities of improving their moral character. Whereas in a future state, our rank will be adjusted according to this improvement only; and then that God who, at his sovereign pleasure, maketh rich or maketh poor, and who regardeth the rich no more than the poor, will render to every man according to his works. Then those who in this life were as poor and destitute as Lazarus, shall, if they be pious and virtuous, be raised to the highest honour, such as that which is figured to us by reclining on Abraham's bosom; whilst those who, like the rich man at whose door he lay, shall not have made a right use of the bounty of Providence, will lift up their eyes in torment.

With respect to the most valuable enjoyments of this life, those which depend on the cultivation of the mind, the poor, if they are virtuous, industrious, and make the most of their advantages, are but little inferior to the rich. They, as well as the rich, have the gospel preached to them; and my brethren, they are the views which the gospel exhibits to us, the views of the nature and true end of this life, and of our destination for another; the views of the great scenes of Providence recorded in the Scriptures, (leading to an habitual regard to the Maker and Governor of the world, the greatest and best of all beings, and our equal relation to him, as our parent,) that contribute most of all to give that elevation to our sentiments, and those generous feelings to the heart, which make one man truly superior to another.

Natural science, or a knowledge and contemplation of the works of God, and of the laws of nature, have, no doubt, an effect of the same kind; and therefore ought to be cultivated by all those who have leisure and opportunity for doing it, as highly becoming and improving our rational nature; but with respect to *degree*, all natural science contributes but

little to the real improvement of the mind, or even true refinement of sentiment (the most essential ingredient in which is humanity and sympathy), compared with that knowledge which the poorest of human beings, who can only read the Scriptures, may derive from that source. And other kinds of knowledge have, like riches and power, together with their advantages for virtue and happiness, their peculiar snares and hazards.

We see, in fact, that natural knowledge, instead of elevating, too often debases the mind, and supplies food for the lowest and most malignant passions. Men of science, and also elegant artists, may be, and too often are, envious, malicious, avaricious, and, indeed, sometimes the grossest sensualists; so as, with respect to real mental excellence, to be little better than brutes. But a Christian, even an unlearned Christian, if he makes his religion his study, and the precepts and promises of it the subject of his habitual contemplation, may, from this alone, be the greatest, and I may almost add, the most polished of all human characters.

The true Christian *lives as seeing God who is invisible*. In all the works of nature he rejoices in the God of nature. In every human being he sees a child of the same parent as himself, an object of the same paternal care and bounty, a scholar in the same school of discipline, and, as he may hope, an heir of the same *immortal life*, revealed to him in the gospel. He therefore will love all as his brethren; that is, as himself; at the same time that he loves God above all, and is wholly devoted to his will in doing and suffering.

Even the necessary labour of the Christian who is poor, that labour which is necessary to his subsistence, will, if accompanied with sobriety, give him that health and cheerfulness which the rich much more generally want; and will tend to make him think of, and rejoice in, that future and happy world, which the rich too often forget. And that is a world in which he knows he shall rest from all his labours and all his sufferings.

Let us, then, my Christian brethren, while we are celebrating this Christian rite, impress our minds with these sentiments becoming Christians, and peculiar to them; and may they contribute to inspire our minds with that brotherly love which levels all ranks and conditions of men, and which is likewise a distinguishing badge of our relation to Christ, with respect to its influence on the mind, as this ordinance is a badge of our profession externally. Hereby, says our Lord, shall all men know that ye are my disciples,

if ye love one another. Thus, after joining in Christian worship and Christian rites here below, we may join in one general assembly, in company with our Saviour himself, the great head of the church, in the praises of God hereafter; in the praises of that great and only adorable Being, who is his Father and our Father, his God and our God.

After the Administration.

Does our religion, my Christian brethren, afford us such excellent means for elevating the mind, superior to any thing that even philosophy can boast? Let it appear by our conduct, that we are possessed of truly elevated sentiments, and that our minds are divested of every affection that is mean, low, and unworthy of us. If we consider this world as merely a passage to a better, let us habitually regard it as a *means*, and be careful not to rest in it as an *end*. Let us not set our affections upon any thing here below; but let our conversation be in heaven, and let us mind chiefly the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

If we consider ourselves as children of God, and heirs of immortality, such as the apostle styles heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus, let us be careful to act a part that shall be truly God-like, that is, disinterestedly benevolent, in imitation of him who is good to all, even the unthankful and unworthy; and let those who are ever so poor, do nothing that shall be unworthy of those who are truly rich; rich in the sure reversion of an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Let not, then, the rich Christians despise the poor ones, nor the poor envy the rich, as there can be no good reason for either.

If these great views and expectations really fill the mind, they will exclude all sentiments that are base and grovelling; and the rich, the great, the powerful, and the wise, with respect to this world only, will appear to be truly abject and contemptible, when compared with the meanest Christians. Their enjoyments, even here below, especially those that have their seat in the *mind* and in the *heart*, (which are of far the greatest importance, and almost alone worth considering, in estimating the happiness of rational beings,) are infinitely inferior to his. And we must ever bear in mind, that all our enjoyments here below, even those which arise from a consciousness of integrity, and from the sense of our relation to God, will still be far short of that happiness which is not yet revealed to us, of that joy which is said to be un-

speakable and full of glory. For, as we are informed, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath laid up for them that love him.

A FUNERAL SERVICE.

Supposing the burying-ground to be near the place of public worship, let the people first assemble there, and the minister begin with reading all or part of the following passages of Scripture.

Job. xiv. 1. &c.

MAN that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.—His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee. Thou hast appointed his bounds, that he cannot pass.—All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee. Thou wilt have a desire for the works of thine hands.

Psalm xxxix. 4, &c.

Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee. Verily, every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show. Surely they are disquieted in vain. He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. And now, Lord, what wait I for? for my hope is in thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions, make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.—Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more.

Psalm xc. 1, &c.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth or the world; even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is

past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as asleep. In the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth.—The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four-score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.—So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

1 *Thess.* iv. 13, &c.

I would not have you ignorant, my brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that ye sorrow not 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, shall have no advantage of 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 the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 *Cor.* xv. 12, &c.

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And, if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.—Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order, Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming.

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power, for he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are

put under him, it is manifest that He is excepted who did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? Thou ignorant man, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed its own body.—So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown 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.

Behold I shew you a mystery: We shall not all 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? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let them then sing the following Hymn.

HYMN LXIII. Second Book, by Dr. WATTS.

I.

HARK, from the tombs a doleful sound,
My ears attend the cry;
Ye living men come view the ground,
Where you must shortly lie.

II.

Princes, this clay must be your bed,
In spite of all your tow'rs;
The tall, the wise, the reverend head,
Must lie as low as ours.

III.

Great God ! is this our certain doom ?
 And are we still secure ;
 Still walking downward to our tomb,
 And yet prepare no more ?

IV.

Grant us the power of quick'ning grace,
 To fit our souls to fly ;
 Then, when we drop this dying flesh,
 We'll rise above the sky.

Or HYMN IV. Book i.

I.

NAKED as from the earth we came,
 And crept to life at first ;
 We to the earth return again,
 And mingle with the dust.

II.

The dear delights we here enjoy,
 And fondly call our own,
 Are but short favours, borrowed now,
 To be repaid anon.

III.

'Tis God that lifts our comforts high,
 Or sinks them in the grave.
 He gives and (blessed be his name)
 He takes but what he gave.

IV.

Peace ! all our angry passions, then :
 Let each rebellious sigh
 Be silent at his sovereign will,
 And every murmur die.

V.

If smiling mercy crown our lives,
 Its praises shall be spread,
 And we'll adore the justice too,
 That strikes our comforts dead.

After this, let the person who officiates pray as follows :

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God : we adore thee as the maker, and supreme disposer of all things ; believing that nothing can come to pass, throughout the whole extent of thy works, without thy knowledge and influence. Thou dost whatsoever thou pleasest in the armies of heaven above, and among the inhabitants of the earth here beneath. None can stay thine hand, or say unto thee, what doest thou ?

Thou hast been pleased in great wisdom, as well as in awful justice, to appoint unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment. Thou hast said to the whole human race, Dust ye are, and to dust ye shall return. Grant that when we see this awful sentence put in execution, when we are conducting our friends, relations, and acquaintance to the silent grave ; while we are committing earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust, we may be seriously reminded of our own mortality ; and be thereby excited to arise and be doing, working the work of thee our God while it is day, since the night of death comes, and may surprise us, in which no man can work. For in the grave there is no remembrance of thee, O God. In that house appointed for all living, there is no work or device, no knowledge or wisdom ; but when this period of our trial and probation shall be expired in death, he that is holy shall be holy still, and he that is unclean shall be unclean still. May we, therefore, while our characters remain unfixed, and before our irrevocable doom be passed ; may we even *now*, while now is the accepted time, while now is the day of salvation, turn from all dead, unprofitable works, to serve thee the living and the true God ; that, having by the help of these considerations been enabled, in some good measure, to live the life of the righteous, our latter end may be also like his, full of hope and joy ; and, whenever we are called to bid adieu to all mortal things, may we have the Christian triumphant song in our mouths, O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ?

Influenced by these just motives, may we pass the whole time of our sojourning here below in thy fear, avoiding every appearance of evil, and the most distant approaches towards it ; that, when the house of this our tabernacle shall be dissolved, we may have a building of thee our God, a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.

Whilst thou art pleased to continue us in this uncertain state of being, we would cultivate an habitual resignation to thy will; having an entire confidence in the wisdom and goodness of thy providence, and rejoicing that thou, the Lord God omnipotent, reignest over all. Having our hearts thus fixed, stayed upon thee, may we be prepared to meet all the events of life with devout composure. In the most afflicting dispensations of thy providence, knowing that we are in thy wise and gracious hands, may we in patience possess our own souls, exercising a steady trust and confidence in thee, the rock of ages, the sure resting-place of all generations; ever disposed to say, Not our wills, but thy will, heavenly Father, be done. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord. Thus may we grow wiser and better by all that we suffer, as well as by all that we enjoy, in this life; training up in thy love and in thy fear, for a glorious and happy immortality.

Hear us, Almighty God, in these our requests; accept of us, and bless us, as the disciples of thy Son Christ Jesus; through whom, to thee, O Father, the only living and true God, be glory for ever. Amen.

*Let the company then proceed to the grave, and when the corpse is deposited in it, and before it is filled up with the earth, let the minister speak as follows: **

I AM the resurrection and the life, saith our Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

I know that my Redeemer liveth, said Job, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my flesh, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

Let us, then, my Christian brethren, with seriousness, but without dread, draw near and behold this cold and silent grave: for such is the last abode of all the living. Narrow and confined as it is, it will suffice for the richest and the greatest upon earth; for naked we came into this world, and naked we must all return out of it. Here all worldly distinctions are at an end.

Healthy and vigorous as many of us here present may be,

* Or, if the weather be rainy, the whole service may be performed in the place of worship. (P.)

extensive as may be the schemes and projects that we are forming, to aggrandize ourselves or our families, to such small graves shall we, and all that we are concerned to provide for, finally come. Here the worms shall prey upon us, or the whole body soon go to corruption.

But, confined as this grave is, and close as the earth will soon cover the body we are now committing to it, the time is coming when this grave, and when all graves, shall open, and when the sea also shall give up its dead. Liberty will then be given to the captives, and life will return to their decayed and perished bodies. They will even rise with renewed vigour. This corruptible body will then become incorruptible, and this mortal will put on immortality. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible: when they who have done good shall have a resurrection to life, never to die any more, but shall be for ever with the Lord.

I heard a voice from heaven, says John, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.

Let us, then, attend to the voice of Divine Providence, which, while it spares us in these events, does likewise speak to us in them, and in a very audible voice says to us all, Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.

Let us not, then, grieve over our departed friends as those who have no hope; but, being persuaded that this separation, though painful, is but a temporary thing, let it quicken our diligence in preparing to meet our virtuous friends once more; in a place where we shall not find them burthened with the pains, infirmities, and weaknesses which often embitter our lives here below; and where, if we be equally virtuous, we shall be equally happy with them for ever.

Let us, then, my sorrowing brethren, comfort one another with these words; and continue steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour shall not finally be in vain in the Lord.

The Blessing.

MAY grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, be with us all evermore. Amen.

PRAYERS, &c. FOR A FAST-DAY.

The Introductory Prayer.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God: we thy servants, and the subjects of thy government, would approach thy presence with the deepest humility and self-abasement; thankfully accepting thy gracious encouragement, in all things, by prayer, and by supplication, with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto thee.

Upon this occasion, when thy judgments are abroad in the earth, and we of this nation have, in thy righteous displeasure, been made to drink deep of the cup of affliction, we would humbly prostrate ourselves before thee, as the most high over all the earth. Thou art the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Thou livest and reignest for ever and ever. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. All the inhabitants of the earth are as nothing before thee. Thou doest according to thy will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. All thy works are truth, and those that walk in pride thou art able to abase.

Thou sittest on the circle of the heavens, and from thence beholdest all the inhabitants of the earth. Thou fashionest their hearts alike; thou considerest all their works. In vain, then, should we endeavour to cloak our iniquity before thy face, to whom all things are naked and open. To us, O Lord, belong shame and confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee; but to thee, O God, belong mercy and forgiveness.

Therefore would we now return unto thee with our whole hearts, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. We would rend our hearts, and not our garments, and turn unto thee, the Lord our God; for thou art gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. We, therefore, earnestly entreat and humbly hope, that thou wilt turn from us thy fierce anger, that we perish not.

May all the people of this land prepare their hearts aright for the service of this day. May they be truly sensible that in all our distresses thou only art our refuge and our strength, a present help in time of trouble; and that if God be for us, we need not fear what man can do to us. May we all be duly

sensible that it is our iniquities alone that separate between thee and us, and that cause thee to hide thy face from us.

May the services of this day be the means of leading us to acknowledge thee in all our ways, as the sovereign disposer of all affairs and of all events; that, for the future, thy fear may be more before our eyes, and we may be better disposed for the faithful discharge of our respective duties in life.

Be with all thy ministering servants who exhort thy people in thy name this day. May they cry aloud and not spare. May they shew the inhabitants of this land their transgressions and their sins; and may their seasonable and earnest admonitions be effectual for the reformation of manners, among all ranks and degrees of men; that, with the return of national virtue, we may regain thy favour, and secure the return of national prosperity and glory.

Hear us, Almighty God, in these our requests; accept of us, and bless us, as the disciples of thy Son Christ Jesus, through whom to thee, O Father, the only living and true God, be glory for ever. Amen.

