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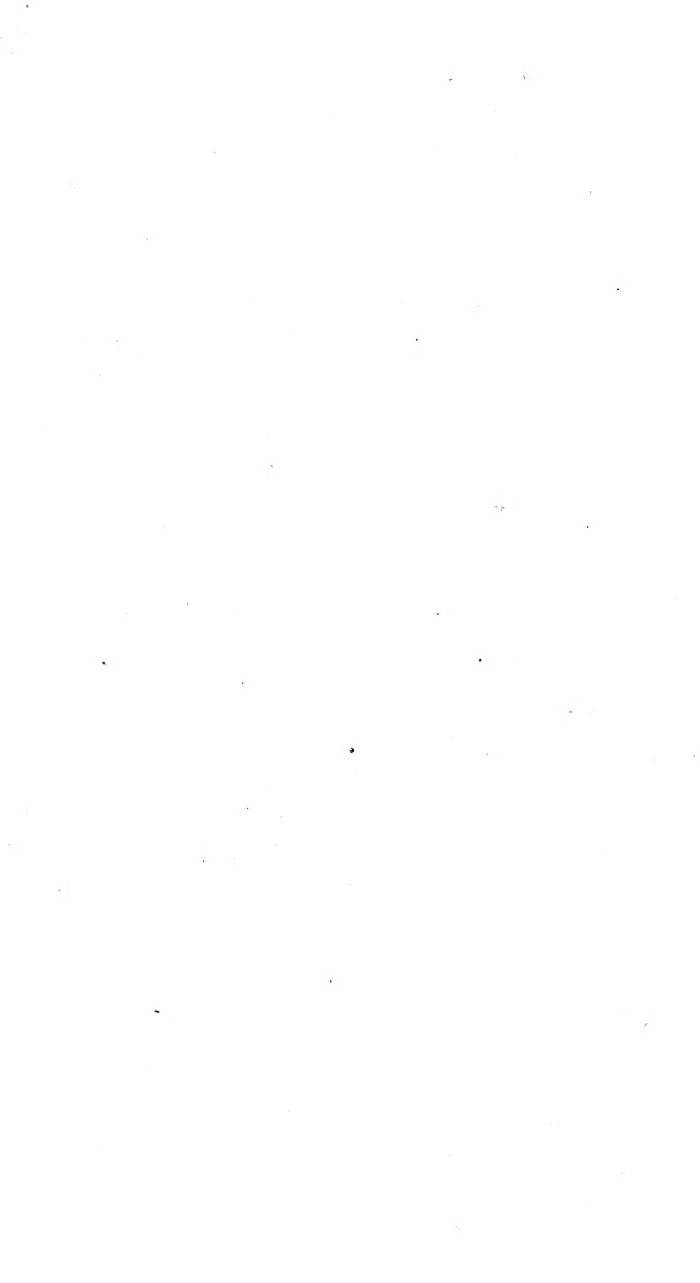
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PREFACE.

THE tracts contained in these volumes are all of them, in the estimation of the Editor, possessed, though in very different measures, of that sort of value which arises from the importance of their subjects, and the ability of their authors. Many of them have the additional recommendation of rareness, and almost all of them are, from this circumstance, or from their being to be found only in the collected works of their authors, sometimes voluminous, not likely to fall into the hands of those who would read them with most relish and advantage.

Their general character is described in their title, ‘Theological Tracts,’ all of them having a bearing more or less direct on the principles of religion natural and revealed; or on the evidence and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; or on some of the doctrines, institutions and duties of Christianity.

The Editor must not be understood to pledge himself for the accuracy of every statement made, or for the soundness of every opinion expressed, in these compositions. There is but one book which he considers as a faultless statement of infallible truth. That book was written by “holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Spirit

of God," and whose pens as well as minds were under divine guidance. In all mere human compositions there are traces of human infirmity—proofs that man is not merely fallible but fallen. In the best of them there is something wanting, something wrong. But though not disposed to accept of these tracts as an exact expression of his creed on the subjects of which they treat, he will be seriously disappointed if any tract, whatever recommendations it might have, has been admitted into the collection which contains any thing inconsistent with those great leading principles of Christian truth which, amid many minor differences, give so striking a character of harmony to the earlier creeds and to the symbols of the various churches of the Reformation; and it is hoped that on examination every one of them will be found to contain an able discussion of some important and interesting topic, while some of them, even among those which had sunk into unmerited oblivion, will be admitted to be master-works of master-minds.

In making the selection, the Editor has availed himself of a considerably extended and miscellaneous course of reading during half-a-century, and his chief difficulty has arisen from the abundance and excellence of the materials from which he had to make a selection. It will be seen that the field of choice has been wide, and that he has not confined himself to professional theologians, nor indeed to divines of any particular school or denomination. Wherever he found a tract suited to his purpose he has availed himself of it, more concerned about its merit than about its paternity. He may safely use the words of another collector of theological tracts: "I did not consider the quarter from which the matter was taken, but whether it was good.

It was to me a matter of utter indifference whether it was of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, provided it was of Christ.”*

At the same time it has been thought right, by prefixing short biographical notices of the authors, to gratify a natural and praiseworthy curiosity, to know something of those by whom we have been entertained or instructed.

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This Collection, while fitted for general perusal, is primarily intended for students of divinity, young ministers, and the more educated and intelligent class of Christians. Should those classes show that this attempt for their benefit is acceptable, these volumes will be followed by others, not less varied and instructive in their contents. Should it be otherwise, the Editor will consider it as an intimation that it is his duty to desist from an undertaking in the prosecution of which he had hoped, while gratifying himself, to benefit his brethren. Of the satisfaction arising from the consciousness that to promote their benefit was his great object, nothing can deprive him.

J. B.

* Bishop Watson.

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REFLECTIONS

ON THE

SOURCES OF INCREDULITY

WITH REGARD TO RELIGION.

THE following treatise was left imperfect by the author, a late eminent lawyer, who was no less conspicuous for his zeal in the cause of religion than for his sincere love of justice, and an invariable attachment to the laws of his country, in the several high stations he filled with applause. That it is unfinished was occasioned by his death, an event universally lamented; that it is now published is owing to some of his friends, who are willing to believe that even a fragment by so masterly a hand may not be an unacceptable present to the public.—ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

DUNCAN FORBES, Lord President of the Court of Session in Scotland, was a younger son of the House of Culloden, distinguished for its resistance to the unconstitutional measures of the Stuarts from the commencement of the civil troubles. He was born in the year 1685. Having acquired the first elements of education at the parish school of Inverness, he came to Edinburgh when a youth, and made a distinguished figure at the university there. According to the usages of the times, he, in 1705, went to Holland, and spent two years in diligent study at the then famous university of Leyden. Law and languages were his favourite pursuits. In oriental literature he made great proficiency, the taste for which he retained through life. It is said he read the Hebrew Bible eight times over. He returned to Scotland about the time of the union of the two kingdoms, and was called to the bar in July 1709. He was soon appointed Sheriff of Mid Lothian. After the rebellion in 1715, which he did much to quell, he was made Advocate-depnte. In 1722 he obtained a seat in parliament, and in 1725 was raised to the office of Lord Advocate. In 1735 he was raised to the bench, and two years later he was appointed Lord President. It was owing very much to his exertions that the attempt by Prince Charles to recover the throne of Great Britain for his family, which wore at one time an alarming aspect, was frustrated. He had a taste for elegant literature, and was the friend and patron of Thomson and Ramsay. He married early, but soon lost his wife, and ever after remained a widower. He died in 1747 at the age of 62.

In the course of his life he published two tracts on religious subjects—entitled *Thoughts on Religion Natural and Revealed*, and a letter to a Bishop concerning some important discoveries in Philosophy and Theology. Both of these are considerably tinctured with Hutchinsonianism, but the first contains so much important

may have on the earth, and on us, it must have been one, and that no inconsiderable end of the making them, to help man to such an idea as has been mentioned of the Creator.

It is rash to say that any one part of the furniture of this earth is useless; that there is not some utility in the various soils and metals; or that the different plants, insects, reptiles, fish, fowls, quadrupeds, are not necessary for certain purposes, though we have not yet discovered them. Who will deny usefulness to poisonous plants; or dare affirm that moths, rats, toads, vipers, and other vermin, have not been intended for proper and fit uses? It is bold to assert, that the least animaleule discovered by the microscope, has not its proper use in nature.

It seems unreasonable to say that God framed all the ornament of this earth to satisfy himself that he could do it; since he perfectly knew, that he could do everything that does not involve contradiction.

But as the whole frame of this earth, so far as we know it, and every plant and living creature that are supported by it, are to man strict and very obvious demonstrations of the power and wisdom of the Creator,—as the economy and disposition of the whole is of his goodness,—it seems reasonable to conclude that one, possibly the chief, end of creating those things, was to show God to man.

Most of the productions of the earth are one way or another for the use of animals. Many animals are the food of other animals; and to be sure so intended by the Maker. Man, as an animal, has his share of the leguminous as well as of animal food. Every living creature wants nourishment, and finds it ready provided; but all have not eyes to see the bountiful hand that reaches it. Man has his provision in common with the other animals; but then he has eyes that may, and, if he do not shut them, must see the hand from which it comes. On the brute therefore, who cannot know his benefactor, there is no obligation to duty or gratitude; on man, who may and ought to know, there is and must be. Why then may it not be fairly concluded, that one of the chief ends of crowding the earth with so many wonders of the vegetable and animal kind, is to fill the head of man with admiration, and his heart with gratitude?

It is rash to say that the bee knows or makes use of any geometrical principles in the formation of its hexagonal cells; or that it is from any physical knowledge of the properties of flowers, that it is directed to cull the sweets that yield its honey from some, neglecting others. It is rash to affirm that the various tribes of spiders consider, and, from reflection and by mechanical rules, frame those nets of different forms and sizes, that catch their vagrant prey. It is rash to suppose that the swallows, the crows, the magpies, frame their nests, and make choice of that situation, from any antecedent reasoning what is fittest to be done, or from any architectonical notions. It is neither reflection nor hunger that moves the cat to lie in wait so patiently and so attentively for the mouse or the rat. These actions they exert probably because they are directed by their frame to exert them; and to that disposition we give the name of *instinct*.

It is false to say that men desire to eat and drink from knowing that doing so is necessary to preserve their lives, or that they have a desire for the other sex from a design of propagating the species. These dispositions flow from their make: they hunger, they thirst, they lust, whether they would or would not. In these things, and some others, they are moved by their frame as brutes are.

But, laying aside these natural, or rather mechanical dispositions, man compared with brutes is much at a loss, except in so far as reason and reflection come to his assistance. He has no instinct to determine him what to eat, what to avoid eating. It is but a small part of the globe, if any, that can afford man fruits or legumes to support him the whole year round. His make is not fit for catching animals to live on, were he naturally carnivorous. No instinct such as appears in other animals directs him to this or that sort of habitation; and were he not directed by experience and reflection, he must quickly perish.

Man comes into the world much more helpless, and continues so much longer than any other animal we know. Without the care of his parents he must be soon lost; and without the instruction which their experience enables them to afford his reason, he must continue miserable, until his own experience and observation yield matter for his reason

to work on. He therefore was evidently so framed, as to be obliged to follow reason for his guide; whereas all the other animals had their guide in their texture and constitution.

No animal but man wants clothing, other than nature has provided for it. Man can hardly live in any part of the globe, unless he find clothing for himself.

No animal but man stands in need of cookery, or any other preparation for his food, but what it has from nature. Man must prepare every thing almost, except fruits and legumes, before they are fit for his service. Grain must be ground and baked; all sort of meat must be altered in its condition by fire; and I doubt salt must by industry be found or made, before the nourishment be proper for man.

No climate yields spontaneously food sufficient for man, though all do for the brutes that inhabit them. Man does not cultivate the ground, nor find supplies for his wants, from instinct, but from observation and reasoning.

Reason in him must answer the end of instinct in brutes. He sees trees and all vegetables spring from seeds; if he would have plenty, he must plant or sow. He sees grains and fruits fall and perish unless they are gathered and preserved; and he sees the ant industriously gathering and laying up stores. These observations must lead him to produce and save corns, &c. Cold makes clothing necessary; the spider's thread and web furnish matter for his fancy, and spinning and weaving are invented. Floods, and storms, and winter make shelter necessary. The swallow makes use of mortar, the crow of sticks for its nest: man's invention improves on their instinct; at first huts rise, and at last palaces.

Instinct carries brutes no farther than to what is fit and necessary: Reason carries man so far; but then it, or at least it prompted by vanity, carries him much farther. In place of warm clothing, which nature requires, vanity will have it rich and gaudy. The blush of the rose, the plume of the peacock, and the shining wing of the butterfly, must be imitated to deck our fine ladies, and our much finer young gentlemen. In place of convenient mansions, we must have sumptuous palaces, crusted with marble, and

shining with gold. In place of food fitted for our stomachs by roasting and boiling, we run into the most ridiculous gratification of extravagant taste, by unnatural mixtures, that distress the stomach. And in place of using wine and strong drink, our own invention, for necessary purposes, if any such there are, we make them the instruments of debauch, the means of debasing our understanding, and destroying our health.

Happy brutes! unhappy man! Their instinct carries them to what is fit and convenient for them, but it carries them no farther; it leads them to nothing that undoes them. His reason supplies in him the lack of instinct, and leads him to every thing that is necessary or convenient, nay, bounds him to that when duly made use of. His reason, besides supplying the place of instinct, was clearly intended for opening to him a scene of very delightful employment; the contemplation of the works of God, the reflection on his boundless might, wisdom, and goodness, and the enjoyment of his favour. But unluckily this last has long ceased to be any part of his business. His reason is made use of, indeed, by all means, whether right or wrong, to purchase things necessary and convenient; but he does not stop there. He seldom ever makes use of it to prevent the abuse of these conveniences; on the contrary, he employs it in contriving means to raise and to gratify unnatural appetites, by which his constitution is hurt. And he seems to have no other view in the conduct of his life, but to satisfy those vicious and destructive inclinations which he himself has raised, and substituted in the room of those which reason was intended to lead him to.

Brutes are by nature sufficiently supplied with necessaries, and with instinct to teach them to make use of them; and if they had eyes to see the Author of nature, they surely would be thankful. Man is richly supplied by nature, and in place of instinct has reason to teach him to apply to his use and convenience what nature has produced. He has besides eyes to see the Author of nature and of his blessings, the giver of that reason that helps him to turn the product of the earth to his account; and he has in his make a disposition to gratitude, as well as he knows that acknow-

ledgment, thankfulness, and compliance with the will of his Maker and Benefactor is his duty. But alas! how seldom does he suffer that disposition to be brought by reason to act? how little is he employed in thinking on nature, with a view to discover and admire its Author? and how small is his concern for the will, for the honour, of that Being by whose power and bounty he subsists?

Because he can raise plants and gather fruits and seeds; because he can convert these seeds and fruits into bread and wine; because he can manufacture silk, wool, and flax; because he can smelt minerals, and produce a sort of new species of metals; and because he can, by making use of his reason, procure a vast variety of gratifications to his taste, and to his vanity, he forgets the Being whose gift that reason was: he is apt to look upon himself as the creator of all those things that afford him subsistence or gratification, and on them as his creatures; he thinks it lawful to make use of his own to any excess: and he at last drops into an opinion, that true felicity consists in the gratification of all appetites, at any expense, without regard to right or wrong; and that every thing that may safely be done to compass that gratification is lawful.

When this comes to be the settled disposition of the mind; when the bias of the heart is the gratification of all lusts and appetites; when the gratification of these lusts and appetites is directly adversary to what right reason says is the will of God, and inconsistent with what it says would have been our chief felicity, even in this life, had we pursued it; no one can wonder that right reason is not consulted, or its voice listened unto; or that the crowd, especially of the giddy and vicious, shun all correspondence with reason, all sort of meditation; and in place thereof, when they are satiated with the gratification of grosser appetites for the time, and cannot proceed farther in the enjoyment, they take up with play, or other the most silly, if not offensive amusements, rather than be left alone in the hands of their own conscience and reflections.

Thus has reason, the highest gift that God has been pleased to bestow on men, by the perversity of foolish guilty man become the instrument of his misery. Reason was

given him in place of instinct to direct his choice, which was left free that he might deserve and be rewarded for doing well: reason was given to guard him against the prevalence of lusts and appetites, and to lead him to the chief felicity his nature was capable of: reason was given to let him see the order, the beauty, and the magnificence of the works of God, and thereby to discover the excellency, the power, the wisdom and the goodness of that self-existent Being: reason was given to show him his immediate dependence on his Creator for every blessing he enjoyed, as well as the capacity of enjoying them, and to fill his soul with gratitude for the overflowing bounty of his Maker: and reason was given him to complete and secure his felicity, by a settled confidence in the favour and protection of the Almighty, so long as he made use of it to control and correct disorderly appetites: and to answer the end of his creation in admiring, reverencing, and adoring that source of perfection, mercy and goodness. But alas, to what miserable purposes has wretched man employed this mighty boon of heaven! Reason, in place of restraining, has been made use of to encourage lusts and appetites, by inventing incentives to them. In place of leading men to see their duty, and the true object of their felicity, it has been employed in contriving means to divert the attention from looking at either: nay, in place of discovering the boundless perfections of God, the absolute dependence of man, and the necessary connection between right and wrong and rewards and punishments, it has been fatally made use of to hide the Deity from the sight of men, to erect man into an independent being, to abolish all hopes and fears of rewards or punishments, and to make felicity consist in what is truly the dishonour of the human nature.

Amazing as this phenomenon is, nothing is more certainly true; nor has any effect in nature a more shameful, a more pitiable cause.

Appetites were given to man to prompt him to preserve himself and to continue the species. These natural calls were necessary, else man, employed in contemplation, would soon have ceased to be. The acts they prompt to, without the natural stimulus, have nothing inviting in them. And it is a further instance of the wise benignity of the Creator

that, when the ends of these natural calls are answered, satiety ensues, and the objects coveted lose their charm, and cannot be so much as thought of with any relish until nature has farther occasion for them.

The desire of knowledge, the effect of discerning and reasoning, was implanted to prompt man to employ those faculties by which the Deity, and what is owing to him, might be discovered. And here again the goodness of the divine Being is manifest, in annexing to the gratification of that desire the calmest and most lasting satisfaction, without that alloy which attends the gratification of their other, carnal, appetites, and with this singularity, that the desire of knowledge is insatiable, and like its object infinite, rewarding nevertheless the seeker after knowledge with very sensible pleasure in every step of his pursuit.

The desire of preserving life (not to speak of the natural impulse to avoid ill), is the result of the pleasures and enjoyments of both kinds provided for man in this life.

And the desire of approbation is the incentive planted in man by his Maker to dispose him to do his duty, which is immediately rewarded by the calm satisfaction that warms his heart upon having done it. The approbation of the Author and Maker of all things must be of infinite consequence to the creature, and the consciousness of having gained that approbation must yield the purest joy.

The other dispositions, or what are called passions of the mind, such as anger, fear, love, hatred, &c., have been placed in man for noble and for salutary ends, not only as they respect man's duty to the Deity, but as they regard society; though those also, as man has unhappily contrived the matter, in place of promoting the ends for which they were meant, hurry man on to misery, and give birth to many disorders in society.

Now, thus qualified for happiness, what has man done to enjoy or to preserve it? Why, truly, finding an immediate pleasure attendant upon the gratification of sensual appetites, he is disposed to place his happiness in them: finding that pains and industry must be used to supply what his appetites crave, he bestows all his time and action in that pursuit: finding that, employing his reason, he can refine upon

the common gratification of those appetites by inventing new meats, new drinks, new sauces,—by procuring variety of women,—by erecting palaces,—by picture,—by sculpture,—by music,—and by numberless arts to please and to amuse, his reason is made use of to those purposes only: and finding that, by the use of reason, he can not only arrive at those things, but that, though he is far from being the strongest of animals, he, by employing it, is more powerful than they are all put together; that he is their lord and master, and they subservient to his uses; that he can blow up rocks, alter the course of rivers, lock up the sea in basins, join in a manner distant continents by ships; that he can imitate thunder and lay whole countries waste; and that those things he can do without any immediate control or check from the Author of nature: he is apt to think he owes all these advantages and prerogatives to himself, and to that reason which distinguishes him from the rest of the visible creation, and on that supposal to conclude, that no return of duty or gratitude is due to that superior Being, from whom his reason and all his real enjoyments flow.