Chapters proper to be read, *Neh. ix.*, *Is. i.*, *Jer. xviii.*, *Hos. iv.*

Psalms of Dr. Watts proper to be sung, *Ps. xxxvi. xciii. cxxxv. cxxxvi. cxxxviii.*

The Concluding Prayer.

O LORD God Almighty: Thou, even thou, art God alone. Thou hast made heaven, yea the heaven of heavens, and all their hosts; the earth, and all that are therein; the sea, and all that are therein; and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, in wisdom and in perfect goodness hast thou made them all. Thou art he who hast made us, and not we ourselves; we are the workmanship of thy hands, what thy fingers have framed.

We thank thee for the noble powers and faculties of our minds; for the gift of reason, whereby we are raised above the brutes that perish; and especially for our social affections, by means of which we are led and enabled to form the most important and useful connexions with our fellow-creatures; in consequence of which, better provision is made for our defence, and for the supply of our common wants.

We acknowledge thy hand in the formation of the several

societies and communities that subsist among men. Thou appointest the bounds of all our habitations, wherever we are dispersed over the face of the earth. Thou rulest among the children of men, and givest the kingdoms of them to whomsoever thou pleasest; the extent of their power, and all their advantages, being marked out for them by thy counsel, in the wonderful order of thy providence.

We thank thee for the favour thou hast shewn to this our native country in particular: Through thy bounty we enjoy the blessings of a fruitful soil and of a temperate and healthful climate; equally removed from the burning heat of some countries and the inclement cold of others. Thou hast given us the surrounding sea for our defence, and the means of our commerce, riches, and power.

We thank thee that thou hast not given us in subjection to any other people; but that we are a free and an independent nation. We thank thee, also, that we are not only a free people with respect to foreign nations, but also with respect to the princes and governors whom thou, in thy providence, hast set over us; so that our lives, our liberties, and our properties, are not at the disposal of any other than ourselves; that we can sit under our own vines, and under our own fig-trees, without any to make us afraid.

We thank thee for the many great and wonderful interpositions of thy providence in our favour to deliver us from the greatest of all temporal evils that can befall a nation, arbitrary power. Truly may we say, If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then had our enemies swallowed us up quick. But, when all other help failed, thou wast a present help in time of trouble. Therefore would we magnify the Lord, and rejoice in God our Saviour: Teach us rightly to value, and diligently to improve, this great blessing of national liberty, which thy providence has, in so remarkable a manner, secured to us.

In a more especial manner do we thank thee, the Father of lights, and the Fountain of all true wisdom, for the spiritual blessings with which thou hast distinguished this people. We thank thee that to us, who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, the glorious light of thy Son's gospel hath shined; that to us, in this remote corner of the world, life and immortality are brought to light.

We adore thy goodness, also, that though we, together with the greatest part of the Christian world, were again sunk in gross antichristian darkness, the light of the Reform-

ation has been extended to us ; so that our worship of thee does not now consist of superstitious and impious rites, which reflect dishonour on thy perfections, and tend to defeat the excellent moral uses of thine everlasting gospel ; and especially that we are not thinking to do thee service by the persecution and massacre of our fellow-creatures. May we be careful to remove still farther from the dreadful corruptions of the Church of Rome, till we shall come entirely out from her, and be separate, touching none of her unclean things, but serve thee, who art a spirit, in spirit and in truth.

We lament before thee the ungrateful returns that we have made for thy manifold goodness to us, and our misimprovement and abuse of it. We lament especially that profaneness and disregard of thine authority which prevail so much in the lower ranks of this people ; the luxury, venality, and irreligion of the higher ranks, and the carelessness and inattention of all.

We lament the prevailing lukewarmness in the cause of virtue and truth, which has greatly increased in time of peace and security ; so that we have not made the progress that might have been expected from us in the reformation of our holy religion ; nor has the purity of our manners corresponded to the degree of purity in doctrine to which we have attained. Justly mightest thou expostulate with us, as with thy people of old, and say, What could have been done more to this my vineyard, than I have done to it, and yet when I looked that it should have brought forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes ?

We have had many warnings in the course of thy providence, to return from our evil ways ; but we have disregarded them. We have held fast our iniquity, and would not let it go, till it has nearly proved our ruin.

But, though our iniquities have abounded, and the love of the generality has waxed cold, we trust there are many righteous among us. May the irreligious among us be reclaimed, and may those who are in any measure virtuous and good, improve more and more in an unfeigned love of thee and of their fellow-creatures ; and may they be actuated with greater zeal and ardour in every good cause ; that, though we have done iniquity, we may do so no more ; that we may be again that happy people whose God is the Lord, that thou mayest again delight over us to do us good ; and that on the solid foundation of public virtue, the public happiness and tranquillity may be established.

We have all too far gone astray from the paths of virtue, whereby we have rendered ourselves obnoxious to thy just displeasure. But do thou turn us again, O thou God of our salvation, and cause thy face to shine upon us, that we may be saved. May all persons exert themselves in their several stations to recover a sense of true piety, virtue, and moderation, in all their enjoyments; and may they promote a strenuous application to the duties of their respective places and professions.

May those who are at the head of our affairs have wisdom and integrity proper for their important trusts, in this difficult conjuncture of public affairs. May their views be not their own emolument, or to take any advantage of the public distress, but to promote the public good. Succeed all their wise and well-meant endeavours, and overrule all their measures, for the real good of this people; and may no arrow formed against us, at home or abroad, be permitted to prosper.

Bless thy servant, our Sovereign. Grant him long to live, and make him the happy instrument in thy hands of continuing and confirming to us our invaluable privileges, civil and religious. We thank thee for the many and great blessings which have been hitherto secured to us by the princes of this family; and so long as they pursue the same equitable and righteous maxims of government, and have the prosperity of this people in view, may they never want the hearts and the confidence of their subjects.

Bless the queen, and all the branches of the royal family. May they be so educated as to acquire talents, virtues, and maxims, suited to their exalted stations.

Bless the nobility and gentry of the land. May they study to adorn the rank they hold in the community, by being useful in proportion to their power and influence. Instead of promoting, may they sincerely endeavour to put a stop to, that effeminacy of manners, and that addictedness to criminal pleasure, which prevail too much among us. May there be no examples among them of men whom the most affluent circumstances cannot satisfy; and who, influenced by a spirit of avarice and rapaciousness, scruple no methods, how ruinous soever to their country, in order to increase their fortunes, or to repair them when wasted by gaming, profusion, and vice.

Grant to those of the lower orders in the community the blessings of peace and plenty. May the poor have a spirit of industry and frugality. May they have full employment,

and be satisfied with bread, through the increase of our manufactures and commerce. May they ever be disposed to submit to salutary laws, and to just, though strict government; but may they never want a proper sense of their natural and civil rights, or courage to assert them, whenever and by whomsoever they are invaded.

Bless the clergy of the Established Church, both superior and subordinate. As ministers of the gospel of Christ, whose kingdom is not of this world, may they not be intent upon seeking their own worldly preferment, but only solicitous about the faithful discharge of their proper duty, that they may save themselves and their hearers. Give them a spirit of moderation towards those who dissent from their method of worshipping thee; and who have adopted religious sentiments, and modes of religious worship, which they think to be more agreeable to the simplicity of the gospel, and farther removed from the errors and abuses of the Church of Rome. May they themselves be led to see the imperfections which yet remain among them; and may they have the Christian courage to act according to the dictates of their consciences, and unite to promote a farther reformation.

Teach us who, in obedience to the dictates of our consciences, dissent from the Established Church, to be thankful to thy good providence for the privileges which we enjoy; at the same time that we cherish the hope of obtaining, in thy due time, all the rights which we justly claim, in common with all our fellow-citizens. Rejoicing in the liberty of the gospel, may we cultivate a spirit of meekness and moderation towards those who think and act differently from us; and may there be a holy emulation among all who profess the gospel of Jesus, to adorn the profession they make of it, by a suitable and an exemplary life and conversation.

Bless all schools and seminaries of useful learning throughout the land. May youth be so trained up in them, that they may acquire such knowledge, and form such virtuous habits, as shall prepare them for filling stations of importance and usefulness in the community; that they may be a blessing to their country, and the ornaments of their respective families.

While it is thus the study of all ranks and professions faithfully to discharge the proper duty of their place and station, and to be unto thee a peculiar people zealous of good works, may we be that happy people whose God is the Lord. Do thou rejoice over us to do us good; and, having served our generation in this world, according to thy will,

and having acted the part of good citizens on earth, may we be training up to be citizens of heaven, and be finally admitted into thine everlasting kingdom.

Hear us, Almighty God, in these our requests, accept of us, and bless us, as the disciples of thy Son Jesus Christ; through whom, to thee, O Father, the only living and true God, be glory for ever. Amen.

An Introductory Prayer on a day of Public Thanksgiving.

ALMIGHTY and ever-blessed God: we adore thee as the great and only potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, the father of all the families of the earth, and the sovereign disposer of all affairs, and of all events. Thou dost whatsoever thou pleasest, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Thou art the giver of every good and every perfect gift, respecting nations as well as individuals of mankind. Peace, plenty, and prosperity of every kind, are the gifts of thy bounty; as war, famine, pestilence, and every species of national calamity; are thy righteous judgments.

We, who are now assembled before thee, as part of the community to which we belong, would come into thy presence with thanksgiving, and into thy courts with praise; we would be thankful unto thee and speak well of thy name, on account of the favours with which thou hast been pleased to distinguish our native country. Thou makest wars to cease from the ends of the earth, and stillest the tumult of the people; as thou raisest or stillest the waves of the sea, and sayest to them, Hitherto shall ye go, and no farther. Thou hast not suffered our foes to prevail over us; but hast been a present help in time of trouble. Thou also causest the earth to bring forth its increase, and thy paths drop fatness upon us.

May our hearts be duly impressed with a sense of all thy distinguishing goodness to us; and may the joint effect of thy judgments and of thy mercies be our turning from all sin and wickedness, which are offensive in thy sight, and which expose us to thy righteous displeasure, to the love and practice of all virtue and goodness, from which alone we can expect the continuance of thy favour and blessing.

May we, as a nation, have thy fear before our eyes, that we may not sin against thee; but that we may serve thee in the abundance of all things, and God, even our God, may bless us:

Hear us, &c.

A CATECHISM

FOR

Children and Young Persons.

The Seventh Edition, with Improvements.

“Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

SOLOMON.

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 [London, 1802.*]
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P R E F A C E.

THE method of communicating instruction by catechizing is of great antiquity; but this is not my reason for adopting or recommending it. It seems to be peculiarly adapted to young minds, as it approaches to the ease and freedom of conversation. And since questions resemble those inquiries which children themselves frequently make of their own accord, when they hear or see any thing that they do not understand, this method tends to engage the attention of children much more than talking to them in a continued strain.

Besides, when they are made to repeat a thing themselves, they will more naturally put questions to their instructor, if they do not understand what they are saying, which will properly introduce the more useful, because the more familiar part of the exercise. For, I would propose that the questions in the Catechism serve only to point out the principal things about which it may be proper to talk with a child, and that they be broken into a greater number of other questions and answers, too particular to be printed at large, but such as will naturally suggest themselves in the course of catechizing.

It is objected to catechizing, that, in this method of instruction, we teach children the use of words, before we can possibly give them adequate ideas of their meaning; and, therefore,

* The first Edition appeared. in 1768.

that we only lead them to entertain a confused and wrong notion of things. But this is, in fact, the case with almost every word a child learns; and there is no remedy for it. Children learn all words mechanically, by imitation; and, from the same principle, will even repeat them in connexion with other words, long before they have any tolerable idea of their meaning; as may be found by questioning them about the words they use. But by using them themselves, and hearing other persons use them, in a great variety of connexions, they learn their true sense by degrees. This, however, is always a work of time.

Besides, an imperfect knowledge of things is often better than no knowledge at all. In this case, if a child do but entertain a very imperfect idea of God, of his duty, and of a future state, he will get such ideas as will be of some use to him at present, but of much more as he grows up; and they will be of much more use then, for, having been impressed early, when they could be of little use, or even if they should, at that time, be of no use at all. A reverence for its general dictates, or even for the words and forms belonging to it, without any clear ideas, if it be inculcated early, when the mind is tender, and apt to receive impressions, will lay a foundation for the principle of conscience; or, however, will come greatly in aid of that principle, and operate as a real restraint upon vice and immorality as long as a person lives. Besides, the ideas that we ourselves, and even the most intelligent of mankind, have of God and of a future state are, no doubt, very imperfect; yet who can deny their being useful? For my own part, I think I have the greatest reason to be thankful to God for the happiness of a religious education, though I was taught many things I never understood, and even many that I do not believe.

This objection to the business of catechizing, I imagine, took its rise from the style and contents of some particular Catechisms, which were drawn up soon after the reformation from Popery, and which were, therefore, necessarily encumbered with the technical terms of a metaphysical system, that had its rise in times of great darkness and superstition. But if we condemn every thing that has been abused, we must deprive ourselves of every thing that God has made, or that man has ever devised, for our use; for there is no good thing we can name, but has, in ignorant or designing hands, been perverted to some mischievous or improper purpose.

To avoid these inconveniences as much as possible, I have, in imitation of the simplicity of Dr. Watts, studied to make

this Catechism, and especially the first part of it, very plain ; and have not introduced into it the technical terms of any particular system of religion whatever. I think I have inserted nothing but what will be acknowledged to belong to common Christianity ; and I also think, that it contains all the truths of Christianity that can greatly influence men's practice ; for these are very few, and such as a child may be made to understand. The whole business of practical preaching, copious as the subject is, serves only to illustrate and enforce the few plain principles of the first part of this small Catechism.

In this view, it may be of some use to persons whose minds have been bewildered in the labyrinths of theological systems ; as they may see, in a small compass, every thing that revelation contains, which can influence the hearts and lives of men, all that is of *practical use*, and, consequently, all that is properly *fundamental* in religion.

However, persons of all parties must, I think, agree with me in this, that the first part of this Catechism contains what is most necessary to be known concerning revelation, and therefore may serve as an introductory Catechism, and may not improperly be taught previous to any other that may be thought to enter more fully into the doctrines of Christianity.

I cannot help wishing that ministers in general would draw up their own Catechisms and forms of instruction of all kinds. Had this been the practice for a century past, we should have had something excellent in the kind before this time ; and no one particular form, as the Assembly's, would have acquired the degree of reverence which sets it upon a level with the Scriptures. This idea in a manner enforces the use of it, and even makes it hazardous for many ministers to attempt to introduce any other, whereby religious knowledge and all improvements are kept at a stand ; and those ministers who cannot with a good conscience make use of that Catechism, use no Catechism at all, and conceive a dislike to the whole business of catechizing.