As the firm belief of this conclusion is absolutely necessary towards quieting his mind in the career of brutal folly in which he is engaged, reason, that unfortunate tool, is made use of on every occasion to blind its owner. It was given by the Creator to be his guide, and it ought to be so; if duly made use of and attended to, it would be so. But as man has contrived to manage matters, it is listened to only when it suggests what is fit to soothe him in his foolish shameful courses. On such occasions it is the sole and sovereign rule. But if it presumes to check him; if it insinuates that he is no more than a poor dependent creature, debtor to the supreme Being, and consequently accountable for every talent, every blessing, every enjoyment; that suggestion is straightway treated as the offspring not of manly reason but of mean dastardly fear, a melancholy conceit nursed up in sickly imaginations, which had its origin in certain inventions of cunning lawgivers who, to keep their people in order, and in obedience to the laws established by them, published notions of right and wrong and of rewards and punishments, which, conveyed down by tradition, have

gained credit with the weak to the great disturbance of their quiet, and pass for realities with enthusiasts. Unhappy man! Fatal effect of prejudice! Reason, the sovereign rule, is to be followed and allowed that name, or rejected and called the fruit of melancholy or enthusiasm, as it does or does not conform itself to prejudices!

But what is the most amazing on this article is, that in proportion as men are, or imagine they are, possessed of knowledge and of the art of reasoning in an eminent degree, their abuse of that knowledge, and of the reasoning faculty, to the prejudice of the end to which it was chiefly meant, is the more conspicuous. In ancient times, which are now called times of ignorance, when men did not pique themselves on the deep knowledge and the profound skill in reasoning which we boast of at this time, there was a general disposition to reverence the Creator, and a professed infidel was hardly to be met with. But in these our days of supposed knowledge the guise is sadly changed. Except amongst those called ignorant, not many are to be found that do or pretend to believe in God.

From the beginning, a rational being, unaided by learning, and the experience of former ages, could easily discern the hand of an intelligent, wise, powerful, and very bountiful Creator in the whole and in every part of the fabric of this system that fell under his ken, and could as easily discover his own obligations to and his dependence on that Being. And accordingly we see, by the earliest accounts of time that have come to our hands, all mankind full of a persuasion of their dependence, full of reverence to the Deity,—soliciting his favour and protection by prayer, by ceremonies, by sacrifices, sometimes human, nay of their first-born,—and imputing all their favourable or cross incidents that happened to them to the goodwill or displeasure of the sovereign Being, whom it was their chief study to placate.

It is true, that the notions they generally entertained of the Deity were imperfect, as well as their manner of serving him corrupted; circumstances that can easily be accounted for from the weakness and perverseness of those who took the lead in directing their religious opinions and practices.

But still it is undeniably true, that the gross of mankind were serious in their belief of the existence of a Deity, of their dependence on him, and of the occasion they had for his protection and favour.

To this general disposition of mankind it was in part owing, that the gospel, upon its first publication, made so rapid and so surprising progress. No man at that time doubted of the existence of a Deity, or of man's dependence on him. It was easy to satisfy every one who admitted these propositions, that mankind, by the corruption into which they had fallen, stood mightily in need of some intercessor, some mean by which they might be saved from the weight of their sins. And it is no marvel, that evidence given to men so convinced, that salvation might be had through Jesus, should be received with gladness.

And accordingly we see, that, in a trifle of time, the herd of mankind, in defiance of all discouragements, and of the most severe persecutions, from power, greedily embraced and professed this faith; and continued steadfastly in the profession of it, notwithstanding the monstrous absurdities with which the teachers of that faith loaded it, and the more monstrous and shocking lives and manners of the teachers; until of late years that what ought to have been improved into a blessing to mankind has unfortunately turned out to their destruction.

In the period just mentioned, wicked and voluptuous men pursued wicked and voluptuous courses, and many gross villanies and abuses were daily committed by profligate men, which the degenerate condition of mankind produced. But still these wickednesses were disguised, disowned, or somehow sought to be atoned for. The villain dissembled at least, and was forced to be so mean as to become a hypocrite. No man dreamed of professing openly that he denied the being of a God, or his dependence on, and being accountable to him. And if any one was indeed so foolish as well as impious as to entertain such a notion, which by the by is with me a question, there was no temptation for uttering it, because there was no chance that any one should concur in supporting such an opinion.

But of late the case is surprisingly and sadly altered, by

the very mean that ought to have produced the contrary effect,—increase in knowledge, from the more careful observation of nature, and from the perusal of the works of the learned in all ages.

Whatever degree of acquisition of knowledge from experience the longevity of the antediluvians might have rendered practicable for any particular person, it is certain that the short period to which men's lives are now, and have for some thousands of years been limited, does not permit any individual to lay in any considerable stock of knowledge. And if he will know much he must profit of others, his contemporaries, or of those that went before him, by tradition or by writing.

Hence all arts have been perfected by degrees. The experience of one age adds to that of another. And if the discoveries of our forefathers had not been handed down to us by writing or tradition, we should be as rude and unlearned as the most barbarous of them were.

After writing became fashionable among the ancients, the experience, the reasoning, and discoveries of one age were transmitted to and improved on by the next. The inquisitive became diligent in perusing the discoveries of former times; philosophy became mightily in vogue, and it was no uncommon thing for men of parts to dedicate their whole time to the contemplation of nature, and to place their whole felicity in employing all their mental faculties in the investigation of truth.

As pursuits of this kind are of all others the most noble, and the most suited to a rational being, they soon became the most honourable. Philosophers were held to be *wise men*, and were called so *tout court*, as undoubtedly they held themselves to be, though modestly they contented themselves with the appellation of *lovers of wisdom* only; and the vanity they had in being very much more knowing than other people, and in being thought by others *wise*, was the chief reward they had for their labour, and contributed not a little to run them into the vain opinion, that they were in very deed *wise*, and that their skill and wisdom could answer all purposes.

In all arts and sciences, so far as the observations they

were possessed of afforded materials, they reasoned accurately. In morality, and the whole system of duties which men owe reciprocally to each other, and which members owe to the society whereof they are part, they acquitted themselves well. Brutal appetites and enjoyments they saw and reproached the meanness of; the superior happiness which the right exercise of the understanding yields they felt and recommended. Reason, in contradistinction to appetites and passions, was their sovereign guide, and felicity was to be attained by following its dictates. Social and public virtues had, according to their notions, charms sufficient to make the possessor of them happy, and to secure against all wants, pains and distresses.

But though their sagacity and attention discovered and described the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, though they defined with precision the limits of social and political duty, and though it was the labour of their lives to recommend what was good and to dissuade from what was evil, yet it unluckily so happened that the learning and reason which they valued themselves upon never once led them to the reflections for which they were principally intended—on the excellencies and manifest attributes of the Author of the creation, on the necessary dependence of man upon his favour, and on the duty thence resulting to the Deity. Such reflections would have been fit to humble their vanity, and to have checked them in the course of pursuits which, though not openly vicious, yet had nothing of that reverence and attention that is due to the Deity mixed with them.

So soon as these wise philosophers had got that quantity of knowledge which in their apprehensions placed them above other men, and had got into a high opinion of their own reason, they no longer employed their parts in attending to and investigating the wondrous effects of wisdom, power and goodness displayed in the fabric of this universe in order to raise high and honourable ideas of the Almighty, and becoming notions of man's meanness, short-sightedness and dependence; but, rejecting such poor-spirited reflections, they took it in their heads to imagine that the profusion of wonders in the works of creation was

intended only for an exercise to their understanding, to discover how, by what mechanism, and for what ends such things were brought about. They found out they had not power sufficient to produce them, but on the all-sufficiency of their reason they depended, and therefore to work they went to discover and to explain nature. Hence so many *cosmogonies*, so many systems for showing how the various *phenomena* are performed. Some set out on *hypotheses* which time has discovered to be absolutely false. Some gave only words which had no certain meaning, and therefore explained nothing, but which the philosopher and his followers were perfectly satisfied with. And all of them agreed in this, that their reason was a match for the undertaking, that is, fit to investigate and describe all the mysteries of nature, and to discover and determine all the ways and works of God.

With this prepossession in behalf of the powers of their reason these wise gentlemen undertook to inquire into the nature of God, laying it down as a fixed point to admit no quality in that Being that their reason did not assign him, nor to allow any action to him but what they, making use of their reason and observation, could assign the cause and end of.

On these articles the difference of opinion was great. Some held the world to be eternal, and the infinite variety and contrivance to be the effect of *Nature*, eternal also; and with this sound in place of sense they were satisfied. Some held the world to be the work of an intelligent Being; but the number of them was few, and what regard he had to men in the composition they did not say. Some held that the Deity directed events in this world, particularly those that regarded nations and societies; others utterly denied Providence, and imagined that everything was left to the government of Chance. Few philosophers allowed of a future state of rewards and punishments; those that did thought only of rewarding public virtues, and punishing vices noxious to society. None of them imagined that God ever minded the inward disposition or heart of man.

As Epicurus and his followers observed that no signal punishment attended vice in this world, they denied Provi-

dence; as they could not be satisfied that the dead could rise, they denied a future state; and as there was no punishment that actually attended vicious actions in this world or another, all actions with them were indifferent. So that this sect, which was numerous, discarded the Deity, and made brutes of men.

But it is impossible they could have dropped into such monstrous absurdities, if the vain voluptuous course in which they were engaged had not given a bias to their reason; and if they had not made reason so much the test and touchstone of all things, as to reject every thing which it could frame any objection to, if it could not also, by its own light, dissolve that objection.

Had they duly attended to the popular opinions which prevailed in their days, that the gods regarded the actions of men,—that good actions were pleasing and evil displeasing to the Deity,—that sins, unless expiated, were to be punished,—and that rewards and punishments were to be met with in another state: had they with care considered the essential difference between good and evil actions,—the monstrous absurdity which attends the supposal that wickedness can go unpunished or virtue unrewarded; and the necessary consequence from thence, that there must be another time for those rewards and punishments, as they do not happen in this life,—and had they permitted themselves to see without prejudice the numberless obligations, unacknowledged and unreturned, under which man lies to his Creator and Preserver, and the infinite disproportion there is between our weak scanty reason and his boundless wisdom, it is impossible they could have fallen into a set of such childish opinions as they maintained.

But they were too much bewitched with the chimerical notions they had of their own excellency; too fond of the character they had carved out for themselves, after driving the Deity from their thoughts, of being lords of the creation, the chief of beings, accountable to none, happy in themselves, entitled to gratify every appetite, and subject to no law but that of their own good will and pleasure, to submit to the mortification that must result from the discovery of their real state. The misery into which folly had plunged human

nature must be a disagreeable object of contemplation to a vain man who has got himself into possession of the seat of God. The necessity of humiliation, repentance, amendment, intercession, and of a total alteration of views and pursuits, was a pill of no easy digestion. And therefore it is no great wonder, that though on the first publication of the gospel the good tidings were greedily received by the unlearned, and consequently less prejudiced, the philosophers and their scholars, the pretended learned men of the world, resisted it with the greatest warmth and bitterness.

It was however lucky, that though the infidelity of the ancient philosophers was almost as strong as that of the modern it was by much less extensive, and therefore less mischievous. Learning in those days was confined to a few heads; books were scarce, and the purchase of them cost a great deal of money; every body did not meddle with philosophising as they do at present; and, of consequence, knowledge of the philosophical kind was only to be met with amongst philosophers who taught, and such of their hearers as had leisure, genius and books to enable them to prosecute their studies. The herd of the people remained ignorant and undebauched, and the Christian doctrine which took root amongst them, when it called in unprejudiced reason and learning to assist it, proved at last too strong for the few fantastic proud philosophers.

Thus was infidelity, that is in theory and opinion, banished from the Christian world, till of late, that a false opinion has prevailed, that, with the restoration of learning, the knowledge of mankind has enlarged itself infinitely,—that this is the effect of genius and reason,—and that making a proper use of this reason, every thing that is or appears to be mysterious in nature may to a certainty, at least to a very high degree of probability, be discovered. And this false opinion has unfortunately become so prevalent and extensive that, except amongst the meaner and the less conceited part of mankind, it is not easy to meet with any one that is not tainted with it.

This mischief is however by no means to be charged upon learning, but on the weakness and prejudices of mankind, who, conceiving too high an opinion of the powers of their

own understanding, presume to measure every thing, divine as well as human, by it. For when first the subversion of the Greek empire drove learned men with their books into the west, which fell in with the time of the invention of printing, whereby knowledge was circulated, and could be come at much cheaper and with less labour than formerly, great numbers of men of genius applied themselves to study, and in a trifle of time acquired so much knowledge as disposed them to throw off the yoke as well as the absurdities of the church of Rome, which would have had a thorough effect, but for the passions and interests of selfish princes. But in this attack on the reigning church, infidelity had no sort of hand. Learning had warmed the piety as well as it improved the knowledge of the Reformers,—a thorough examination of the scriptures, of history and of antiquity, independent of the tradition of the church, secured and defined their faith,—and piety in those days was the companion of knowledge and learning, as it must ever continue to be where knowledge and learning are lodged in sober minds.

The quick and easy conveyance of knowledge by the press, soon produced in all soils swarms of men of real or pretended learning. Curiosity, genius, or the fashion (for it was the mode then to study), filled Europe with men of letters. Sciences of all sorts were pursued by people of all countries, as their tastes severally led them; all the ancient learning was exposed to view; in theology the progress just described was made; the Roman law was studied and taught with great accuracy; the Greek and Roman oratory and poetry became the standards of performances of that kind; the Greek, particularly Aristotle's philosophy, reigned in the schools; Hippocrates, Galen, Celsus, &c., gave lights to physicians which they had not before; and the works of the ancient astronomers and mathematicians which remain, revived those studies, in which, by the assiduous application of ingenious men, very great progress has been made.

It must be owned that in almost every branch of learning^d knowledge has been carried to a higher pitch since the revival of learning, than it appears to have been by the ancients, from the remains of their works that have come to

our hands. But that is not to be ascribed to the superiority of genius of the moderns, since the true cause of it can easily be assigned: *i. e.* That multitudes are at work on the same subject, and that the press affords so quick a conveyance of their conceptions and observations to each other that they are thereby vastly aided in their lucubrations. Besides that many accidental discoveries by men not always of the brightest parts have given hints, and struck out lights to the ingenious, which have led to considerable improvements, and have banished many false systems.

Accident gave birth to the invention of telescopes and of microscopes, and yet to the first is owing the confirmation of the Copernican and the ruin of the Ptolemeyan system, and to the second the confirmation of Dr. Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, as well as the production to view of numberless tribes of animals, hitherto hid from mortal sight. Accident gave birth to the invention of gun-powder and of the air-pump; and experiments made on these have disclosed many unknown properties of the air. Experiments to which men have been led by accidents have made surprising discoveries in chemistry and many parts of natural philosophy, to the great improvement of physic and other branches of useful knowledge. And the accidental discovery of the West Indies, and the intercourse by trade with it, and with the East Indies, have brought numbers of particulars to light to which the ancients were utter strangers.

Possessed of the learning of the ancients, with the vast addition of later discoveries, it is not to be wondered at if the moderns exceeded the ancients as much in vanity, and the good opinion they entertained of their own capacity, as they did in knowledge. Hence they employed with great industry their time and their talents in searches after the secrets of nature, and in discovering and assigning the physical causes of the effects that shine forth in the universe. Descartes's new Cosmogony beat Aristotle's, and all the other ancient systems, out of the schools. The artifice employed by the Creator, in the formation of the universe, in the direction and the preservation of it, was described and laid open to the comprehension of the meanest capacity,—the physical causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, of

magnetism, of the formation of metals, and of the other seeming mysteries of nature, were assigned,—and to the conviction of the inventors, and of almost all Europe, for about half a century, nothing was wanted but the application of his principles to account for every phenomenon, how surprising soever, that should at any time make its appearance.

Whilst the world was drunk with this conceit, no marvel they should entertain a very high opinion of the sagacity of man. If his power was not to be compared with that of the Omnipotent, yet his wisdom and knowledge did not seem to fall far short of that of the Omniscient. A well-instructed and well-convincing Cartesian would not think himself hard put to it by the questions about the formation of natural things which the Almighty put to Job, to humble his pride, and to convince him that he was not a competent judge of the ways and views of God. And thence it naturally followed that they looked down, with some contempt, upon such parts of the scripture as appeared to them unphilosophical, entertained a poor opinion of the writers of them, and laughed at the simplicity of serious Christians, who believed several articles, in matters of religion, which those wise men could not account for so well as they could for the formation of the universe and the various phenomena of nature.

To this way of thinking their master's first principle led them. *Quicquid clarè et distinctè percipio, est verum*, was the foundation on which he built,—and a good one. He surely run no risk in admitting whatever was founded on it. In all the parts of mathematics, in which he excelled, the converting the proposition, and admitting nothing to be true but what one clearly perceives to be so, is the rule which has guided such as followed it to that degree of certainty which has distinguished those sciences from all others. The object of them admits of the application of the rule. Lines, angles, numbers, the creatures of man's imagination, defined by him, and receiving their nature from that definition, he may clearly conceive all the properties of, and is in the right to deny to any line, angle, or number what he does not clearly perceive to belong to it. But if he carries

this rule to other sciences, where the discovery of truth depends upon a different species of evidence,—if he applies it to the works or ways of the Most High, which his knowledge does not reach to, as it does to the properties of lines and numbers, beings of his own creation; and of which he cannot possibly know anything but what he gathers from conjecture, founded on the appearances in nature, or from what the Deity may have been pleased to reveal, monstrous mistakes may and must grow. A thousand improbable, nay almost inconceivable things, in natural philosophy are true. The testimony of the senses confutes all objections from improbability, or inconceivability, if one may use the expression; and credible evidence short of that of seeing or feeling, from unsuspected witnesses, creates that certainty on which men may safely depend and act. And if it has pleased the Almighty to discover to mankind anything relating to himself or to his ways, it is but of little consequence whether that falls in with the philosopher's notions or conceptions, and the only sensible question can be, Whether there is sufficient evidence that in fact such things were revealed?

Notwithstanding these obvious reflections, Mons. Descartes and his followers, and the other sects of philosophers who have succeeded him, not content with world-making, have proceeded to god-making. They have presumed to define him, his attributes and powers; nay, they have determined what he is and must be, and what he is not and cannot be, with such precision and certainty, that if any thing said to be revealed by himself does not conform directly to the character and qualities they have given this god, they straightway contest, and, right or wrong, reject the evidence for such revelation.

Descartes's romance kept entire possession of men's belief for full fifty years. If some cross experiment shocked it in some particular, the system was pieced up and mended by his followers, and accommodated to the newly discovered phenomena; till at last the tide of contrary observations and experiments was too strong to be resisted. All the invention of his countrymen the French could not prop the theory that experiment demonstrated to be false, and what was

worst of all for France, it was crushed under the weight of another theory, built on the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton, an Englishman.

The sagacity of Sir Isaac was admired by all, and adored by his countrymen. His genius pushed him to discoveries in the most abstruse parts of the mathematics, that have caused the astonishment of the learned; and at the same time, from accurate observations made on nature, he has given hints which, though by him flung out in the form of queries only, his countrymen have converted into so many certain propositions, and upon them have founded what they pretend to be a complete theory or system, which future experiments and discovery must try the solidity of. But it must be owned Sir Isaac's modesty was much greater than that of his followers, not only in the title he gave to his notions, but in the respect with which, notwithstanding his vast genius and superior knowledge, he treated the Deity and the Scriptures.

It is truly amazing, that the series of blunders which the most exalted geniuses who applied themselves to system-making have by late discoveries been found to have dropped into one after another, has not cured the philosophers of our time of the high conceit they have entertained of the compass and all-sufficiency of the human understanding, and of the madness of the undertaking to trace, with the organs which we have got, the hidden wonders of the material creation, especially since the more light we gain into natural things by accidental discoveries, the thicker the difficulties pour themselves on us, and the more inexplicable these mysteries appear to be.

About the beginning of the last century natural philosophers had nothing to exercise their talents on but such phenomena as fell within their senses, unaided by instruments, and such observations as were without very great care or accuracy made accidentally on such things as gave surprise on account of their singularity. But since that time the microscope has unveiled a sort of new creation, at least a very remarkable part of it, till then unknown,—the telescope has discovered new worlds in the skies,—and improvements in mathematics and astronomy have showed the

size and distance of those worlds. The inconceivable minuteness of the microscopic animals, of the parts whereof they are composed, of their juices and nutriment, and the delicacy of the artifice that has produced and supports them, strikes the mind with as strong a sense of the plenitude of skill and power of the Creator, as the grandeur and magnificence of the new discoveries in the skies do of his immensity; and both are equally fit to give to man the most humbling view of his own knowledge and penetration, as well as of his power, when compared with those of the Almighty.

The air-pump, experiments made therein, and others to which these gave rise, have discovered many properties of the air heretofore unknown, which show the admirable sagacity of that Being by whose astonishing contrivance that fluid is so adjusted and tempered as in effect to support the animal as well as the vegetable world, and to maintain this part of the creation in the condition in which it is.