The age at which it may be proper to teach the first part of this Catechism, I think, will be, in general, about four or five. And I think it will not be improper, in some cases, to teach it to servants as well as to children. But every thing of this nature will depend upon particular circumstances, concerning which the master of a family only can judge.

The second part of the Catechism may either be committed to memory, like the first, or not, at the pleasure of

the teacher : or some of the answers may be committed to memory, and others not. It may be of use to young persons either way. I have endeavoured to make it less theoretical and more practical than any other Catechism that I have seen ; and this, I think, is an advantage.

With respect to catechizing, and every method of communicating instruction to children, let it be considered that it is much more the proper duty of the parent, than of the minister. But I would advise that ministers also give attention to it, and by hearing the children repeat the Catechism either stately or occasionally, encourage both parents and children in the exercise. Small rewards, properly distributed, may be of use to this purpose.

I shall not, in this place, enlarge upon the motives to a virtuous and religious education of children, to which, I hope, this method of instruction, by catechizing, will contribute. I shall only conclude this Preface with observing, that this, Parents, is the greatest benefit you can confer upon your children. The riches and honours of this world are not to be compared with the solid advantages of a virtuous and religious education. It is a debt you owe to society ; it is also an important part of the duty you owe to God, the father of our spirits ; and it is, at the same time, the best provision you can make for the peace and comfort of your own future lives. Children that have received early and lasting impressions in favour of virtue and religion, will be a support to you in life, will ease the pains of death, and be your crown of rejoicing in a better world hereafter.

PART I.

1. Question. *Can you tell me who made you?* Answer. God made me, and all things.

2. Q. *What did God make you, and all mankind for?* A. He made us to be good and happy.

3. Q. *What is to be good?* A. To be good is to love and obey our parents, to speak the truth always, and to be just and kind to all persons.

4. Q. *Can God know whether you be good or not?* A. Yes: for, though we cannot see God, he sees us wherever we are, by night as well as by day.

5. Q. *What will God do for you if you be good?* A. If we be good, God will love us and make us very happy.

6. Q. *What can you do for God, who is so good to you?* A. I can only love him, obey him, and be thankful to him. There is nothing that I can do for him.

7. Q. *Can you speak to God?* A. Yes; he has bid us pray to him for every thing that is fit for us, and he is always ready to hear us.

8. Q. *What will God do if you be not good?* A. If we be not good, God will be angry with us, and punish us.

9. Q. *Is God able to punish you if you be not good?* A. Yes: God, who made all things, is able to do all things. He can take away all our friends, and every thing that he has given us; and he can make us die whenever he pleases.

10. Q. *When you die, shall you ever live again?* A. Yes. God will some time raise us from the dead, and we shall die no more.

11. Q. *Where shall you live again if you have been good?* A. If I have been good, I shall go to heaven, and be very happy for ever.

12. Q. *Where shall you live again, if you have been wicked?* A. If I have been wicked, I shall go to hell, where I shall be very miserable.

13. Q. *Have you always been good?* A. No. I have very often done wrong, and offended God.

14. Q. *Are you not, then, afraid of God's anger?* A. Yes; but he has promised to forgive us, if we be sorry for our sins, and endeavour to sin no more.

15. Q. *Who hath told us that God will forgive us, if we repent of our sins, and endeavour to sin no more?* A. Many persons by whom God spake; and particularly *Jesus Christ*.

16. Q. *Who was Jesus Christ?* A. *Jesus Christ* was a person whom God sent to teach men their duty, and to persuade and encourage them to practise it.

17. Q. *What became of Jesus Christ?* A. He was put to death by wicked men, who would not hearken to him.

18. Q. *Is Christ dead now?* A. No. God raised him from the dead, and took him up into heaven.

19. Q. *Where do we learn what we know concerning Christ, and what he did, taught, and suffered for the good of men?* A. In the Bible, which we must diligently read and study, for our improvement in knowledge and goodness, in order to fit us for heaven.

PART II.

1. Q. *WHAT is the Bible?* A. The Bible is a collection of books written by good men, containing an account of what God has done for mankind, what he requires of them, and what they have to expect from him. These books are also called *the Scriptures*.

2. Q. *Have the Scriptures informed us what God himself is?* A. We learn in the Scriptures that God is a Being who had no beginning, and will have no end. He is almighty, perfectly wise, and infinitely good. He is every where present, and never changes in his nature or disposition.

3. Q. *In what manner has God made his great power known?* A. God made this world, together with the sun, moon, and stars. He made all kinds of plants and trees to grow out of the earth. He made all kinds of animals to live upon it, and he made man the chief and most excellent of them all.

4. Q. *In what does it appear that God is perfectly wise?* A. In bringing about all his designs in the best manner; in his knowing every thing, even the thoughts of our heart; in foreseeing all that will ever come to pass, and thereby governing the world by his providence.

5. Q. *What are the effects of the goodness of God?* A. He has made all living creatures capable of being happy; having provided for the supply of all their wants, by furnishing them with proper materials for their food, raiment, and every thing they have occasion for; and by giving all of them as much strength and sagacity as are necessary for their preservation and defence.

6. Q. *In what respects has God been good to men in particular?* A. Besides the provision he has made for feeding and clothing us, and giving us more understanding than brute creatures, he has sent good men from time to time to teach us his will, and to persuade men to turn from vice and wickedness, and to live good lives, in order to secure his favour, and obtain immortal happiness in the world to come.

* [7. Q. *Give me a few instances of the Divine wisdom and goodness in the world in general?* A. God has provided

* Dr. Priestley, in his "seventh Edition," had "printed in a smaller letter those questions which are either more burdensome to the memory, or of less importance." I have, in this Edition, distinguished those questions by a *crotchet*.

clouds to give rain, without which corn and plants could not grow; and the sun not only gives light, but also heat to raise the water in vapour, which again forms clouds, and so produces a perpetual supply of rain. He has provided different kinds of food suited to the natures of the different creatures he has made to live upon the earth; and, though other animals have not the reason of man, God has given them a principle, which we call *instinct*, whereby birds can build their own nests, and all of them can provide for their subsistence, preservation, and defence, better than we could do for them.

[8. Q. *Give some instances of the Divine goodness with respect to men?* A. Men could not live without seeing, and God has given them eyes to see, and has also made the light, without which our eyes would have been of no use to us. We often want to take things and carry them from place to place, and God has given us hands and fingers, whereby we can lay hold of them. We have occasion to move from one place to another, and he has made us with legs and feet, whereby we can walk, and go where we please. We cannot live without food, and he has both enabled us to get food from the earth, and made us with mouths to take it in, the teeth to chew it, and stomachs to digest it, and convert it into proper nourishment. All these things are proofs both of the wisdom and goodness of God.]

9. Q. *How doth God govern the world by his providence?* A. He suffers nothing to come to pass, but what tends to promote his design of making mankind virtuous and happy. His providence extends to the meanest creatures that he has made, and even a sparrow falls not to the ground without his will.

10. Q. *If nothing come to pass without the will of God, why doth he suffer storms and tempests, pain and sickness, which occasion such distress and misery to his creatures?* A. The evils and miseries of which we complain are intended for our good, though we are not always sensible of it. They are the corrections of a wise and affectionate parent.

11. Q. *What doth God require of us, in order to live and die in his favour?* A. All that God requires of us is comprehended in these two precepts, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.

12. Q. *In what manner must we express our love to God?* A. By a grateful sense of his goodness to us, by a constant care to do his will, and by an entire and cheerful submission to all the dispensations of his providence.

13. Q. *How must we express our love to our fellow-creatures?* A. By doing to others as we should think it right for them to do to us in the same circumstances.

[14. Q. *By what methods must we cherish our love to God, and increase our confidence in him?* A. We must frequently consider the benefits he confers upon us. We must also address ourselves to him in prayer; thanking him for the mercies he bestows upon us, confessing our sins before him, and asking of him whatever he knows to be needful and good for us.

[15. Q. *How shall we bring ourselves into the best disposition for performing our duty to God and man?* A. By a proper government of our passions according to the dictates of reason and conscience; by living in temperance and chastity, and never indulging a proud, malicious, or selfish temper.]

16. Q. *What must we do when persons affront and injure us?* A. We must not return evil for evil; and if they repent, we must forgive them, as we hope that God will forgive us our offences against him.

17. Q. *Hath the Divine Being any where delivered distinct directions concerning the several branches of our duty to him and to our fellow-creatures?* A. Yes; in the Ten Commandments, which he delivered to the children of Israel from Mount Sinai.

18. Q. *What is the first of these commandments?* A. Thou shalt worship no God but one.

19. Q. *What is the second?* A. Thou shalt not worship God by images, as if he had any particular form or shape.

20. Q. *What is the third?* A. Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain, by calling him to witness a falsehood, or by profane cursing and swearing.

21. Q. *What is the fourth?* A. Thou shalt rest one day in seven from all worldly business.

22. Q. *What is the fifth?* A. Thou shalt honour and obey thy parents.

23. Q. *What is the sixth?* A. Thou shalt not commit murder.

24. Q. *What is the seventh?* A. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

25. Q. *What is the eighth?* A. Thou shalt not steal.

26. Q. *What is the ninth?* A. Thou shalt not bear false witness.

27. Q. *What is the tenth?* A. Thou shalt not covet any thing that belongs to another person.

28. Q. *What are those principles which will most effectually*

lead to the observance of these, and all other of God's commandments? A. A high reverence for God, and a sincere good-will towards our fellow-creatures, joined with a just regard to our own real interest.

29. Q. *What is the best method we can take to guard ourselves from all vice and wickedness?* A. By being careful not to indulge sinful thoughts, and by correcting every thing that is amiss in the beginning, before we have become accustomed to it, and have gotten a habit which cannot easily be broken; particularly, by avoiding the company of wicked persons, who would soon make us like themselves; and by being, in a more especial manner, upon our guard against those vices to which our situation and circumstances make us peculiarly prone.

30. Q. *What is the best method to guard ourselves against being seduced by wicked company?* A. To choose virtuous and good persons for our favourite companions; and to propose to ourselves the imitation of good men whom we read of in the Scriptures; especially, the imitation of Christ, who was a perfect pattern of all the most excellent Christian virtues.

31. Q. *What are the vices and follies to which young persons are most exposed?* A. Young persons are most in danger of vanity, peevishness, disobedience to parents, an excessive love of pleasure, and extravagance; all arising from strong and ungoverned passions.

32. Q. *What are the vices that poor people are liable to?* A. The poor are most in danger of being induced to steal, and of envying and undermining their superiors.

33. Q. *What vices are the rich most in danger of?* A. The rich are most in danger of being proud, of living in idleness and luxury, of oppressing the poor, and of forgetting God.

34. Q. *In what virtues, then, must the poor and the rich endeavour to excel?* A. The poor should be content with their low situation in life, and, by frugality and industry, endeavour to make their circumstances as easy as they can. And the rich should be humble, and thankful to God for all they enjoy, and endeavour to do as much good to others as possible.

35. Q. *Is any man able to fulfil all the commands of God, so as to live entirely without sin?* A. No. Our merciful God and Father knows that we are not able to do this, and therefore does not expect it of us. He only requires that we

repent of the sins we commit, and endeavour to live better lives for the future.

36. Q. *What should a sense of our frailty and proneness to sin teach us?* A. It should teach us humility and watchfulness, make us earnest in our prayers to God, to enable us to resist temptation, and to strengthen and confirm our good dispositions.

37. Q. *In what manner will God reward our faithful, though imperfect obedience to his will?* A. He will so order all the events of this life, prosperous and adverse, as that they shall be the best for us, whether we can see them to be so or not; and he will make us completely happy in another and a better world.

38. Q. *In what manner must all men spend the greatest part of their time in this world?* A. In a diligent application to that kind of honest labour or employment which is necessary for procuring suitable supplies of the good things of this life for ourselves, and those who immediately depend upon us, and by which we can, at the same time, be of the most use to our fellow-creatures in general.

39. Q. *Will not an application to worldly business interfere with the duties of religion?* A. No; provided it be not immoderate. On the contrary, idleness is the greatest inlet to vice and wickedness of all kinds. Besides, we please God the most by doing that which makes ourselves and others the most happy.

[40. Q. *Whom do the Scriptures inform us that God sent into the world, in order to reclaim men from wickedness and to persuade and encourage them to return to virtue and goodness?* A. Besides the notices which mankind in general had of his will, God was pleased to favour the Jews with a particular revelation. To them he sent Moses, who gave them laws, assured them of the favour of God in case of obedience, and threatened them with his displeasure in case of disobedience.]

41. Q. *In what character did the Divine Being represent himself to the Israelites by Moses?* A. Speaking to Moses from Mount Sinai, he proclaimed himself, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. *Exod. xxxiv. 6.*

42. Q. *Who succeeded Moses as messengers from God to the people of Israel?* A. Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others, who are called prophets; and who succeeded

one another almost without intermission, for the space of several hundred years.

43. Q. *What is the general strain of their preaching and exhortation?* A. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; why will ye die, Oh house of Israel? As I live, says God, I will not the death of a sinner, but had rather that he would return and live.

[44. Q. *Did the Divine Being enjoin the people of Israel nothing besides the practice of moral virtue?* A. He enjoined them the performance of various ceremonies, to keep up the remembrance of certain remarkable facts, to prevent them from mixing with idolatrous nations, and to teach them many important moral truths in a symbolical manner, suited to their low apprehensions.]

45. Q. *What proof did Moses and the prophets give, that they were sent of God?* A. They performed many miracles, which could not have been done without the power of God being with them. Under Moses the people of Israel walked on dry land through the Red Sea, and were fed with manna from heaven forty years. The strong walls of Jericho fell down before them; the nation was often delivered from their enemies by the immediate hand of God; and most of the prophets foretold some great event which came to pass in their own time.

46. Q. *By whom did God speak, not only to the Jews, but to the whole world of mankind?* A. By Jesus Christ, who brought the most complete and extensive revelation of the will of God to man.

47. Q. *What was the proper design and end of Christ's coming into the world?* A. He came to make men happy in turning them from their iniquities, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

48. Q. *In what respects was Christ superior to the prophets who went before him?* A. In the perfection of his example, the purity of his precepts, and the importance of the motives by which he enforced them; more especially, as he gave us more distinct information concerning a future state of rewards and punishments. He also sent his disciples to teach all nations the knowledge of God.

49. Q. *Who put Christ to death, and by what death did he die?* A. At the instigation of the Jews, the Romans (under whose dominion they then were) caused him to be put to death by crucifixion; which is a very painful and lingering death, and that to which only slaves and the vilest malefactors were exposed.