Chemistry pursued with attention has discovered many effects of fire, and of mixtures, and general properties in metals, minerals, and other bodies, that give daily surprise,—anatomy has to a certain pitch laid open the astonishing artifice of the Creator, in the texture of the body of man as well as of other animals,—a prism in Sir Isaac Newton's hand has disclosed many qualities in light which never had entered into the heart of man to think of,—and some accidental experiments in electricity have presented to the senses appearances which show that there are some powers and properties in matter not hitherto dreamed of, and which no theory as yet hatched can account for.

The natural effect of those discoveries upon minds rightly disposed ought to be, to mortify conceit and to exalt our idea of the infinite power and perfection of the Creator; since the greater progress we make in discovering, the more wonders of contrivance, wisdom, power, and goodness we meet with, which though our reason cannot sometimes see the end of, it is too scanty to trace the mechanical cause of; and for that must resort to the will and pleasure of the Deity, unless we will be so absurd as to say that nature, without any meaning or contrivance, has bestowed those properties and powers upon certain parcels of matter.

That dense bodies gravitate in proportion to their mass, and that projected bodies continue in motion until obstructed, are appearances so common that no one is surprised with the observation, and the crowd do not trouble their head in inquiring after the causes. But it is not so with the clear-sighted philosophers. They must puzzle their brains with assigning the mechanical causes for those effects, and when they have done their best they must confess their ignorance, or risk error, by averring that there is no mechanical cause, and that the effect depends upon a law of nature, which those who are disposed to be civil to the Deity say flows from the mere will of the Deity.

In the same way, every man living is sensible of the intimate connexion between the soul and the body,—he feels the sensation raised in the one by the action of the other, and knows the ready obedience which such parts of the body as are intended for action yield to the will of the soul; but how the one acts upon the other is not only not known, but, one may venture to say, not knowable or conceivable by us, until we acquire some degree of knowledge of what we are at present mere strangers to,—the nature of soul, and the nature of body.

A body fit to reflect light and colours, when placed in light, not only returns the rays of light that fall upon it to the luminous body that enlightened it, but sends the picture of itself quite round the hemisphere in all directions, and to every point. Placing a thousand, a million of such bodies near one another, each performs the same operation; the rays of light and colours come instantaneously to the spectator's eye from each, without being disturbed or diverted in the passage by the numberless rays returned, in different and contrary directions, by the other contiguous bodies. That the Being who contrived this mechanism, and created the machine, can explain it, and can give us capacity to comprehend it, is not to be doubted; but until it shall be his good pleasure to do so, all we have to do is, to admire his power and skill, and thankfully to acknowledge the blessing he has bestowed upon us by this astonishing machinery.

Why then, what has man got by the numerous experi-

ments and discoveries of later years? Why, surely, a more accurate and certain knowledge of many phenomena of nature, of many of the works of God, than the ancients had, and a more distinct view of the ends and uses of many pieces and parts of the creation than men were formerly possessed of,—discoveries fit to raise the most high and honourable notions of the Creator, and of his goodness to his creatures; and to convince man of his short-sightedness, dependence, and duty.

But has man made this improvement of those discoveries? Nothing less! He makes a pompous muster to his own vain mind of his knowledge; he looks upon it as his property, acquired by his own ingenuity and industry; he prides himself on his sagacity, and hopes by its assistance to be still richer in wisdom; and he feels so much pleasure in the pursuit of more knowledge, and takes so much joy upon every trifling discovery which adds to his store, that he cannot think with patience on the evidence which his increase in knowledge gives of his real ignorance and weakness, nor on the infinite perfection and goodness of the Deity, which that knowledge demonstrates. Such reflections would shock his vanity,—would convince him he had passed his life unprofitably,—and might determine him to quit his beloved course of philosophizing, or other courses still more foolish; or else to persist in them under a load of anxious doubts which might pall the taste of his enjoyments.

He must be a stranger to the exercise of the rational faculty, who does not know that the pursuit of knowledge in any science is attended with very sensible pleasure, or who doubts that a philosopher, if blessed with health, and means, and temperance, may reasonably propose to drive on in the career of life till nature decay, with as much satisfaction as any man who does not confidently look for a happy hereafter. And as this is the case, supposing a philosopher engaged in this pleasurable course, it is not to be imagined that he would quit it willingly, or listen without some reluctance to doctrines that should make him uneasy in it. With such prejudice does almost every philosopher of our days attend to what he daily hears preached, and what the voice of all nature proclaims, of the duties which men owe to their

Creator, of the regard which he expects from them to his will, and of the certainty of rewards and punishments; and is therefore fertile in objections, to prevent his own and other people's believing these truths.

And what puts our age in a much more lamentable case than those that were before it is, that whereas the number of philosophers formerly was but very small, the number of pretended philosophers is now immensely great; and whereas books and learning were then in a few hands, at present almost every body can read. The press circulates books very cheap; philosophers from opinion, and wits for bread, publish atheism; and the half-learned and vicious read. With these the authority of the learned, as well as the objections against doctrines which men's vices may induce them to wish not to be true, go far, and those of inferior learning or rank are glad to follow the opinions as well as the vices of their betters; so that a man that truly fears God is at this day almost as great a curiosity as an Atheist was heretofore.

What makes the truth of these reflections the more sensible is, that though those philosophers called Freethinkers controvert the duties owing to the Deity, and dream of no punishment attendant on the neglect; yet they all pretend to be, and generally are, sensible of the social duties, and act up to them better than others do who in other respects think more justly than they. And this comes from the moral sense in them, which they rather encourage than stifle on that article, from the vanity of having the good opinion and approbation of mankind, which they court; and from this consideration, that it is no obstruction to their pursuits. Whereas, brought up with doubts of the very existence of the Deity,—ripening into years under a total neglect of all duties that may be owing to him,—immersed in pursuits and courses whereof the objects are pretty much incompatible with those duties,—and conscious that such duties neglected, if there is any real obligation to them, must be highly offensive to the Deity, and attended with certain punishment, it is natural for them to wish they may have made no mistake in that article, and that they may not be found debtors to the divine justice. And it imports them

very much, in respect to the future quiet and tranquillity of their lives, if they resolve to pursue the pleasures wherein they are engaged, to convince themselves, if they can, that all apprehensions of danger from neglect of duties to the Deity are but vain terrors, the device of priests, or the dreams of melancholy men.

But if there be such a thing as an intelligent Being, that has employed and displayed infinite wisdom, power and goodness in the creation of this universe,—that has with stupendous artifice stored this globe with every thing necessary, not only for the support but for the felicity of man,—that on all his works has stamped characters of the infinite perfections and overflowing goodness of the author,—that has given to man, and to him alone of all the visible creation, that share of his goodness, eyes to be entertained with the magnificence, the beauty, the harmony, and the order of the universe, to see the perfection of the Creator in his works, and to discover the infinite obligations he lies under to, and the dependence he has on, the goodness of his beneficent Maker,—that has so moulded his heart and spirit as to make pleasure attendant on admiration, and love and gratitude the necessary companions of the sense of favours received; and that has joined to the idea of ingratitude the sensation of horror, and to consciousness of gratitude an inward satisfaction that even adds to the relish of the favour received: what could have been the view of the Creator in bestowing those eyes, and that disposition of heart and spirit? Was he or was he not to be discovered, admired, adored, loved, and revered? or was it indifferent to that perfect and beneficent Being which way his creature employed his eyes, or disposed of his heart? And on the other hand, how gross must be the folly and guilt of man, who, misemploying his eyes and misapplying his heart, has refused to see the perfection of God in his works; and in place of acknowledging with gratitude his obligation and dependence, chooses to be indebted to nothing but what he calls Nature and Chance, substituted by him in the room of God; and bestows his heart upon vanity, upon the creature in place of the Creator?

If neglects and breaches of the social and moral duties are

criminal even in the eyes of Freethinkers, what must be the guilt of neglecting the only duty, properly speaking, to God, of denying him the only return which he expects, because it is the only return he has qualified us to make—reverence, love, and gratitude? Ingratitude to men is marked with the blackest stain, what must then that vice be when it has for its object the source of all goodness? and what chance is there that it shall pass unpunished? It is astonishing, that men, who justly look with such horror and detestation on murder and parricide, should think so coolly on the abnegation of the Deity, which denying him his tribute of reverence and gratitude is. But the instances of punishment which the magistrate, for the preservation of the society, inflicts, help to keep up the idea of horror that attends the first; and the forbearance of vengeance in the latter, is by weak pretenders to reason made an argument to conclude that no offence is given.

It is a strange imagination to admit that men are formed with ideas of right and wrong, with a sense of duty and the contrary, and with full physical liberty to act as they shall best like; and yet to maintain that it is absolutely indifferent to the Deity, who gave them that rule of conduct, whether they conform to or transgress it, whether they do right or wrong; and consequently, that it is indifferent to them, if they escape punishment from their fellow-creatures, whether they have or have not conformed themselves to the rule of their Creator and sovereign Lord.

The excellency of the body, the capacity of the understanding, the extent of the knowledge of the most perfect of the human species, cannot possibly make any impression on the Deity other than the general complacency that results from the survey of his works, and seeing that they are good. What a poor figure must the parts, the sagacity, and the knowledge of the admired Sir Isaac Newton make in the eye of the Omniscient? And how few Newtons can mankind boast of? These are therefore not the qualities that claim the Deity's regard. But if a rational creature, however limited in understanding, or imperfect in body, shall have his heart and spirit rightly disposed,—shall see, and in all his thoughts and actions acknowledge, his dependence on

the God that made him, — shall maintain in his heart a grateful sense of the numberless obligations he lies under to that bountiful Being, and shall be thoroughly disposed to make the will of that Being the rule of his actions during the whole course of his life, regardless of the pleasures and sensual enjoyment which following this rule may deprive him of, and of the dangers and inconveniences to which pursuing it may expose him; in full confidence that the sincerity of his heart will be acceptable to, and rewarded by the Creator, who endued it with such dispositions; we must necessarily conclude, either that the Omniscient does not know the dispositions and inward actings of the spirits of all his creatures, or that the grateful and dutiful heart of such a creature is pleasing and agreeable to him.

Thus the objects of the complacence of the Almighty amongst the children of men, may be as numerous as the individuals of the species. He has given to very few those distinguishing parts that provoke the esteem even of their fellow-creatures, but he has given to all, hearts susceptible of reverence, gratitude, and love, and they have no more to do but to employ those dispositions towards the proper object to entitle themselves to the continuation of his goodness and good-will for them. It is remarkable that the only thing which God claims of man in scripture is the *heart*; and it is remarkable also, that possession of the heart of any of our own, or even of the brute species, is what secures our affection in return. Persuasion of the friendship or love of any of our fellow-creatures determines us to sentiments of the like kind for them; and we cannot help, when a dog, a cat, or any other familiar creature shows marks of any particular respect or fondness for us, to have pleasure in that fondness, and to cherish the creature in return. Now, though to limit the sovereign and self-existent Mind, by supposing that it has just such qualities and modifications as ours, would be rash; yet it would be rash also to assert that there are not in it qualities and dispositions similar to such as are praiseworthy and commendable in our own. Nay, the contrary must be admitted by all who believe the scriptures, which assure that God made man after his own image, and in every page declare his dislike of sin and regard for piety.

But here lies the misfortune: this claim of the Creator to the hearts of his creatures cannot be complied with, because they have already disposed of their hearts in another way. Lusts and follies of very different kinds have got possession of their spirits, and the gratification of those is the object of their pursuit. Multitudes follow the direction of the temperature of their body, and are slaves to the appetites that prevail in them; which chain them to the oar they tug at, by the immediate pleasure they taste in obeying the call of those appetites; whilst the very enjoyment of what they are so fond of, destroys the appetite, pulls on diseases and peevishness, with early old age and decay; which must be attended with remorse and horror, if they do not carefully lock out from their thoughts all ideas of futurity, and of what ought to have been the object of their pursuits. To talk to such men of duty, whether in the career of their enjoyments, or when they are no longer capable of enjoying what their soul took delight in, is to preach to the deaf, at least to such as will undoubtedly stop their ears against sounds that must be so grating and disagreeable.

And, on the other hand, great numbers who, from their constitution, education, or other circumstances, have escaped the enchantments of sensual pleasures, and have relished the delight that attends the exercise of their mental faculties, by much the most substantial, manly, and lasting enjoyment of the two, see, with regret and contempt, the brutish folly in which their fellow-creatures are engaged. They pity and despise those grovelling mean souls, who never once tasted the refined satisfaction that results from employing the rational powers in the acquisition of knowledge, and the discovery of truth. And by how much soever the soul exceeds in excellency the body, by so much they look upon themselves to be better and happier than their brethren. In this they glory, in this they are really happy. In their own opinion they are wise, and they hope they are so in the opinion of all others. On the vanity that results from such an empty conceit they feed. They are glad to be thought wiser and better than they truly are. To gain the estimation of their acquaintance, they are charlatans in science, and hypocrites in conduct. The natural desire of approba-

tion, born with them, they have transferred from God to their fellow-creatures. The applause of men, deserved or undeserved, blows up their pride. On that, and on their imagined knowledge, they value themselves; and can have no idea of any state for which they would exchange their own, except one in which they might be more knowing or more esteemed.

In the whole course of the lives of such men, the true direction of the *heart* was never once minded. Sensual enjoyment it might not have for its object, but it had the Creator less; and knowledge, with the reputation of knowledge, it ardently breathed after and exulted in. To bring such men to a fixed belief that the boasted acquisition of their lives was no more than vanity and vexation of spirit,—that death must deliver them over to judgment, for the abuse of those noble talents which their Maker had bestowed on them,—and that there is no way to escape punishment but by banishing those vanities from their heart, and yielding it entirely to God that framed it, would be no easy work; every power of their mind would be employed in defence of the idol they had carved for themselves. If religion had prescribed only prayers, penances, building of churches, or any other transient act, its language might have been listened to; but, as it will be satisfied with nothing less than the *heart*, which is already bestowed, no wonder philosophers are deaf.

To resist the evidence that pours in upon them from nature, from revelation, from all quarters, in behalf of religion, and to stifle the apprehensions which it must naturally beget, they call in to their assistance that boasted Reason, which qualifies them to judge of God, and of all his works and ways. Him and them they try by that infallible touchstone; and if ought is proposed to be believed of either, which they cannot distinctly comprehend the manner or cause of, the proposition is immediately rejected as absurd and impossible; or if any difficulty or objection occur to their imagination which cannot instantly be dissolved, the validity of the objection is straightway allowed, and the proposition to which it relates is condemned. But this is not all. If the proposition condemned has revelation for its

support, the whole of revelation, together with the evidence for it, are damned by the lump; because that cannot be the declaration of God, but must be a palpable forgery, which asserts any falsehood, or, what is just the same, any thing that does not fall in with the notions of the learned and the wise.

Thus, because Freethinkers cannot conceive how a spirit can exist without a body, or how a body dissolved into dust and dissipated, can be resuscitated, they doubt of a future state, and deny the resurrection; though these very wise men must admit they have no adequate conception of the soul, or of its *manner* of existence or acting, or of the way in which it and the body were brought together.

In like manner, what is called the *hypostatical union* in Christ, is rejected, because the *manner* of it cannot be comprehended by men; who must admit the union between soul and body in man, and must at the same time confess they neither do nor can, whilst they remain in their present condition, conceive how the one operates on the other.

The doctrine of the Trinity shares the same fate—and with some more show of reason,—as, besides the difficulty of comprehending the *how* and the *wherefore* in that doctrine, as commonly expressed, there is some appearance of contradiction in the terms, which makes it difficult to conceive what is meant to be believed. But this appearance of contradiction is owing, not to the revelation from which the knowledge of that history is derived, but to the vanity and folly of the doctors of the church, who, puffed up, even as the Freethinkers, with too good an opinion of their own parts, would take upon them to define what revelation does not, and to coin terms not made use of in scripture, to express their imperfect conceptions. The words *trinity*, and *person*, or *hypostasis*, are terms not to be met with in the sacred book; and yet to those terms, and the application of them, the revolt against the doctrine is chiefly owing.

What the scripture acquaints us with is this, and no more:—That what it characterizes the FATHER, the avenger of wrong and rewarder of right, is GOD; that what it characterizes the SON, the WORD, the Creator of the world, the Redeemer of mankind, sent for that purpose by the Father, is GOD;

that the HOLY SPIRIT, the correspondent with, and Comforter of the spirits of men, is GOD; and that nevertheless the DEITY, the SELF-EXISTENT BEING, is but ONE. That these matters are so, the scripture expressly declares, and the manner in which it expresses the last proposition, Deut. vi. 4, is worth attending to. Our translators render it "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD."* The original says, "JEHOVAH our Gods is one SELF-EXISTENT BEING;" for so the word translated *Lord* signifies. Now, what is there in our knowledge, in our conceptions, or in our reason, that can qualify us to determine the *modus* of the existence, or of the action of the invisible Deity? That we have no sort of idea of the substance of that soul which acts in us, or of the manner of its existence or actions, is an agreed point; what impudence then must it be in us to pretend to determine, from our conceptions, or rather inability to conceive, the condition, or manner of existence and acting of the Supreme Being, the least of whose works are in very deed beyond our comprehension!

The ancients, less refined than we, disputed about the figure and form of the Deity; and, knowing none more perfect or noble, as they apprehended, than that of man, bestowed upon the Deity a human shape and figure. The impropriety of this gross imagination we see; as we perceive that the ideas of extension, shape, and figure, are not applicable to spirit, according to the idea which we have of it. But though we have not eyes to discover the substance or properties of spirit, does it certainly follow that they have nothing in them analogous to shape or figure,—no properties by which they can be discerned, and distinguished the one from the other, by God, or even by other spiritual beings, to whom he may have given eyes and understanding fit to perceive what we cannot? And is it not, on the other hand, clear, that there may be somewhat analogous to figure, some particular *modus* of existence of the Deity, of which our want of ideas will not permit us to form any notion?

Had nature produced to our view such living creatures as wild fiction can present to our fancy, composed of three or

* Jehovah is our God, Jehovah is one.—Ainsworth.

more distinct bodies, absolutely separated from each other, without any bodily connexion, but actuated by one and the same principle, moving by one will, acting with one consent, each affected by the accidents that touch either, the one wounded by the blow that wounds the other, and all dying by the killing of one,—we should have had no distinct conception of what the scripture represents concerning the Deity. But then, habituated to the sight of such an extraordinary creation as has been mentioned, the scripture-doctrine would cease to be so shocking as it is to our wise men; and yet, from their knowledge of the machinery of nature, they will hardly take upon them to say that the Deity could not have created such an animal as has been feigned.

If this reflection wants any further illustration, let the vision of Ezekiel, chap. i. and x. be considered. Four living creatures, which he knew to be the cherubim, actuated by one spirit, moving with one consent whithersoever they would,—attended by as many wheels, moving spontaneously in the same manner, because the *spirit* of the *living creature* was in them. This plurality and unity exposed in vision to the prophet's view, must have lessened his difficulty against admitting the doctrine which so much offends our Freethinkers, because nothing resembling it has ever offered itself to their imagination. It is not necessary at present to inquire how far the cherubim was the emblem pitched upon by the Deity to represent the divine nature, with man united to what the lion in that hieroglyphical figure denoted. It is sufficient to observe, that if such living creatures had existed in nature, and had been seen and known, as the prophet saw them living and acting in vision, the mystery exploded by philosophers would not have been quite so incompatible with common notions as they pretend. And therefore it is absurd for wise men to declare against a matter of fact asserted by the highest authority, for no other reason, forsooth, but that their observation or experience has presented them with nothing that should furnish an adequate idea of it.

Upon the same sort of principles, our modern reasoners reject the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction. They cannot conceive how the punishment of one who is innocent should

atone for the guilt of another. This to them appears to be contrary to the essential justice of the Deity, which ought not to take pleasure in the sufferings of the innocent; and productive of no good effect, suited to the character which they entertain of that exalted Being.

Here again the temerity of those presumptuous men is notorious. That justice, according to our notions, will not condemn one for the fault of another, is manifest. But if the innocent should consent to suffer for the guilty, where is the violation of justice in permitting it? If the innocent again has some great and noble end in view by submitting to that suffering, fit to recompense a thousandfold the grief borne, where is the injustice of permitting him to put himself in the place of the guilty? If the innocent person is all mercy, all bowels, all compassion, and can sustain the punishment which the broken-hearted repenting criminal cannot,—what is shocking in the belief, even according to our common notions, that, to comply with the benignity of his nature, he might submit to bear it? It is true we may not see so clearly why the divine justice should be satisfied for the offence of one by the sufferings of another; and that the light of nature would not have led us to discover, that we guilty offenders were to be delivered from punishment by the sufferings of another: but is that a reason why we should not take God's word for it, if he has been pleased to assure us that it is so? Do we know so intimately the nature of his essential justice, as to be certain that it will not permit him to accept of a vicarious satisfaction? Amongst men, we know, that debt owing by one may be discharged by payment made by another; and are we certain that, in the court of heaven, one man's obligation to justice may not be cancelled upon another's voluntary fulfilling it? He little thinks on the unmeasurable difference that is between the narrowness of the human understanding and the immensity of the divine, who dares rest on such conclusions.