[50. Q. *What was the chief strain of Christ's preaching?*

A. He reformed many abuses, by which the Jewish teachers had corrupted the law of God. He taught men to worship God not so much by external services, as in spirit and in truth. He frequently inculcated the duties of loving one another, of forgiving our enemies, and of doing to others as we would that they should do to us; and he enforced a regard to these virtues by the doctrines of a resurrection, and of a judgment to come.]

51. Q. *What proof did Christ give of his divine mission?*

A. He healed multitudes of sick persons by a word speaking. He gave sight to the blind, raised persons from the dead, and rose himself from the grave after he had been dead three days, as he had foretold.

52. Q. *Did Christ appoint no outward ordinances, as means of promoting his religion?* A. He commanded his disciples to go and baptize all nations, upon their conversion to Christianity; and he also appointed them to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him. This rite is called the *Lord's Supper?*

53. Q. *What is the meaning of baptism?* A. The washing with water in baptism, probably represents the purity of heart and life required of all who become the disciples of Christ?

54. Q. *What is the nature and use of the Lord's Supper?*

A. By eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Christ, we keep alive the memory of his death and resurrection; we acknowledge ourselves to be Christians; we cherish a grateful sense of the blessings of the gospel of Christ, and strengthen our resolution to live as becomes his disciples.

[55. Q. *What provision did Christ make for propagating his religion after his death?* A. He appointed twelve persons, called apostles, to be witnesses of his life and doctrine. These he sent into all the nations of the world, giving them the power of working miracles in his name. From this time the knowledge of Christianity was spread over a great part of the world; and in all Christian countries there are ministers of the gospel, whose office it is to instruct men in it, and to persuade and encourage them to practise the duties of it.]

56. Q. *Had Christ no particular reward for what he did and suffered on the behalf of men?* A. Because he humbled himself unto death, God has highly exalted him, and made him head over all things to his church; and at the end of the world he will come to judge the living and the dead.

For this hope that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame of that ignominious death.

57. Q. *What do the Scriptures say concerning the day of judgment?* A. That Christ will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, when every eye shall see him; that he will then separate the wicked from the good; that he will send the wicked into a place of punishment, and take the righteous to a place of happiness, where they shall live for ever with himself.

[58. Q. *Do the Scriptures inform us of any other intelligent being besides men?* A. We read of angels who have sometimes made their appearance in human forms, and who have been sent by God upon messages of importance to men.

[59. Q. *What was the state of the world before revelation?* A. The greatest part of mankind, when they were without a revelation, worshipped a great number of false and imaginary gods, bowing down to images of wood and stone, the work of their own hands. They were abandoned to wickedness, and even practised very abominable customs, as methods of serving and pleasing their gods; and they had no clear notion of a future state, for the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice.

[60. Q. *Has the religion of Christ always remained pure, as it came from the hands of its author?* A. No. It soon began to be corrupted; and, about the end of a thousand five hundred years, it was (among the Papists) such as almost entirely defeated the original design of it, to promote virtue and piety in the world. In many cases it was made to serve as a cover for vice and wickedness. But at length it pleased God to bring about a reformation, which is going on, and we hope will go on, till our religion be, in all respects, as pure, and as efficacious to promote real goodness of heart and life, as it was at the first.]

A Prayer for a Child.

ALMIGHTY GOD and heavenly Father, I thank thee for all thy goodness to me, and thy daily care over me, in preserving me from the many dangers to which I am continually exposed. Forgive, I pray thee, whatever I have done that is displeasing to thee, and teach me to offend thee no more, but to love and obey thee better as long as I live. Grant unto me, and to all my relations and friends,* whatever thou seest to be

* Here the child may be taught to name his father, mother, brothers, sisters, or any other near relation or friend. (P.)

good for us in this world, and bring us to heaven and happiness hereafter, according to thy gracious promises to all thy faithful servants, by Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Prayer for a Young Person.

ALMIGHTY GOD and most merciful Father ! I adore thee as my Maker and Preserver, and the giver of every good thing that I enjoy. I thank thee for the gift of reason, whereby I am capable of knowing thee, and of learning and doing thy will ; but more especially I thank thee for thy promise of the forgiveness of sins, to all sincere penitents, and of eternal life to all who carefully obey thee, delivered to the world by thy Son Christ Jesus. Do thou, out of thy abundant goodness, forgive all my sins, and strengthen my resolution to keep thy holy commandments for the time to come. Enable me to be, in a more especial manner, upon my guard against those vices and follies to which my youth is peculiarly prone. Teach me to avoid the snares of bad company, and to continue in the practice of my duty, notwithstanding all the temptations to which I am exposed. Make me resigned to thy will in all the events of life, and to grow wiser and better by all the dispensations of thy providence. May I love all mankind as my brethren, and forgive those that have offended me, as I myself hope to be forgiven. And, after a faithful and cheerful discharge of my duty on earth, may I be received into thy kingdom of glory, and into the company of all good men, and of Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer.

OUR FATHER, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

* Dr. Priestley printed in connexion with this Catechism, and as an introduction to that which follows, "Dr. Watts's Historical Catechism, with Alterations." These alterations were very few, and merely *doctrinal*, such as any instructor may easily make for himself. I have therefore thought it unnecessary, if not improper, to print among Dr. Priestley's Works, a piece so easily procured as Dr. Watts's Historical Catechism.

A
Scripture
CATECHISM,

CONSISTING OF

A SERIES OF QUESTIONS, WITH REFERENCES TO THE
 SCRIPTURES INSTEAD OF ANSWERS.

The Third Edition.

“From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.” PAUL.

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 [London, 1792.]
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PREFACE.

ST. PAUL mentions it as a great advantage to *Timothy*, and a subject of great commendation to his parents, that *from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures*; which, he says, *were able to make him wise unto salvation.* 2 *Tim.* iii. 15. By the Scriptures the apostle must have meant the books of the *Old Testament*; but the collection is now rendered much more valuable by the addition of those of the *New*. Since these inestimable writings are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness,” and are calculated to make men “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,” (*vers.* 16, 17,) it must be a matter of the greatest importance that young persons be instructed in the knowledge of them; and this course of instruction, in order to be effectual, cannot be begun too early.

The sooner the mind is impressed with just maxims of conduct, with a sense of the Divine authority, the hope of his favour, and the fear of his displeasure; the sooner a person is made sensible of the charms of good example, and filled with abhorrence by a view of what is odious and contemptible in human characters (and for all these purposes the books of Scripture are most excellent) the more probable it is that the effect will be lasting and happy. This course of instruction, I know by experience, may be begun, and carried on with success, as soon as a child is capable of any

kind of oral instruction whatever ; and none but those who have made the trial can imagine, with how much pleasure children will listen to the most instructive scripture histories, and how soon they will enter into the meaning and spirit of them.

But the following Catechism is not designed for the use of young children. These must be taught without a book, by the parent telling them the stories in the most familiar manner, selecting the most important and engaging circumstances, and making them tell the particulars in their own way after him. But as soon as persons are capable of reading the Bible with understanding, I think it may be sufficient to propose to them such questions as I have here drawn up, and to refer them to the Scriptures themselves for the answers. I do not, indeed, think that it can be reasonably expected that a person should be able to prepare tolerably judicious answers to *some* of the questions in this Catechism, under sixteen or eighteen years of age ; but there are others which will not be too difficult for those who are but nine or ten years old ; so that, with a little judgment in the use of it, this collection of questions may be useful in the instruction of young persons of any age. Upon the whole, however, I would advise that this Catechism be taught to a class of persons not quite so young as those for whose use my other Catechism, and especially the first part of it, was particularly calculated.

The questions in this Catechism are chiefly *historical*, because this part of the Bible may be most conveniently taught in this manner ; and that young persons may have a clearer idea of the order of events, I have collected the history of the kings of Judea and Israel from the *Prophets*, as well as from the books of *Kings* and *Chronicles* ; reserving only a few miscellaneous prophecies for a separate Section. I have also reduced the four Evangelists into harmony, and have referred to all the different accounts of the same story. Those who have made a greater proficiency in the knowledge of the Scriptures may be required to compare them, and note the variations.

On the books of *Proverbs*, *Psalms*, *Ecclesiastes*, and other books, and parts of books, which are not historical, I have made but few questions. These books can only be recommended in general to the attention and study of young persons ; or particular parts of them may be committed to memory. Other books of Scripture, especially the prophetic, and some of the apostolical epistles, can hardly be well understood, except by persons of riper years. For this rea-

son I have been very sparing of the questions which refer to them.

In many cases, I am aware, that it will be necessary to divide these questions into various others, and also to diversify the form of expression, in order to lead those who are less experienced to the proper answers; but a very small degree of judgment and address will be sufficient for this purpose.

It will be a considerable advantage attending this method of instruction, that by it young persons will be introduced to an acquaintance with *the Scriptures themselves*, which will give them the truest idea of their contents and value. No answers framed to their hands could possibly effect this great and good purpose. If the answers to Catechisms be given in the very words of Scripture, yet the connexion in which such sentences are introduced, and consequently much of the peculiar propriety and force of them, is necessarily lost. Besides, Catechisms, upon this plan, cannot well comprise more than the *moral maxims* of Scripture, so that the *historical*, which is, in fact, the most useful part to young persons, must be omitted.

I hope also that those parents who have the true wisdom to see it to be a duty incumbent upon themselves to superintend the religious instruction of their children, and who will not refuse to take some pains for so valuable a purpose, will not be displeas'd with the opportunity which this scheme of a Catechism will afford them, of renewing and perfecting their own acquaintance with the history of the Bible. Indeed, it cannot be supposed that the most knowing in the Scriptures, should be able to make use of such a Catechism as this, in the instruction of his children, without some previous preparation; so that no person need to be ashamed, if it appear that he himself has something to learn in this business, as well as his child. But I hope that few of those who will make any inquiry after this Catechism, will object to it, because it is calculated to give themselves as well as their children, a more perfect knowledge of important facts and truths.

GENESIS.

IN how many days did God create the heavens and the earth? Ch. i. What was the work of each of the six days? Ch. i. What was the reason of the institution of the sab-

bath? Ch. ii. 2, 3; *Exod.* xx. 11. On what account were Adam and Eve cast out of the garden of Eden? Ch. iii. Recite the history of Cain and Abel. Ch. iv. What was the cause of the general deluge, and who survived it? Ch. vi. vii. viii. What token did God give that the earth should be no more destroyed by a flood? Ch. ix. 12. What sin was Noah guilty of? Ch. ix. 21. What occasioned the dispersion of mankind over the face of the earth? Ch. xi. 1—9. Of what country was Abraham a native; and on what account did he leave it to dwell in the land of Canaan? Ch. xi. 31; xii. 1—10. What promise did God make to Abraham when he first called him, and which he repeated afterwards? Ch. xii. 2, 3, xviii. 18, xxii. 17, 18. What service did Abraham render to Lot? Ch. xiv. Recite the history of the birth of Ishmael. Ch. xvi. On what account, and in what manner, were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed? Ch. xviii. xix. What was there extraordinary in the birth of Isaac? Ch. xvii. 16—22, xxi. 1—8. What became of Ishmael after the birth of Isaac? Ch. xxi. 9—21. How did God try the obedience of Abraham, with respect to his son Isaac? Ch. xxii. 1—19. How did Abraham procure a wife for his son Isaac? Ch. xxiv. What children had Isaac, and what were their different characters? Ch. xxv. 19—28. In what manner did Jacob deprive Esau of his birthright? Ch. xxv. 29—34, xxvii. 1—40. Whither did Jacob flee from the anger of his brother Esau? Ch. xxvii. 43, xxviii. 5. What wives and children had Jacob? Ch. xxix. 15—35, xxx. 1—25. On what account did Jacob leave Laban? Ch. xxxi. How was Jacob received by his brother Esau? Ch. xxxii. xxxiii. Of what crime were Simeon and Levi guilty, with respect to the Shechemites? Ch. xxxiv. How came Joseph to go into Egypt? Ch. xxxvii. On what account was he cast into prison? Ch. xxxix. On what occasion was he introduced to Pharaoh? Ch. xl. xli. 1—49. What brought Jacob and his other sons into Egypt? Ch. xlii.—xlv.

EXODUS.

How were the children of Israel treated in Egypt, after the death of Joseph? Ch. i. Relate the history of the birth of Moses, and of his flight from Egypt. Ch. ii. How came Moses to undertake to deliver the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt? Ch. iii. What miracle did Moses work, in order to prove that God sent him, and what effect had it on Pharaoh? Ch. vii. 1—13. What were the plagues with which, God afflicted Egypt, and especially that which induced Pha-

raoh to permit the Israelites to go out of his country? Ch. vii. 14, viii.—xii. What was the original and meaning of the passover? Ch. xii. 1—31. What great calamity befel the Egyptians, at the time that the Israelites left their country? Ch. xiv. What miracle was performed at Marah? Ch. xv. 23, to the end. What was the chief food of the Israelites in their travelling through the wilderness? Ch. xvi. How were they supplied with water at Mount Horeb? Ch. xvii. 1—7. By what means did the Israelites prevail over the Amalekites? Ch. xvii. 8, to the end. What advice did Jethro give to Moses? Ch. xviii. What extraordinary appearances were there at Mount Sinai? Ch. xix. Repeat the ten commandments which God spake from thence. Ch. xx. 1—17. Of what crimes were the Israelites guilty in the absence of Moses; and what were the consequences of it? Ch. xxxii.

LEVITICUS.

WHAT were the crime and punishment of Nadab and Abihu? Ch. x. 1—12. What was done to the person who cursed and blasphemed God? Ch. xxiv. 10, to the end.

NUMBERS.

How were the children of Israel directed in their march through the wilderness? Ch. ix. 15, to the end. What was the consequence of the Israelites loathing manna, and longing for flesh meat? Ch. xi. What was the offence of Aaron and Miriam, and the consequence of it? Ch. xii. What happened upon sending the spies to discover the land of Canaan? Ch. xiii. xiv. What were the offence and the punishment of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram? Ch. xvii. Recite the history of the fiery serpents. Ch. xxi. 4—9. Who were the first kings that the Israelites conquered? Ch. xxi. 21, to the end. Recite the history of Balak and Balaam. Ch. xxii.—xxiv. Into what wickedness did the Moabites tempt the children of Israel, and what was the issue of it? Ch. xxv. What was the fate of the Midianites? Ch. xxxi. 1—20.

DEUTERONOMY.

IN what manner were the children of Israel to treat the idolatrous inhabitants of Canan? Ch. vii. 1—3. For what reason were they ordered to exterminate them? Ch. vii. 4—11. In what were the Israelites to be particularly careful to instruct their children? Ch. xi. 18—21. In what manner were the Israelites to treat other nations with whom

they might be at war, besides the inhabitants of Canaan? Ch. xx. 10—15. Who succeeded Moses in the conduct of the Israelites? Ch. xxxi. 3.