Another instance of men's making their own confined observations and conceptions the measure and touchstone of truth, is the prevailing opinion that discards providence, denies a future state, and consequently renounces the Deity, at least deprives the first cause of all intelligence.

This notable opinion is grafted on observation, that the Deity does not interpose in any extraordinary manner in the transactions of this lower world,—that everything proceeds in it according to the concurrence of natural causes,—that the same events befall the wicked as the virtuous, with the advantage most commonly on the side of the vicious,—that the strongest battalions, conducted by the best officers, succeed in battle,—and that vice and villany are triumphant, when conducted by skill, without any appearance on the part of God in providence to prevent the effects of the wickedness, or to correct the authors of it; and from these observations the collection is, that all actions are indifferent, and that a future state is a bugbear.

Now, supposing these observations precisely true, and that there is not the least interposition of the Deity in this world, what is the necessary consequence? Whether that all actions are indifferent, in flat contradiction to the clearest feeling and perception of the soul; or that there must be a future state, in which the actors must severally be distinguished by rewards and punishments? If there are such things as right and wrong,—if the Deity is intelligent,—and if justice is an attribute of that Being; the last must necessarily be the true conclusion. But as the admitting it might be attended with some uneasy apprehensions, and might require a change of heart and conduct, the moral sense, the most intimate conviction, must be smothered, and intelligence and justice denied to the infinitely perfect Being.

But after all, on what is this important proposition—that the Almighty has absolutely abandoned all sublunary things to the direction of chance—founded? Why, just on this,—that none of our wise men have seen any miracles wrought of late times; and they are not disposed to think it possible that any could have been wrought in the more early; and it is a truth not to be contested, that the unjust succeed in this world fully as well as the just.

But if they were to be asked whether they are certain that no cause has interposed in the producing any event but what they have observed, and whether they are sure that there are no secret springs in providence, unseen and unthought of by them, to which important events are owing,

—if they would not be laughed at they must answer in the negative; which is enough to destroy the certainty of their position.

But to examine the thing more carefully, they must distinguish between individuals of the human species, and states and kingdoms, which by us are considered in some sort as individuals, and may be so by the Ruler of the universe. Though men be not punished or rewarded here, they may meet with what they deserve hereafter. But if states and kingdoms are not to meet with any correction in this world they cannot be considered as proper objects of it in another.

Now, it is a certain truth that all states and kingdoms, in proportion as they grow great, wealthy, and powerful, grow wanton, wicked, and oppressive. And the history of all ages gives evidence of the fatal catastrophe of all such states and kingdoms, when the cup of their iniquity was full; nor is it possible to show that any one state or kingdom has been overturned that did not deserve it at the hand of Providence, however little they may have deserved it at the hand of the tyrant or oppressor who brought their calamity upon them. In this argument it is not necessary to say that no unjust war ever prospered. Providence may make use of the vicious and wicked disposition of any prince, or of the ruler of any state, to execute justice upon a power fated to punishment. And the only question which the adversaries to Providence have to answer is, how they can be sure that those deserved judgments were the effect of mere fortuity, without the least intervention on the part of the Lord of the universe.

The course of Providence with respect to individuals of the human species undergoes a very different consideration, and ought to be viewed in a light which no Freethinker ever thought of. If by happiness and prosperity in this world is meant wealth, and power, and enjoyment of all pleasures, and success in all pursuits, it may be safely allowed that the best man is not the happiest or most prosperous; but if by happiness and prosperity is meant the full and quiet enjoyment of all the pleasures that man, considered as a rational being, is capable of, and success in all the pursuits in which as a reasonable creature he ought to engage, there is no

doubt that the good man will be found to be the most completely happy; and with that good man as little doubt, that the Maker and sovereign Lord of man has not abandoned the care of him to blind chance.

The man who, forgetting all regards for the Author of his being and happiness, centres all his views upon himself,—who, born with a vigorous body and keen appetites, succeeds to or acquires means to gratify all his brutal desires, and plunges into the enjoyment of whatever his lust directs him to,—is not, in the eyes even of the most freethinking philosopher, happy. His pursuits, as well as his enjoyments, are mean and beastly; surfeits and accidental diseases interrupt the course of his felicity; age, with its attendant infirmities, dissolves the charm that bound him; pleasures of all sorts lose their relish; and the terrors which death unavoidable must bring, are no way to be evited, but by banishing all thoughts of death from the mind. Such a man's possessions and enjoyments cannot denote him happy; nor would a wise man pray for these blessings as the portion with which he was to be contented, unless he might obtain this other boon, that he should never decay nor die.

No philosopher that breathes the air is so silly as to maintain that the objects of the pursuits of the avaricious, or of the ambitious, whether in the political or martial way, are objects fit for the pursuit of a rational creature, or that success in those pursuits is fit to denote such a creature happy. And if they will take an impartial view of their own boasted felicity,—if they will draw up a fair account of the sum of their learning and knowledge, and of the happiness they have tasted in the acquisition and enjoyment of those blessings,—and if they will candidly set against it the discoveries they must have made of the scantiness of their knowledge, the weakness of their understanding, and their necessary dependence on somewhat not within themselves for their existence, which they never have thought fit to acknowledge; or, however, adding to these reflections, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of what may come after—the balance of the account will doubtless stand on the wrong side, and will show, that though they have been more happy, or rather less miserable than the profligate of the higher or

lower class of mankind, yet neither their pursuits nor acquisitions can give them any title to consider themselves, or to be considered by others, as really happy.

Now, on the other hand, let the case of that man be considered who, delivered from the slavery of those vices and follies, and acquainted with the end for which he was created, endeavours with all his powers to answer the design. Such a one tastes the same pleasure in all sensual enjoyments as the greatest epicure, and has as quick a relish of all mental joys that proceed from the pursuit, or from the discovery of truth, as the greatest philosopher.

But then he sees, with the philosopher, that those sensual enjoyments are mean and beastly, unworthy of the pursuit of rational creatures,—that they are annexed to the performance of the animal functions, to induce men to do acts necessary for their own preservation and the propagation of the species,—but which they never would think of but for the appetites implanted in them and the pleasure which attends the gratification of the appetites, and that satiety and uneasiness accompany the pursuit of those pleasures any further than nature requires.

And he sees, by the exercise of his rational powers, what few philosophers attend to, that the eyes of his mind were given him to discover the immensity, the power, the wisdom and the goodness of the Creator in his works,—to discover the overflowing bounty of that perfect Being to him, and his constant dependence on the Author and Source of his happiness,—to discover the numberless obligations he lies under, with reverence and gratitude to obey and to adore the Sovereign of the universe,—to discover his duty towards his fellow-creatures, as well as towards his Creator,—to discover that the favour of the Almighty must attend performance of duty, as his displeasure must follow the ungrateful breach of it,—to discover that the favour of God is the only object worthy of the pursuit of the heart of man,—and to discover, that the bestowing that heart, and all the desires of it, on sensual brutish pleasures, or any other vanity to the exclusion of the *Eternal*, is the most horrid as well as the most foolish crime that can be imagined.

The pleasures of life are enjoyed by this man with as

much, perhaps with more relish, than by the libertine. But then they do not pervert the heart. The only emotion they are capable of exciting there, is gratitude and thankfulness to the beneficent Donor. The acquisition of knowledge is tasted by him with as much delight as it is by the philosopher, though it produces in them very different effects. The one it puffs up with pride and presumption; the other it fills with humility, and reverence for the Most High.

The man who has fixed his heart upon the proper object does not cease to taste with pleasure the common blessings of this life, neither does he fail to bestow the proper industry to acquire and to preserve them. But then he considers them only as so many sugar-plums given by the Creator to make his confinement to his prison of clay more palatable, which must have an end when his enlargement begins. He laments the unhappy condition of those who seek after them as their chief good. He would neither acquire nor preserve them at the expense of doing one single act that might forfeit the favour of his Maker and Benefactor; neither does he repine at the privation of them, knowing that it could not happen without the will and pleasure of his Lord and Master, the Sovereign of the universe, to which his heart and will cheerfully submit.

Compare the happiness of this man with that of the greatest favourite of fortune, who has set his heart on other objects, and who has had the full gratification of all his appetites, so far as the course of humanity will permit; but who must die, and leave those enjoyments, uncertain what is to happen hereafter. This man enjoys, in common with the wise and the voluptuous of his rank in the world, all the sensual and mental pleasures in which they delight, without the alloy that must torture their minds when they think of parting with them. But then he has in himself a constant source of unalloyed joy, to which they are utter strangers. The abundant goodness of the Giver of all those blessings fills his soul with gratitude and thankfulness, and disposes him with joy to do what appears to him to be his duty; and consciousness of that happy disposition produces the most firm confidence and reliance on the favour and good-will of his omnipotent Benefactor, from which he is to look here-

after for joys of a different nature from those which in this life he slightes when they stand in the way of his duty. Every act of duty performed fills his soul with a placid, still satisfaction, that is sensibly felt, though not easily expressed. A mouthful of meat bestowed on a hungry beggar, gives the heart of the donor more real satisfaction than the relish of the food gives pleasure to the craving stomach, or the most delicious dainty gives to the vitiated palates of the voluptuous. And the particular excellency of these enjoyments is, that no excess can surfeit or pall the appetite, no accident can deprive him of them.

To a man possessed of such an incorruptible stock of happiness, the pleasures of this life appear but mere baubles, and the privation of them a trifling loss. Life itself he is disposed to resign with willingness, because to him death has no sting.

If then felicity, even in this life, does not depend upon what are called the gifts of fortune, but on the disposition of soul that has been described, with what countenance can any Freethinker maintain that in this world there is no interposition of the act of the Deity, no special providence? It may indeed be true, that wealth, and honours, and power do not attend the most deserving, and that halters, and infamy, and want do not lay hold on the vicious; but will it follow, from our not being able to see the hand of Providence in the distribution of those perishing favours on which the real happiness of man does not depend, that the Framer of the hearts of men has no communication with them, and never interposes to determine them to that wherein their chief felicity consists?