JOSHUA.

RECITE the history of the spies whom Joshua sent to examine the condition of Jericho. Ch. ii. In what manner did the Israelites cross the river Jordan? Ch. iii. iv. In what manner did they get possession of Jericho? Ch. vi. How did they take Ai, and what followed upon it? Ch. vii. viii. How did the Gibeonites deceive the Israelites? Ch. ix. In what manner were the five kings that warred against Gibeon defeated? Ch. x. 1—28. How many kings did Joshua take after the Israelites had crossed the river Jordan? Ch. xii. Did the Israelites under Joshua conquer all the land of Canaan? Ch. xiii. 1—13, xv. 63, xvi. 10. In what part of the land of Canaan was the tabernacle set up? Ch. xviii. 1. In what place, and at what time was Joseph buried? Ch. xxiv. 32.

JUDGES.

How was Adonibezek requited? Ch. i. 5—7. What was the consequence of the Israelites having a communication with the idolatrous nations that were not conquered? Ch. iii. 5—7. In what manner did God punish their idolatry? Ch. iii. 8. Who delivered them from the king of Mesopotamia? Ch. iii. 9—11. What were the circumstances which attended their deliverance from the power of Eglon, king of Moab, when they had relapsed into idolatry? Ch. iii. 12—30. Recite the history of Deborah and Barak. Ch. iv. Recite the history of Gideon and the Midianites. Ch. vi. vii. viii. What were the history and fate of Abimeleck? Ch. ix. What rash vow did Jephtha make, and into what difficulties did he bring himself in consequence of it? Ch. xi. 29, to the end. Relate the history of the birth of Sampson. Ch. xiii. What was Sampson's riddle, and what were the occasion and issue of it? Ch. xiv. In what manner did Sampson revenge himself of the Philistines, for taking his wife from him? Ch. xv. What exploits did Sampson perform at Gaza? Ch. xvi. 1—3. Who betrayed Sampson into the hands of the Philistines; and what were the circumstances that attended his death? Ch. xvi. Relate the story of the great destruction of the Benjamites. Ch. xix.—xxi.

RUTH.

Who was Ruth, and how did she come to reside at Bethlehem? Ch. i. To whom was Ruth married, and what remarkable person descended from her? Ch. iv.

1 SAMUEL.

RELATE the history of the birth of Samuel. Ch. i. What judgment was inflicted upon the house of Eli, and what was the reason of it? Ch. ii. iii. What calamitous events preceded the death of Eli? Ch. iv. How did the Philistines dispose of the ark; and what induced them to send it back again? Ch. v. vi. For what reason did the Israelites desire to be governed by a king? Ch. viii. In what manner was Saul chosen king? Ch. ix. x. What offence was Saul guilty of when he went to fight against the Philistines? Ch. xiii. What great exploit did Jonathan perform in this war; and what danger was he brought into by the imprudence of his father? Ch. xiv. What offence was Saul guilty of with respect to the Amalekites? Ch. xv. In what manner was David chosen king? Ch. xvi. Recite the history of David and Goliath. Ch. xvii. What was the cause of the hatred that Saul bore to David, and what were the effects of it? Ch. xviii. What friendship did Jonathan and Michal shew to David? Ch. xix. xx. Whither did David flee from Saul? Ch. xxi. 10, to the end. What did Saul do to the priests when he suspected them to be in the interest of David? Ch. xxii. How did David spare Saul in the cave of Engedi? Ch. xxiv. Recite the history of David and Abigail. Ch. xxv. How did David spare Saul a second time at Hachilah? Ch. xxvi. Recite the history of the death of Saul and Jonathan. Ch. xxviii. xxxi.

2 SAMUEL.

How did David receive the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan? Ch. i. Who succeeded Saul in opposition to David? Ch. ii. 8. What was the fate of Abner, the general of Saul and Ishbosheth? Ch. iii. What became of Ishbosheth? Ch. iv. What place did David conquer, and fix upon for his residence? Ch. v. 6—11; 1 *Chron.* xi. 4—10. What nations did David conquer? Ch. viii. ; 1 *Chron.* xviii. How did David behave towards Mephibosheth? Ch. xi. What crime was David guilty of on account of Bathsheba?

Ch. xi. In what manner did Nathan reprove David for his sin? Ch. xii. What were the crime and the fate of Amnon? Ch. xiii. Recite the history of Absalom. Ch. xv.—xvii. What was the consequence of David's numbering Israel? Ch. xxiv.; 1 *Chron.* xxi.

1 KINGS.

Who succeeded David in the kingdom of Israel? Ch. i. What choice did Solomon make? Ch. iii. 1—16; 2 *Chron.* i. 7—13. How did Solomon decide between the two harlots? Ch. iii. 16, to the end. What things distinguished Solomon and his reign? Ch. iv.; 2 *Chron.* 1—13, to the end. What great undertaking did Solomon execute, which had been intended by his father? Ch. v. vi. What was the purport of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple? Ch. viii.; 2 *Chron.* vi. By what circumstance did it appear that God approved of Solomon's building the temple? 2 *Chron.* v. 11, to the end. Who came to visit Solomon on account of his great wisdom? Ch. x.; 2 *Chron.* ix. 1—13. Into what sins did Solomon fall in his old age? Ch. xi. What occasioned the revolt of the ten tribes from Rehoboam the son of Solomon? Ch. xii.; 2 *Chron.* x. What was the event of the war between Abijah and Jeroboam? 2 *Chron.* xiii. Relate the history of the old prophet, who prophesied against the altar at Bethel, Ch. xiii. What calamity befel the kingdom of Judah in the reign of Rehoboam? Ch. xiv. 25, to the end; 2 *Chron.* xii. What was the character of Asa's reign? Ch. xv. 8—25. By what favourable events was the reign of Asa distinguished? 2 *Chron.* xiv. xv. What connexion had Jehosaphat with Ahab, and what were the consequences of it? 2 *Chron.* xviii. What success had Jehosaphat in his wars with the Moabites and Ammonites? 2 *Chron.* xx. What was the character of the reign of Ahab? Ch. xvi. 27—34. How was Elijah maintained, when he fled from Ahab? Ch. xvii. 1—8. What did Elijah do for the poor widow who entertained him in time of the famine? Ch. xviii. 8, to the end. What was the consequence of Ahab's attempt to take Elijah? Ch. xviii. 17, to the end. Relate the history of the siege of Samaria by Benhadad, king of Syria. Ch. xx. What injustice was Ahab guilty of, with respect to Naboth? Ch. xxi. What were the circumstances of the death of Ahab? Ch. xxii. 1—37. What was

the character of Jehosaphat's reign? Ch. xxii. 41—50; 2 *Chron.* xvii.

2 KINGS.

How was Elijah defended against those persons whom Ahaziah sent to apprehend him? Ch. i. How was Elijah distinguished at the close of his life? Ch. ii. 1—12. In what manner were the young persons that mocked Elisha punished? Ch. ii. 23, to the end. What blessing did God bestow upon the widow who applied to Elisha? Ch. vi. 1. How did God bless the Shunamite who received Elijah? Ch. iv. 8—37. Recite the history of Naaman the Syrian and Gehazi. Ch. v. Relate the particulars of the siege of Samaria in the time of Elisha. Ch. vi. 8, to the end; ch. vii. What was the history of Hazael king of Syria? Ch. viii. 7—16. What was the fate of Jezebel? Ch. ix. 30, to the end. How did Jehu destroy the priests of Baal? Ch. x. 18—29. How was Jehoash saved from his grandmother Athaliah? Ch. xi.; 2 *Chron.* xxii. xxiii. What did Elisha prophesy to Jehoash, at the time of his death? Ch. xiii. 14—20. What miracle was performed by the bones of Elisha? Ch. xiii. 20—22. What was the offence of king Uzziah? 2 *Chron.* xxvi. 16—22. What were the character and history of the reign of Ahaz? Ch. xvi.; 2 *Chron.* xxviii. What was the conclusion of the kingdom of Israel? Ch. xvii. What was the character, and what were the events of the reign of Hezekiah? Ch. xviii. —xx.; 2 *Chron.* xxix. What was the event of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah? 2 *Chron.* xxxii.; *Isa.* xxxvi. xxxvii. What was there remarkable in the sickness and recovery of Hezekiah? *Isa.* xxxviii. How did Hezekiah behave to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, and what followed upon it? *Isa.* xxxix. What were the character and fate of Manasseh? Ch. xxi. 1—23; 2 *Chron.* xxxiii. 1—20. What was the character of Josiah? Ch. xxii. 1—8; 2 *Chron.* xxxiv. What happened with respect to the book of the law in his reign? Ch. xxii. 8—15, xxxiii. 1—4; 2 *Chron.* xxxiv. 14, to the end. In what manner did Josiah come to his death? Ch. xxiii. 26—31; 2 *Chron.* xxxv. What calamity befel the kingdom of Judah in the reign of Jehoiakim? Ch. xxiv. 1—6; 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 6—11. How did king Jehoiakim behave with respect to the written prophecies of Jeremiah? *Jer.* xxxvi. What did Jeremiah prophesy concerning the issue of the siege of Jerusalem in the

reign of Zedekiah? *Jer.* xxxvii. What did Jeremiah prophesy concerning the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and also concerning the kingdom of Christ? *Jer.* xxiii. 1—8. What were the fate of Zedekiah, and the end of the kingdom of Judah? *Ch.* xxiv. 17, to the end, xxv.; *2 Chron.* xxxvi. 11, to the end; *Jer.* xxxix. lii. How long did Jeremiah prophesy that the Babylonish captivity would continue? *Jer.* xxv. 8—15, xxix. 10. What evil befel Jeremiah for his persevering to prophesy concerning the Babylonish captivity? *Jer.* xxxviii. What became of Jeremiah after the taking of Jerusalem? *Jer.* xl. 1—7. What were the fate of Gedaliah, who was appointed governor of those Jews who were not carried captive? *Jer.* xl. 7, to the end, xli. 1—11. What part did Johanan act after the death of Gedaliah, and what advice did Jeremiah give him? *Jer.* xlii. How did Johanan act; and what became of Jeremiah? *Jer.* xliii. 1—7.

DANIEL.

How did Daniel come into favour at the court of Babylon? *Ch.* i. Recite the history of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream. *Ch.* ii. What was the consequence of Nebuchadnezzar's setting up a golden image to be worshipped? *Ch.* iii. What was the occasion, and the circumstance of Nebuchadnezzar's being driven from the society of men, and from his kingdom? *Ch.* iv. Relate the history of Belshazzar. *Ch.* v. How came Daniel to be cast into the den of lions? *Ch.* vi.

EZRA.

WHAT King of Persia permitted the Jews to return from captivity and rebuild their temple? *Ch.* i. What obstructions did the Jews meet with in that building? *Ch.* iv. v. What favour did Darius shew the Jews? *Ch.* vi. What did Artaxerxes do in favour of the Jews? *Ch.* vii. What difficulty did Ezra and Nehemiah meet with, in reforming the Jewish state? *Ch.* ix. x.; *Neh.* xiii.

NEHEMIAH.

WHAT favour did Artaxerxes shew the Jews by Nehemiah? *Ch.* ii. What difficulties did Nehemiah meet with

in building the wall of Jerusalem? Ch. iv. vi. What great solemnity did the Jews keep on their settlement in their own country? Ch. viii. ix.

ESTHER.

WHAT occasioned the rise of Esther and Mordecai in the court of Ahasuerus? Ch. i. ii. Into what danger did Haman bring the Jews? Ch. iii. iv. v. What was the fate of Haman? Ch. vii. 9, 10. What honour was done to Mordecai? Ch. viii. 1, 2, 15. How did the Jews escape their danger? Ch. viii. 7—15. How did they commemorate their deliverance? Ch. ix. 20, to the end.

THE PROPHETS.

WHAT was prophesied by Isaiah concerning Babylon, when it was the capital of a rising and splendid kingdom? *Isa.* xiii. What was prophesied concerning Cyrus? *Isa.* xlv. 1—8. Repeat some of the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the humiliation of Christ, and the success of his gospel. Ch. lii. 13, to the end; liii., lxi. 1—3. Repeat one of the exhortations of the prophet Isaiah against hypocrisy; and his promises to those who were sincere. *Isa.* i. 10—20, lviii. What did Jeremiah prophesy concerning Egypt? *Jer.* xliii. 8, to the end; xlvi. 11, to the end. What did Jeremiah prophesy against Babylon? *Jer.* l. li. What did Ezekiel prophesy concerning Egypt, and the King of Babylon? *Ezek.* xvii. 11—22, xxix.—xxxii. How did God explain his threatenings and his promises by the prophet Ezekiel? *Ez.* xxxiii. 11—20. What did Ezekiel prophesy concerning Tyre? *Ez.* xxvi.—xxviii. What did Amos prophesy concerning the kingdom of Israel? *Am.* vi. 7, to the end. What was the consequence of Jonah's fleeing from the command of God? *Jonah* i. ii. What was the event of his preaching to the Ninevites? *Jonah* iii. What sin was Jonah guilty of after the repentance of the Ninevites? *Jonah* iv. What did Nahum prophesy concerning Nineveh? *Nahum* ii. iii. What was Daniel's vision of the four beasts? *Dan.* vii. Give an account of Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks. *Dan.* ix. 22, to the end. What did Haggai prophesy concerning the glory of the second temple? *Hag.*

ii. 1—10. Who was to make his appearance before the coming of Christ, according to the prophet Malachi? *Mal.* iv.

MORAL AND DEVOTIONAL WRITINGS.

RELATE the history of the afflictions of Job. *Job* i. ii. What was his prosperity afterwards? *Job* xlii. Repeat the following *Psalms*: i. xv. xix. xxiii. xxxiii. xxxix. l. xc. xcvii. c. ciii. cxlv. What cautions does Solomon give concerning bad company? *Proverbs* i. What description does Solomon give of the artifices of an harlot? *Prov.* vii. Repeat the following chapters and passages in the book of *Proverbs*: iv. viii. xxx. 7—9. What does Solomon say of a virtuous woman? *Prov.* xxxi. 10, to the end. Repeat some of the advice which Solomon gives to young persons, in the book of *Ecclesiastes*, xi. 9, 10, xii. 1, 14.

THE FOUR GOSPELS.

GIVE an account of the birth of John the Baptist. *Luke* i. 1—57. What circumstances attended the naming of John the Baptist? *Luke* i. 58—80. Recite the history of the birth of Jesus. *Matt.* i. 18—25; *Luke* ii. 1—20. What circumstances attended the circumcision of Jesus? *Luke* ii. 21—40. What did Jesus do at Jerusalem, when he went thither at twelve years of age? *Luke* ii. 41—52. What was the subject of the preaching of John the Baptist? *Matt.* iii. 1—12; *Mark* i. 1—8; *Luke* iii. 3, 18. What circumstances attended the baptism of Jesus? *Matt.* iii. 13—17; *Mark* i. 9—11; *Luke* iii. 21, 22. Recite the history of Christ's temptations. *Matt.* iv. 1—11. *Luke* iv. 1—13. What was the testimony of John concerning Jesus? *John* i. 19—34. How came the apostle Peter and his brothers acquainted with Jesus? *John* i. 35—44. How was Nathaniel introduced to Jesus? *John* i. 45—51. What happened at a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee? *John* ii. 1—12. Which of the rulers of the Jews came to Jesus by night? *John* iii. 1. What conversation had Jesus with the woman of Samaria, and what was the issue of it? *John* iv. 1—42. In what manner did Jesus cure the son of a nobleman at Capernaum? *John* iv. 43—54. What miracle at-

tended the call of Peter? *Luke v. 3—11.* What cure did Jesus perform in the synagogue at Capernaum? *Mark i. 21—28 ; Luke iv. 14—37.* What other cure did Jesus perform in Capernaum? *Mark i. 29—38 ; Luke iv. 38—44 ; Matt. viii. 14—17.* Repeat the blessings which our Saviour pronounced at the beginning of his sermon upon the mount. *Matt. v. 1—13.* To what did our Saviour compare his disciples? *Ver. 13—16.* In what respects did Christ condemn murder and hatred more than the Scribes and Pharisees? *Ver. 21—26.* What did our Saviour enjoin with respect to oaths? *Ver. 33—37.* What precepts did Christ give respecting the most perfect humanity and mercy? *Ver. 38—48.* What advice did Christ give respecting alms and prayer? *Matt. vi. 1—8.* Repeat the Lord's Prayer. *Ver. 8—13.* What advice did Christ give respecting earthly treasures and covetousness? *Ver. 19—34.* What caution did he give with respect to rash judgment? *Matt. vii. 1—5.* In what manner did Christ encourage persons to pray? *Ver. 7—11.* What general rule did Christ lay down, comprehending all social virtues? *Ver. 12.* In what manner did our Lord express the great importance of a practical regard to his precepts? *Ver. 15—29.* What cure did Jesus perform as he came down from the mountain? *Matt. viii. 1—4 ; Mark i. 39—44 ; Luke v. 12—16.* What miracle did Jesus perform in favour of a Centurion at Capernaum? *Matt. viii. 5—13. Luke vii. 1—10.* Whom did Jesus raise from the dead at Nain? *Luke vii. 11—17.* What circumstances attended the cure of the demoniacs at Gadara? *Matt. viii. 18—34. Mark iv. 35 ; to the end ; ch. v. 1—21 ; Luke viii. 22—40.* How did Jesus cure a person sick of the palsy at Capernaum? *Matt. ix. 1—8 ; Mark ii. 1—12 ; Luke v. 17—26.* In what manner did Christ call the apostle Matthew, and what conversation had he with the Pharisees at his house? *Matt. ix. 9—17 ; Mark ii. 14—22 ; Luke v. 27—39.* What method did a woman, who had a bloody issue, take, in order to be cured by Jesus, as he was going to the house of Jairus ; and what great miracle did he perform in favour of Jairus? *Mark v. 22—43 ; Matt. ix. 18—26 ; Luke viii. 41—56.* What discourse had Jesus with the Pharisees on occasion of his disciples plucking some ears of corn, and his healing the man who had a withered hand? *Matt. xii. 1—13 ; Mark ii. 23, to the end ; ch. iii. 1—6 ; Luke vi. 1—11.* Relate the parable of Christ concerning the sower, and his explanation of it. *Matt. xiii. 1—51 ; Mark iv. 1—29 ;*

Luke viii. 4—18. In what manner was Jesus received at Nazareth? *Matt.* xiii. 53—58; *Mark* vi. 1—6; *Luke* iv. 16—30. What instructions did Christ give to the twelve apostles when he sent them forth to preach? *Matt.* x.; *Mark* vi. 7—11; *Luke* ix. 1—12. What happened when Jesus dined with Simon the Pharisee? *Luke* vii. 36—50. In what manner was John the Baptist put to death? *Matt.* xiv. 1—13; *Mark* vi. 14—29. What miracle did Jesus perform when the multitude flocked to him in the wilderness? *Matt.* xiv. 14—21; *Mark* vii. 33—44; *Luke* ix. 10—17; *John* vi. 5—14. What miracle did Jesus perform on the sea of Galilee? *Matt.* xiv. 22—36; *Mark* vi. 45—56; *John* vi. 15—21. What was the cure of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, and the consequence of it? *John* v. What did Jesus do in favour of a woman of Canaan? *Matt.* xv. 21—29; *Mark* vii. 24—31. What number did Jesus feed at his second miracle of that kind? *Matt.* xv. 32—39; *Mark* viii. 1—10. Give an account of the transfiguration of Jesus. *Matt.* xvii. 1—13; *Mark* ix. 2—13; *Luke* ix. 28—36. What miracle did Jesus perform on his descending from the mountain on which he was transfigured? *Matt.* xvii. 14—21; *Mark* ix. 14—29; *Luke* ix. 37—44. In what manner did Jesus pay tribute for himself and Peter? *Matt.* xvii. 24—27. What were the circumstances of Jesus's curing ten lepers? *Luke* xvii. 11—19. Recite the history of the woman taken in adultery. *John* viii. 1—11. In what manner did Jesus cure the man who had been blind from his birth, and what were the consequences of it? *John* ix. Relate the parable of the good Samaritan. *Luke* x. 30—37. What reproof did Jesus give to Martha? *Luke* x. 38—42. Recite the parable of the prodigal son. *Luke* xv. 11—32. Recite the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. *Luke* xvi. 19—31. Relate the parable concerning the Pharisee and the Publican. *Luke* xviii. 9—14. What did Jesus say when they brought little children to him? *Matt.* xix. 13—15; *Mark* x. 13—16; *Luke* xviii. 15—17. What reply did Jesus make to the person who asked him what he should do to inherit eternal life; and what observations did he make concerning riches upon that occasion? *Matt.* xix. 16—30; *Mark* x. 17—31; *Luke* xviii. 18—30. Relate the parable of the householder who hired labourers. *Matt.* xx. 1—16. Recite the history of the resurrection of Lazarus. *John* xi. On what occasion did Jesus reprove the apostles James and John? *Matt.* xx. 20

—29; *Mark* x. 34—45. Relate what the evangelists say concerning Zaccheus. *Luke* xix. 1—10. Relate the parable of the ten pounds, and ten servants. *Luke* xix. 12—27. What offended Judas Iscariot when Jesus supped at Bethany? *Matt.* xxvi. 6—13; *Mark* xiv. 1—9; *John* xii. 1—10. In what manner did Jesus enter into Jerusalem? *Matt.* xxi. 1—11; *Mark* xi. 1—10; *Luke* xix. 29—40; *John* xii. 12—19. What did Jesus do when he found the temple occupied with buyers and sellers? *Matt.* xxi. 12—16; *Mark* xi. 11—18; *Luke* xix. 45, 46; *John* ii. 14—17. What did Jesus do with respect to a barren fig-tree? *Matt.* xxi. 17—22; *Mark* xi. 12—15. Relate the parable of the housholder and the vineyard. *Matt.* xxi. 34—46; *Mark* xii. 1—12; *Luke* xx. 9—19. What reply did Jesus make to those who asked him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar? *Matt.* xxii. 15—22; *Mark* xii. 13—17; *Luke* xx. 20—26. What question did the Sadducees put to Jesus, and what reply did he make to them? *Matt.* xxii. 23—33; *Mark* xii. 18—27; *Luke* xx. 27—40. What did Jesus say to the lawyer who asked him which was the greatest commandment? *Matt.* xxii. 35—40; *Mark* xii. 28—34. On what account did Jesus reproach the Pharisees? *Matt.* xxiii.; *Mark* xii. 38—40; *Luke* xx. 45—47. What observation did Jesus make concerning the poor woman who cast her mite into the treasury? *Mark* xii. 41—44; *Luke* xxi. 1—4. What did Jesus prophesy concerning Jerusalem and the temple? *Matt.* xxiv.; *Mark* xiii.; *Luke* xxi. 5—24. Relate the parable of the ten virgins. *Matt.* xxv. 1—13. Relate the parable of the talents. *Matt.* xxv. 14—30. What account did Christ give of the day of judgment? *Matt.* xxv. 31—46. Relate the circumstances of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. *John* xiii. 1—17. Give an account of the institution of the Lord's Supper. *Matt.* xxvi. 26—30; *Mark* xiv. 22—25; *Luke* xxii. 19, 20; *1 Cor.* xi. 23—25. Relate the circumstances of Christ's agony in the garden. *Matt.* xxvi. 36—46; *Mark* xiv. 32—42; *Luke* xxii. 40—46. In what manner was Jesus apprehended? *Matt.* xxvi. 47—56; *Mark* xiv. 43—50; *Luke* xxii. 47—53; *John* xviii. 2—11. What passed when Jesus was examined before the high priest? *Matt.* xxvi. 57—75; *Mark* xiv. 53—72; *Luke* xxii. 54—71; *John* xviii. 19—27. What became of Judas? *Matt.* xxvii. 1—10. What were the particulars of the examination of Jesus before Pilate? *Matt.* xxvii. 2—25; *Mark* xv. 1—15; *Luke* xxiii. 1—25;

John xviii. 28—40. Relate the particulars of the crucifixion of Jesus. *Matt.* xxvii. 26—56; *Mark* xv. 16—41; *Luke* xxiii. 26—49; *John* xix. 1—37. In what manner was Jesus buried? *Matt.* xxvii. 57—66; *Mark* xv. 43—47; *Luke* xxiii. 50—56. *John* xix. 38—42. Relate the particulars of the resurrection of Jesus, and his appearing to Mary Magdalene. *Matt.* xxviii. 1—15; *Mark* xvi. 1—11; *Luke* xxiv. 1—12; *John* xx. 11—17. In what manner did Jesus appear to two of his disciples, who were walking to Emmaus? *Luke* xxiv. 13—35. In what manner did Jesus appear to all the apostles, and especially to Thomas? *Luke* xxiv. 36—49; *John* xx. 19—31. Relate the circumstances of Jesus appearing in Galilee. *John* xxi. 1—25. Relate the particulars of Jesus's ascension. *Mark* xvi. 19; *Luke* xxiv. 51—53; *Acts* i. 3—12.

ACTS.

IN what manner was Matthias chosen to succeed Judas Iscariot? *Ch.* i. 15—26. Relate the circumstances which attended the descent of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost. *Ch.* ii. What miracle was performed by Peter and John in the temple? *Ch.* iii. What were the consequences of imprisoning Peter and John? *Ch.* iv. What was the occasion of the death of Ananias and Sapphira? *Ch.* v. 1—11. In what manner was Peter delivered out of prison, and what followed upon it? *Ch.* v. 12, to the end. Give an account of the martyrdom of Stephen. *Ch.* vi. 8, to the end; *ch.* vii. What circumstances attended the planting of Christianity in Samaria? *Ch.* viii. 1—25. In what manner was the Ethiopian eunuch converted to Christianity? *Ch.* viii. 26, to the end. In what manner was Paul converted? *Ch.* ix. 1—23. In what manner did Paul escape from the Jews, who lay in wait to kill him? *Ch.* ix. 23—31. What miracle did Peter perform with respect to Tabitha? *Ch.* ix. 32, to the end. In what manner was Christianity first preached to the Gentiles? *Ch.* x. How was this event received by the Jewish converts? *Ch.* xi. 1—18. What was the prophecy of Agabus? *Ch.* xi. 27, to the end. What were the actions and death of Herod? *Ch.* xii. What success had Paul and Barnabas in their preaching in Cyprus, and Antioch in Pisidia? *Ch.* xiii. In what manner were they received at Lystra? *Ch.* xiv. What did the apostles enjoin with respect to the Gentile converts? *Ch.* xv. 1—32.

What happened to Paul and Silas at Philippi? Ch. xvi. What was the character of the Jews at Berea? Ch. xvii. 10—15. In what manner was Paul received at Athens? Ch. xvii. 16, to the end. How did Paul maintain himself at Corinth; and what was the issue of his accusation before Gallio? Ch. xviii. What happened to some Jews who attempted to cast out dæmons in the name of Jesus? Ch. xix. 13—20. What uproar was occasioned by Paul's preaching at Ephesus? Ch. xix. 23, to the end. What accident befel Eutychus, and what was the issue of it? Ch. xx. 6—11. In what manner did Paul take his leave of the elders of Ephesus? Ch. xx. 17, to the end. What intimation did Paul receive concerning the risk that he would run in going to Jerusalem, and what effect had it upon him? Ch. xxi. 1—18. In what manner was Paul delivered from the fury of the Jews, on his arrival at Jerusalem? Ch. xxi. 18, to the end. What defence did Paul make for his conduct, and by what means did he escape being scourged? Ch. xxii. By what stratagem did Paul make a division among his enemies? Ch. xxiii. 1—10. How did Paul escape the conspiracy that was made against him by the Jews? Ch. xxiii. 10, to the end. How did Paul defend himself when he was accused before Felix? Ch. xxiv. In what manner did Paul extricate himself from the power of his enemies in Judea? Ch. xxv. Give an account of the pleading of Paul before Agrippa? Ch. xxvi. Relate the particulars of Paul's shipwreck on his voyage to Rome? Ch. xxvii. What happened to Paul after his landing on the island Melite? Ch. xxviii. 1—11. In what manner was Paul received in Rome? Ch. xxviii. 11, to the end.

THE APOSTOLICAL EPISTLES.

WHAT account does Paul give of the state of the Gentile world before the promulgation of Christianity? *Rom.* i. 18, to the end. What advice does Paul give with respect to things of an indifferent nature, as to moral virtue? *Rom.* xiv. What admonition does he give with respect to divisions and factions among Christians? *1 Cor.* iii. How did Paul advise the Corinthians to treat a person who had been guilty of incest? *1 Cor.* v. What account does the apostle Paul give of the resurrection? *1 Cor.* xv.; *1 Thess.* iv. 13, to the end; ch. v. 1—6. Give an account of what Paul suffered

in preaching the gospel from his own brief account of it. *2 Cor.* xi. 23, to the end. Into what dangerous opinions and practices had the churches in Galatia been seduced? *Gal.* i. What did Paul prophesy concerning the man of sin? *2 Thess.* ii. 1—13; *1 Tim.* iv. 1, &c. On what account does Paul commend Timothy? *2 Tim.* iii. 14, to the end. What was the occasion of Paul's writing to Philemon? The whole epistle. What remarkable actions does the author of the epistle to the Hebrews ascribe to the principle of faith in God? *Heb.* xi. What account does the apostle James give of pure and undefiled religion? *James* i. 26, 27. What admonition does he give concerning a respect to riches? *James* ii. 1—9. What are the genuine effects of faith? *James* ii. 14, to the end. In what manner is this world to be destroyed? *2 Peter* iii. In what manner are we to make it appear that we love God? *1 John* iv. 20, 21.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

EXTRACTS FROM SWEDENBORG'S UNIVERSAL THEOLOGY.

(See *supra*, p. 86, Note †.)

THE following are copied from the *Universal Theology*, as recited at the "General Conference of the members of the New Church held in Great East Cheap, London," from the 13th to the 17th of April, 1789.*

"I shall relate the following particulars, which I know to be true, because I have been an eye-witness of them, and therefore can testify the truth of them....I was once raised up as to my spirit into the Angelic Heaven, and introduced to a particular society therein; and immediately some of the wise ones of the society came to me and said, WHAT NEWS FROM EARTH? I replied, This is new, that the Lord hath revealed Arcana, which in point of real excellence exceed all the Arcana heretofore revealed since the beginning of the church. They asked, What Arcana? I answered, The following."

Here follow the several articles of his discoveries.

"The angels, on hearing an account of all these new discoveries made to mankind, were much rejoiced; but they saw that I was sorrowful and dejected, and they asked, What is the cause of thy sorrow? I replied, Because these Arcana at this day revealed by the Lord, notwithstanding their superiority in excellence and dignity above all the knowledges that have been heretofore published to the world, are yet reputed on earth as things of no value. The angels wondered at this, and requested the Lord's permission to look down into the world; and they looked down, and lo, mere darkness was therein: and it was suggested to them to write those Arcana on a paper, and let the paper down on earth, and then they would see a prodigy; and they did so, and lo! the paper, on which the Arcana were written, was let down from heaven, and in its progress, whilst it was yet in the spiritual world, it shone bright like a star; but when it came into the natural world, the light disappeared, and as it fell on the ground, it was totally darkened; and when it was let down by the angels among some assemblies con-

* See the Minutes of that Conference, pp. 7, &c. (P.) See *supra*, p. 47, Note, No. 17.

sisting of learned clergy and laity, many of them were heard to mutter words to this effect, What have we got here? Is it any thing or nothing? What matters it whether we know those things or do not know them? Surely they are the offspring of imagination and a disordered brain. And it appeared as if some took the paper and folded it into different shapes, and then again unfolded it with their fingers; and also as if some tore it in pieces, and were desirous to tread it under their feet; but they were prevented by the Lord from proceeding to such enormity, and the angels were charged to take up the paper back again, and secure it. And because these things affected the angels with sorrow, they began to think with themselves how long the darkness on earth would continue; it was told them, **FOR A TIME, AND TIMES, AND HALF A TIME.**" *Rev. xii. 14.*

"I am aware that many, who read the *memorable relations* annexed to each chapter of this work, will conceive that they are the fictions of imagination; but I protest in truth that they are not fictions, but were really seen and heard; not seen and heard in any state of the mind in sleep, but in a state when I was broad awake; for it hath pleased the Lord to manifest himself to me, and to send me to teach the things relating to his New Church, which is meant by the New Jerusalem in the Revelation; for which purpose he hath opened the interiors of my mind, or spirit, by virtue of which privilege it was granted me to have commerce with angels in the spiritual world, and at the same time with men in the natural world, and that now for twenty-seven years. Who in the Christian world would have known any thing concerning heaven and hell, unless it had pleased the Lord to open spiritual vision in some person or other, and to shew and teach what relates to the spiritual world?"

I shall close these extracts with some from Mr. Swedenborg's Treatise "of the last Judgment." *

"That the Babylon here treated of," (viz. in the Revelation,) "is destroyed, no other man can know than he who saw it, and to me is was given to see in what manner the last judgment was executed and accomplished on all, particularly on those who were from Babylon; wherefore I shall give a description thereof. This was granted me principally for this reason, that it might be known to the world, that all things predicted in the *Revelation* are divinely inspired, and that it is a prophetic book of the word. For unless this were revealed to the world, and at the same time the internal sense discovered, which is contained in every expression therein, in like manner as in every prophetic book of the Old Testament, that book might be rejected, &c. To prevent, therefore, this from being the case, it has pleased the Lord to make me an eye-witness," &c.

He then describes the manner in which the last judgment took place in all the four quarters of the *Babylonian* nation, beginning with the *southern*, to which I shall confine this extract.

* P. 127. (P.) See *supra*, p. 47, Note, No. 13.

“ After visitation, destruction took place; for visitation always precedes destruction. Visitation is an examination as to their quality, and also a separation of the good from the bad, when the former are taken away, and the latter left behind. This was followed by great earthquakes, from which, perceiving the last judgment to be at hand, a sudden trembling seized them all. Then they who dwelled in the southern quarter, particularly in that great city of which mention is made above, were seen to run up and down; some endeavouring to escape by flight, some hiding themselves in caves, some in the cells and vaults where their treasures were deposited, and some carrying away thence whatever they could lay their hands upon.

“ But after the earthquakes, there burst forth an ebullition from below, which overturned every thing in the city, and in the parts adjacent. After the ebullition there came a strong wind from the East, which laid bare, shook, and overthrew every thing from the very foundation. Then all who were in that quarter were brought forth from every part and hiding-place, and cast into a sea of black water, to the amount of several myriads.

“ Afterwards, there arose a smoke from the whole region, as from a great fire, and at last a thick dust, which was conveyed by the eastern wind to the sea, and covered it all over. For their treasures were turned into dust, together with all those things which they had called holy, because in their possession. The reason why that dust covered the sea was, because such dust signifies damnation. At length there was seen as it were something black flying over the whole tract, which had the appearance of a dragon, a sign that the whole of that great city, and the whole of that tract, was made a desert. The reason of such appearance was, because by dragons are signified the falses of that religion, and by the place of their abode is signified a desert after its overthrow, as in *Jer. ix. &c.* Some were also seen to have as it were a millstone round their left arm, which was representative of their having confirmed their abominable tenets from the world; for such is the signification of a millstone. Hence it appeared what is signified in the Revelation by these words, *An angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, &c.*

“ But they who were of the assembly held in the same quarter, but nearer the East, wherein they consulted about the means of enlarging their dominion, and of keeping the people in ignorance, and thence in blind obedience, were not cast into that black sea, but into a gulf which opened itself to a wide extent around them, and a great depth under them.

“ In this manner was the last judgment accomplished on the Babylonians in the southern quarter.”

No. II.

EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECH OF M. FRANCAIS DE NANTES,* IN
THE ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE, JUIN 8, 1792.

(See *supra*, p. 87.)

“LE Docteur *Priestley* en envoyant son Fils en France, m'a confié ce dépôt précieux. Je ne puis mieux répondre à sa confiance qu'en recommandant le Fils d'un grand homme aux représentans d'un grand peuple. Ce n'est point pour le Docteur *Priestley* que je viens vous parler : le génie n'a pas besoin d'apologie : mais pour LE PEUPLE Français qui sent le besoin de lui manifester sa reconnaissance.

“Quel est l'homme assez barbare pour ne pas connaître le Docteur *Priestley*, par ses ouvrages ou par sa réputation ? Il appartient par son génie et par ses travaux, au monde savant ; aux amis de la liberté par les écrits éloquens qu'il a publié pour cette noble cause ; à tous les gens de bien par ses vertus.—Mais ce ne fut jamais impunément qu'on consacra sa vie à l'affranchissement des peuples et au bonheur des hommes. Plus de 40 volumes, par les quels il avait agrandi la sphere des connoissances humaines, établi les principes de la plus pure morale, inspiré une haine généreuse contre les tyrans de la société et contre les vices qui sont les tyrans de l'ame, lui avaient mérité l'honneur d'être détesté de tous ceux qui ont fondé leurs jouissances ou leur pouvoir sur l'ignorance, la corruption, et l'aveuglement des peuples. A peine se fut il déclaré le défenseur et l'apôtre de nôtre révolution qu'on lança contre lui cet éternel déclamateur, ce chevalier errant de la littérature Anglaise, [*Burke*,] qui dans les accès vaporeux d'une imagination tout plein des paladins et des prodiges éleva un monument aussi brillant que honteux à la gloire de la *chevalerie Français* et à la *servitude des peuples*. Cet extravagant rhéteur appella les vengeances populaires sur la tête du Docteur *Priestley* : et il prépara sa proscription par ses écrits, comme autrefois un écrivain infâme prépara par ses comédies le supplice de *Socrate*. Mais les noms des *Socrate* et des *Priestley* vivront honorablement dans la mémoire des hommes ; et ceux des *Aristophane* et des *Burke* à mesure qu'ils traverseront les siècles se chargeront d'opprobres et de l'exécration de tous les gens de bien.

* Who appears by the following passage to have been in England before the death of Dr. Price, in 1791. Speaking of Dr. Priestley, he says, “Une jeunesse nombreuse se presse actuellement autour de lui, et reçoit ses leçons dans le Collège de *Hackney* ; où j'entendais autrefois la voix du Docteur *Price* célébrer les charmes de la vertu, et, nouveau *Fenelon*, la faire aimer par son éloquence, tandis qu'il en commandait la pratique par ses exemples.” See “Proceedings of the National Assembly,” 1792, by C. L., p. 26.

“A numerous band of youths at this time surrounds him, and receives his instructions in the *New Academy* at *Hackney* ; where I lately heard the voice of Dr. *Price* celebrating the charms of virtue, and, as another *Fenelon*, inspiring the love of her by his animated and pathetic eloquence, while he recommended the practice by his life.” *Ibid.* p. 13.

“L’Autorité des magistrats du peuple a pour limites l’empire dans lequel ils habitent. Mais l’homme de génie est le magistrat de l’univers. Cette magistrature s’exerce sans haches et sans faisceaux : mais tout ce qui sent et tout ce qui pense lui obéit ; et elle ne reconnaît des bornes que celles mêmes du monde. Quelquefois on a vû le génie se prostituer à des rois ou à des factions et offrir ce mélange de grandeur et de bassesses qui force l’esprit à admirer, alors même que le cœur déteste : mais l’Angleterre et l’Amérique vous diront que le Docteur *Priestley* a toujours vecu loin des intrigues et de toute ambition ; que souvent il a fui les hommes à fin de pouvoir les aimer plus, et les servir mieux ; et qu’il rappelle ces tems où la philosophie, pure de tous les vices dont la corruption l’a depuis souillée, n’était pas encore un instrument entre les mains des ambitieux ; et où l’on ne connaissait qu’un seul et même mot pour exprimer la sagesse et le savoir.”*

* *Proceedings*, pp. 19—21, 25, 26. “Dr. *Priestley*, when he sent his son to France, entrusted me with the care of that valuable pledge. I cannot better answer his confidence than by recommending the son of a great man to the representatives of a great people. It is not for Dr. *Priestley* that I address you : genius has no need of an apologist : but for THE PEOPLE OF FRANCE who feel for him the impulse of gratitude.

“What man is so uninformed as to be unacquainted with Dr. *Priestley*, by his works or his reputation ? His genius and his labours have appropriated him to the world of science ; the eloquence of the writings he has published, in that noble cause, to the friends of freedom ; his virtues, to all good men. But men never have devoted themselves with impunity to the *deliverance of nations*, and the happiness of *mankind*. More than forty volumes, by which he had extended the sphere of human knowledge, established the principles of the most pure morality, and inspired a generous abhorrence of the tyrants of society, of those vices which are the tyrants of the soul, had obtained him the honour of being detested by all those who have founded their enjoyments and their power on the ignorance, the corruption, and the blindness of the people. Scarce had he manifested himself the defender and apostle of our freedom, when that ceaseless declaimer, that knight-errant of English literature, was let loose against him ; who, from the exalted fumes of a bewildered imagination, full of knights and monsters, has raised an aerial monument of ignominious splendour to the glory of French chivalry, and the servitude of nations. This extravagant rhetorician called down the fury of a mob on the head of Dr. *Priestley* ; and prepared the catastrophe by his writings, as formerly an infamous writer prepared by his comedies the destruction of *Socrates*. But the names of *Socrates* and *Priestley* will live with honour in the remembrance of men ; while those of *Aristophanes* and of *Burke* [as they pass to future times, will excite the contempt and execration of all good people].

“The authority of the magistrates of the people is limited by the empire which they inhabit ; but the man of genius is the magistrate of mankind. That magistracy supports itself without rods or axes : all that feels, all that thinks, acquiesces in it : it has no limits but those of the world itself. Sometimes, however, even genius has been seen to degrade itself from its native height ; to prostitute itself to kings or factions, and present that mixture of sublimity and baseness which, while the understanding is compelled to admire, the heart detests. But *England* and *America* will inform you, that Dr. *Priestley* has always lived far from intrigues and from all ambition : that he has often shunned human society to husband to himself the leisure and the means of serving it the better : and that he recalls, by his example, the memory of those times when philosophy, pure of all the vices by which corruption hath since dishonoured her, was not yet an instrument in the hands of the ambitious : and when one only word was known to express *knowledge and wisdom*.” *Ibid.* pp. 5—7, 12, 13.

No. III.

EXTRACTS FROM MR. LINDSEY'S PREFACE.*

(See *supra*, p. 109.)

It was natural for Mr. Paine to send over, and for the Americans to be inquisitive after his famous work, *The Age of Reason*, which had reached the country before Dr. Priestley's arrival in it, and was much extolled and circulated. He soon found that it was desired and expected that he should make some reply to it, and undertake a cause which he was held so well able to defend.

Mr. Paine is very far from being a contemptible adversary, as he possesses the talent, perhaps above all other writers, of arresting the attention of his readers, and making them pleased and desirous of going on with him, which, with many, is one step towards convincing them.

Without disparagement to the learned and ingenious replies which others have made to this popular work against revelation, he has here met with an opponent who has most thoroughly confuted, if he has not done something even toward converting him. Here are no expressions of astonishment at any of his assertions, however strange and singular; no accusations of his writing with bad views, or that he is to be blamed for writing against the Bible, if he disapproves or thinks it a bad book. But with that candour and mutual respect, which becomes men canvassing important points, and seeking after truth, Dr. Priestley frankly acknowledges those gross errors among Christians which Mr. Paine justly reprobates, whilst he detects and plainly shews him his mistakes in every thing of consequence which he has advanced against real Christianity, and that it stands firm and secure against his objections, as against all others.

The continuation of the Doctor's letters to the French politicians and philosophers, which constitutes the first part of the present publication, is admirably contrived, like those which have gone before, to recover them to the belief of Christianity, which they have discarded. And his efforts, with those of others whom Providence shall hereafter raise up, will, I hope, be effectual, to plant again the gospel, which had been really lost in that country. For the Christian religion, as they had metamorphosed and corrupted it, and in the state in which it remains in Italy, Naples, &c. and in Spain and Portugal, the dire abode of the Inquisition,† had actually generated, and tends to generate, that *infidelity* and *atheism* into which a great part of the French nation had fallen, and which was

* There are other parts of this Preface respecting the pursuits, the associates, and also the calumniators of Dr. Priestley, of which I hope to avail myself in the preparation of his biography, for the first volume.

† Happily this "abode of broken hearts," as Cowper described the *Bastille*, has since fallen "in Spain and Portugal," to rise we trust, no more.

becoming universal. And as many of our countrymen, from various, long-subsisting causes, that might be pointed out, and not a few among the younger part of the learned professions, from the reading of this work of Mr. Paine's, and from the proselyting zeal of some *minute philosophers** lately risen among us, are said to be hastening into the same dreary gulf, it is not too much to expect that a due attention to this work of Dr. Priestley's, and to his other writings, may save them from it.

No. IV.

EXTRACT FROM MR. WAKEFIELD'S EXAMINATION OF THE AGE OF REASON.

(See *supra*, p. 154.)

In answer to this undigested and inaccurate statement of the case, I observe, as follows: It is most certain, and ought not to be dissembled, that *all* the books of the *Old* and *New Testament* have not come confirmed to us by the same degree of historical evidence. They may be commodiously and properly distributed

* Those to whom allusion is here made, are persons of no mean abilities, and of acknowledged worth and probity; but these are the fruits, not of their philosophy, but of the Christian religion in which they were educated, and the early habits they had derived from it; yet surely, *very minute philosophers* are they, and blind, who can argue as if there was no God; who can maintain that the eye was not made for seeing, &c.; who, in the face of day and of the sun, can behold this fair fabric of the world, with marks of wisdom in every part, and not perceive it to be the work of an intelligent Creator.

Hear, however, the verdict of true philosophy: "I had rather believe all the fables in the *Legend*, and the *Talmud*, and the *Alcoran*, than that this universal frame is without a mind. And therefore God never wrought miracles to convince Atheism, because his ordinary works convince it. It is true, a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to Atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to *religion*. For while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate and linked together, it must fly to Providence and *Deity*." (Bacon's *Essays*.)

I would add, that not to worship this beneficent Parent of the universe, would stop the current of those affections which belong to him, and which are natural as those to our fellow-creatures, and make no small part of our happiness; and would, by degrees, extinguish all thought of him, and lead to doubt, if not to deny, his very existence, with all its immoral consequences; especially, if the fashionable system be taken up when young, before any better habits are formed. A subject, this, not sufficiently considered by the ingenious author of the *Memoirs of Planets*, who, in the compass of a few lines, (p. 113,) wipes away all application to God by prayer, not reflecting, how poor a support he leaves for the *practice of justice and benevolence to our fellow-creatures*, which he rightly makes the road to happiness, but surely not the *only* road. (T. L.)

into two classes; Books of *Fact*, and Books of *Opinion*. Under the former class, I would comprise from *Genesis* to the book of *Job*, with the *Gospels* and *Acts* of the *Apostles*: and under the latter, to make the largest concession to this argument, the *Hagiographa* and *Prophets*, i. e. all the remainder of the *Old Testament*, with the *Epistles* and *Apocalypse* of the *New*. Now, that we may waive, on the present occasion, all extraneous discussion of the evidences and importance of the latter collection, the *Christian* and *Jewish* systems need no support beyond the authenticity of the *historic* class: and I assert, in the fullest confidence, and appeal to a multitude of publications in behalf of this assertion, that no history whatever, taking its antiquity into consideration, has more claims to be received as genuine, than the histories in question. And what need of circumstantial detail on such a worn-out argument, in repelling the objections of men who really know just nothing of the subject; who satisfy their *reason* and *philosophy*, forsooth! by peremptory asseveration only, in all the plenitude of dictatorial self-sufficiency, unilluminated by one single ray of information on the topic in dispute?*

To contravene positions that have been discussed again and again by writers of the first genius and erudition, and to disparage the genuineness of the *Bible histories* wholly and indiscriminately, without some precision and investigation, some specific allegations founded on the report of authentic documents, candour herself must deem intolerable arrogance, and the consummation of literary profligacy. With respect to the *internal* evidences of these *histories*, I am persuaded, and would engage to prove in detail, that they are exceedingly superior to those of any ancient records whatever, whose authenticity is admitted; evidences, of which no man will doubt who does not unreasonably insist on *mathematical demonstration* in cases only susceptible of varying *probabilities*. However this be, it is my settled persuasion, deduced from experience and the manners of mankind, that, if no *written memorials* of the *Jewish* and *Christian* dispensations were at this moment in existence, the present condition of the professors of these systems, as a traduction of believers in certain principles, composing vast aggregates of men through an uninterrupted succession of ages; of men, in a variety of instances persecuted, distressed, and destroyed for their belief; this existing fact, I say, cannot be accounted for, but on a supposition of the original reasonableness of these dispensations, in the apprehensions of the *first* professors; and consequently of their probable authenticity; unless, indeed, we are resolved to exempt the men of that æra from the common benefits of rationality, and a participation of human feelings. It were most easy to enlarge on this subject; but more has been said already than such desultory and unsubstantial objections have any reason to expect: and I shall but add, from a multiplicity of cogent instances, with reference to *one*

* I have long had in contemplation a work relative to the authenticity of the *Old Testament*, similar to my *Evidences of Christianity*, which I hope some day to execute. This might apologize for my brevity now, if such hasty and crude objections could lay claim to any apology at all. (W.)

branch of evidence of the first moment, that a comparison of the xxviii. chapter of *Deuteronomy* only, with the subsequent and present state of the *Israelitish* nation, must flash conviction, I should think, upon any mind, not totally clouded by a palpable darkness of prejudice and perversity, in favour of the *prophetical* pretensions of the *Scriptures*; for, that the book of *Deuteronomy* was composed *posterior* to these events, what effrontery, even of unlearned *Deism*, if it hazard the assertion, will undertake to prove? *

* Most remarkable too with respect to this people is that prediction of *Jeremiah*, xxx. 11: "For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee." [See Vol. XII. p. 236.] There is nothing similar in the history of our species to the continuance of the *Jews* as a distinct and unmixed body, in so many nations, through such a succession of ages, and in the midst of perpetual persecution.

— genus immortale manet, multosque per annos
Stat fortuna domus, et avi numerantur avorum.

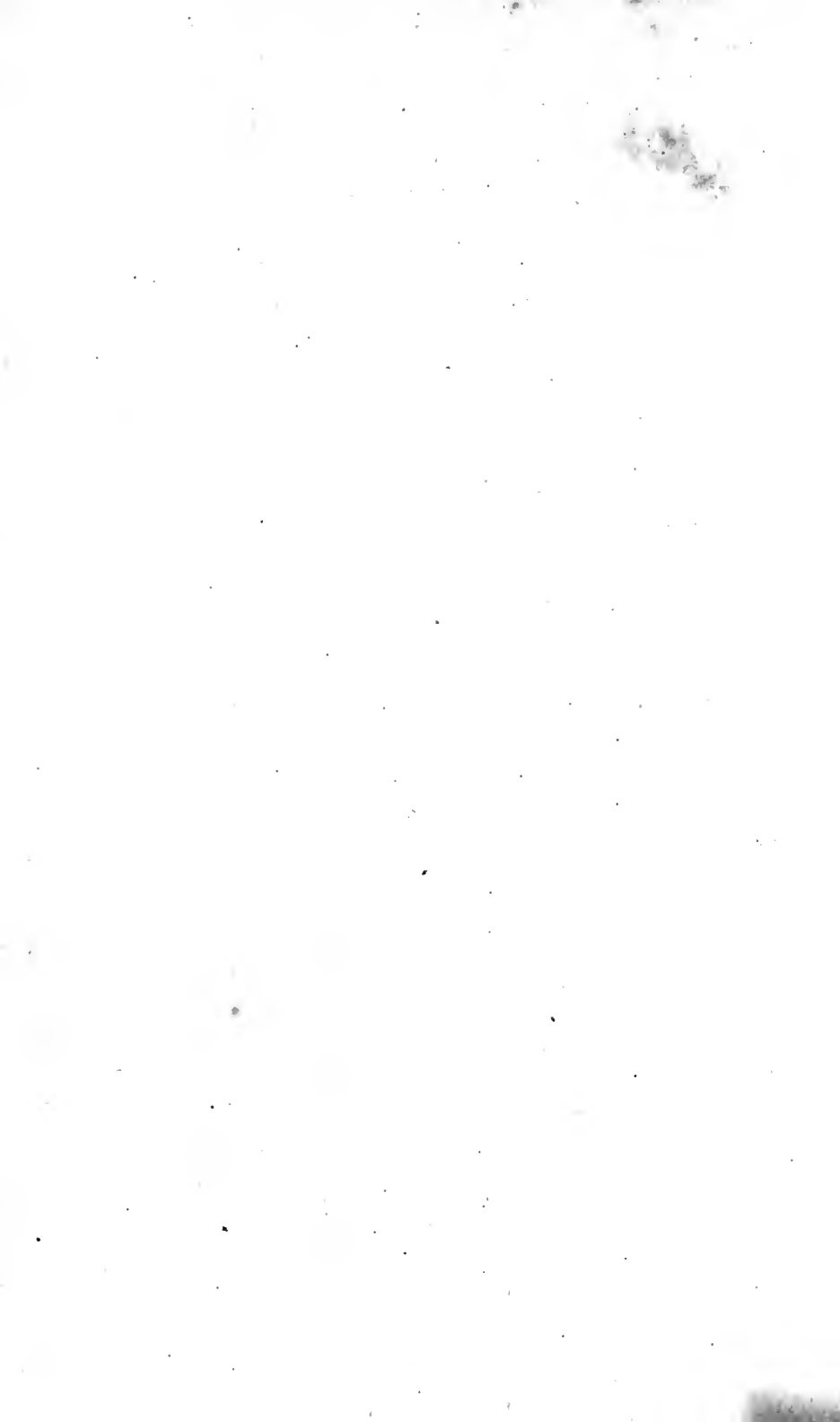
(W.) VIRG. *Geor.* iv.

The nation lives; sires in their sons we trace,
And Time's long years behold the immortal race.

END OF VOLUME XXI.









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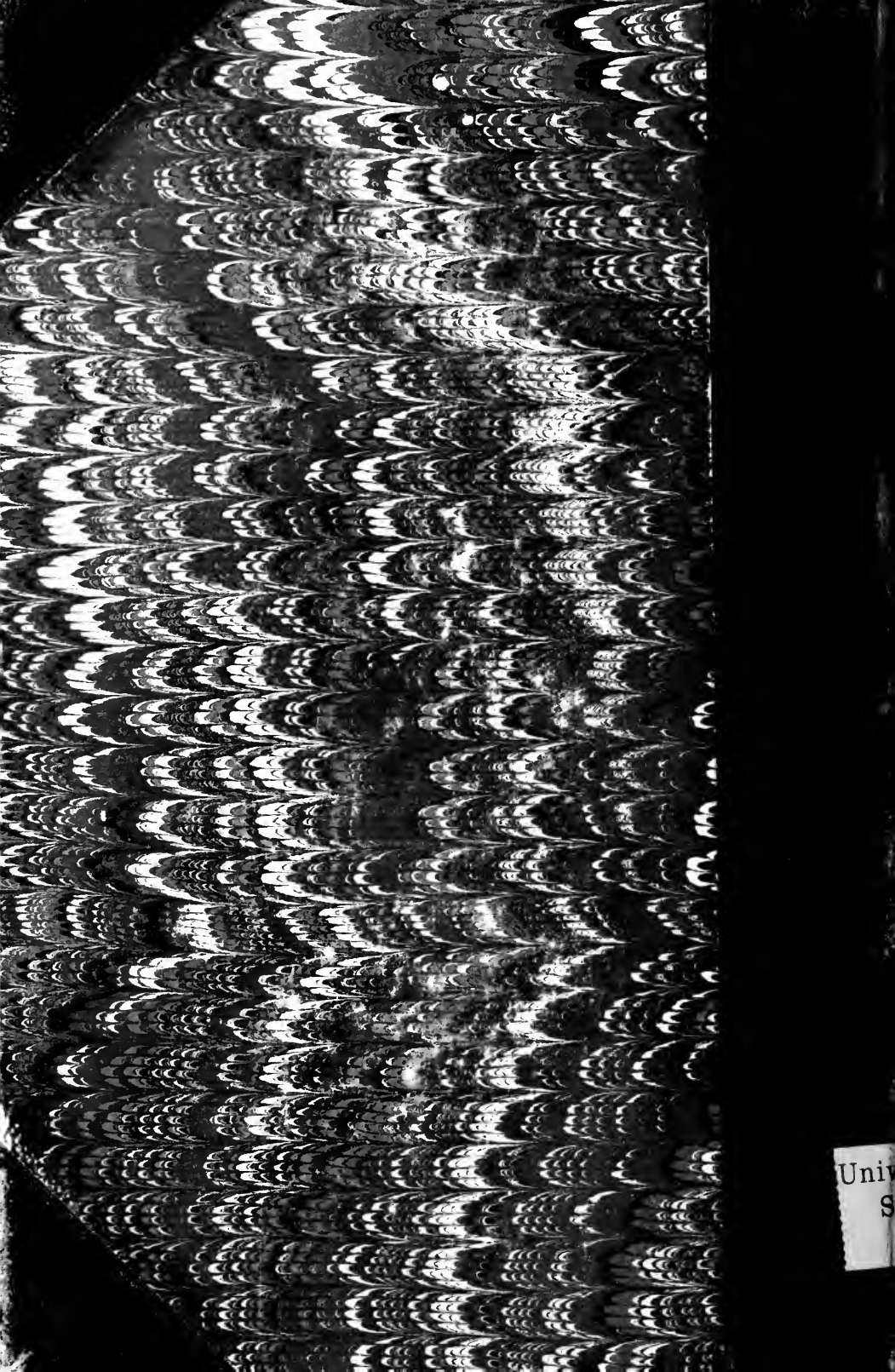


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