The proofs of the goodness and justice of God, of the duty and dependence of man, of the certainty of rewards and punishments, of the desperate condition of those who, neglecting God and their duty, pursue fading pleasures and vanity with their whole spirit; and of the real and permanent happiness of such as enjoy all the gifts of God with thankfulness, and gratefully make it the business of their lives to obey his will and to obtain his favour, are so conspicuous, that nothing seems to be wanted towards their producing *conviction*, but somewhat that shall turn their eye and fix the attention

upon them; because, if they are duly considered and attended to, the evidence is irresistible. Now, as that attention may be raised by various incidents, sometimes by sickness and distresses of different kinds, sometimes by a happy education, sometimes by the conversation of pious persons, and sometimes by reading and meditation, which a thousand circumstances seemingly accidental concur to improve,—why should we conclude that all these incidents are purely accidental, and that the person transformed by them from a miserable brute to a happy man owes the change to blind chance? Whatever vain reasoners may imagine or babble, the person whose eyes are opened by those incidents, acknowledges with gratitude the hand of God in them.

But though Freethinkers might be excused for concluding, however rashly, that Providence does not interpose in the government of the external transactions of this world, because, after all the observations they can make, they have not complete evidence to the contrary; yet what excuse can they have for pretending to judge that the merciful and beneficent Spirit of God does not work upon the spirits of men? From their proper experience they can draw no observation, as they have locked out all regards for the Deity from their heart; and what passes in the spirits of other men they can have no knowledge of, nor indeed any idea, as they have suffered no such transactions to take place in their own.

Philosophers have talked much of action and reaction in matter, and imagine they understand what they say; what should hinder them to believe that there may be such a thing as action and reaction between spirits, even between the infinitely perfect Spirit and the spirits of finite men? If gratitude observed in a dog produces some regard and kindness in the mind of his master, why may not the gratitude, the warmth of the heart of man, work some similar effect in the all-seeing Mind? and who dare presume to say that it may not act on and comfort the spirit of man in return? If that beneficent and all-powerful Spirit does not show his kindness in bestowing wealth, and power, and fading pleasures, it is because they are not real goods,—because they are not the object of the heart and wishes of the party favoured,—and because, in place of doing them real good, they might call

off the affections from that exercise wherein his true felicity consists. And this is so true, that crosses, disappointments, and distresses, may justly be considered as acts of the greatest kindness, when they tend to recall the straying mind from vanity, and to fix it on its proper object.

How then dares presumptuous shortsighted man deny the interposition of Providence, because he does not see the secret spring by which it acts, or know the intentions of the Inscrutable? Or how can he, because a satisfactory reason does not appear to him for the long-suffering patience and forbearance of the Most Merciful, doubt of the existence or justice of that Being, deny a future state, or maintain the indifference of all actions as to right and wrong? But such is the fatal effect of the corruption of man's heart, and of the deflection of it from the true object to vice and vanity.

The extreme folly of modern Freethinkers is much less accountable or excusable than that of the ancients. The ancients had no certain lights but those of nature. Those naturally led them to see the vanity of the pursuits wherein they were engaged, the depravity of the human nature, and the consequences which might attend their courses hereafter. Those were but melancholy reflections, leading to despair, and tending to sour every enjoyment,—as they had no certain intimation that any method was chalked out by the Deity for the expiation of sin, and for restoring offending man to his favour and protection. And therefore it is not to be wondered at that they banished from their thoughts such gloomy uncomfortable speculations. But our modern madmen hear every day of mercy and pardon offered by the offended Deity to offending sinners, if they will receive it thankfully. They are told that this is the declared will of God, and that there is complete evidence of its being such; and they see that this is the belief of numbers of the most sagacious and inquisitive of their fellow-creatures. But all this will not do. Their heart is given to other objects, and they hear that these must be dismissed before they can share of the pardon proffered.

To keep however their countenance, and the character of Freethinkers, they must assign some reason for their revolting against revelation. And this they readily do. They

say, falsely, that they have carefully examined all the evidence for revelation; and they say, honestly and truly, that all the evidence which they have considered has not been sufficient to satisfy their objections, and to convince them that what is called revelation is really such.

That they have carefully examined *all* the evidence, is absolutely false. No man ever did, or can do so, without receiving perfect conviction. It is a question whether any professed Freethinker who has hitherto appeared, had learning or talents sufficient to examine the evidence. It is certain that none who have written have discovered that they had either.

Men may search for arguments *à priori* for the proof of any proposition that may result from the nature of things known to them. That treachery to our neighbour, and ingratitude to the God that made us, are highly offensive, and ought to be punished by perfect justice, may be demonstrated *à priori*. But if sovereign goodness and mercy, to deliver repenting men from deserved punishment, has contrived a method of salvation by sending his Son to the world to suffer for them; and if, to prevent their despair, and to encourage their repentance and amendment, that beneficent Being has been pleased to publish his pardon, with the conditions of it, to mankind; this must be admitted to be a matter of fact not discoverable by any inductions *à priori*, because it is in some sort adversary to our general notions of right and wrong; and therefore, to have any effect on the minds of men, must have been published with such a degree of evidence as must necessarily gain full belief; and if it was the intention of the Author of this publication that it should gain belief in future ages, the evidence must be of that nature that is fit to carry conviction to all for whom the publication was intended.

Accordingly this revelation, which was made soon after the first transgression, was renewed from time to time under circumstances so distinguished as could not possibly leave any doubt that it was the declaration of the Deity. And, by wisdom and power more than human, such a sort of evidence has been contrived and preserved for the authority of that revelation as far exceeds in point of certainty the proof

of any other event that ever happened. That such cities as Babylon and Carthage existed; that Cæsar won the battle of Pharsalia, and was murdered in the Roman senate, no one doubts. But if all the documents for the authority of revelation were brought together, the proof in this last case is by so much stronger than in the others, as the belief of it is more interesting to mankind.

But the different degrees of credit given to the one and to the other arise from the different dispositions of the hearts of men. There is no prejudice in the mind of man against admitting the first; against the last there is this violent bias, that if it is admitted, men must become in their own eyes miserable wretches, and must dismiss those lusts and vanities on which they doated. To prevent this disgrace and irreparable damage, arms must be taken up against the evidence that insults their quiet; any objection,—of which there are, and must be multitudes,—if it cannot easily be answered, is a demonstration superior to all the evidence for revelation; and they look into revelation, and to the evidence for it, only to arm themselves with such objections.

It is indeed no wonder that men whose prejudices stand so much in the way of believing, do not give themselves the trouble to search after and to collect *all* the proofs for revelation. It is a laborious work. All the remains of ancient history and the composures of the learned of those times, must be examined; all the rites, opinions, and practices of nations, so far as they can be discovered, must be considered; all the monuments of antiquity now extant must be surveyed; a reasonable knowledge of the languages in which revelation is recorded must be attained; and the consequences that have attended that revelation since the advent of Christ must be adverted to, before one can say that he is possessed of all the evidence, and before he can form a judgment of many of the objections which Freethinkers move. But that none of them who have written have given themselves this trouble is plain from their writings, which contain little more than smatterings of learning, to which the Jews have helped them, and which they seem, without due examination, to have taken on trust.

Though it has pleased the merciful wisdom of God to

scatter proofs of his revelation over all the ancient nations, and to preserve documents of them down to our days, for the conviction of obstinate infidels, and for the confirmation of the faith of the inquisitive who believe, yet, happily for the bulk of mankind, who have neither time nor talents for such inquiries, revelation is so calculated as to require nothing of man that his conscious soul does not see to be his duty, and to promise him nothing that does not appear to his most inward sense to be the necessary consequence of doing it. By it he is acquainted with his forlorn condition,—which he needs do no more to discover to be truth, than to turn his eyes inward upon himself. And a remedy is pointed out adequate to the disease, which tends to magnify the mercy, the wisdom and the goodness of the Creator, and to tie the creature to him by still stronger bonds of duty and gratitude.

In this system there is such harmony between duty and interest, and therefore such a propensity in every sober-thinking person to wish it to be true, that, from the declared opinions of others better qualified to judge of the evidence, and to determine, it gains belief; and that very belief influencing the practice, brings real tranquillity and happiness in this life, springing from confidence of the favour of the Almighty—a sure earnest of future felicity. But by the debauched and the giddy, who have delivered themselves over soul and body to their lusts and to their vanity, this aptitude, this harmony is not discovered. Their fears make them wish it may not be true. Objections are rife in every corner; and if any inquiry is made into the proofs, it is with an intent to object, and to find them insufficient.

And one of the main objections is, that there is place for any objection against the certainty of revelation. Why, say those reasoners, if it had been the intention of the Almighty that what is called the revelation of his will should have been believed by all mankind to be such, he would have accompanied it with such evidence as should have been at first sight superior to all objections, and must have convinced and converted all infidels; but since he has not done so, but, on the contrary, room is left for many objections, the conclusion is just, that this pretended revelation is none of his.

And it must be admitted the inference would be pretty just, on supposal of the proposition, that it was the intention of the Deity to convince and convert all infidels, however wicked and reprobate. For it is not to be controverted that it was in the power of the Almighty to have accompanied revelation with constant standing miracles, even as it was in his power to have created man with a smaller share of free-will, and, by perpetual interposition of his grace, to have prevented his actual defection from his duty. But upon what principle is it supposed that God intended, or ought to have intended, to extend his grace alike to all,—to the obstinate and flagitious, as well as to the sober and the humble sinner? The discretion of men makes a wide difference between those characters; and how can we be sure that the judgment of God does not so also?

The mercy of God has provided an atonement sufficient to expiate the sins of all mankind who will take hold of it. The wisdom of God has contrived evidence sufficient to convince all mankind that such atonement is provided, if they will give themselves the trouble to examine it. But then it is so contrived as to reach with conviction those only who are disposed to take hold of it; that is, the meek and the humble, who are conscious of their distress by nature, and desirous to be delivered from it. And them it reaches, because they think it worth their while to inquire after and to examine it; whilst it does not convince, nor indeed can it possibly, the proud and the stubborn, who slight the atonement provided so much, and are so thoroughly averse to comply with the condition upon which it is to be obtained, that without troubling their heads with the evidence, they insolently reject the mercy of the Most High. Who then can find fault with the divine goodness on this article? The meek surely will not; and the proud, who have themselves only to blame, ought not.

So the sum of the wise objection is this, that the good and just God did not intend that salvation should reach those desperately wicked sinners who refused to accept of it. But this objection weighs with those who have never turned their thoughts upon the heinousness of their own guilt, and have formed to themselves notions of the benignity of the

Deity, from the false notions of generosity which they have encouraged in themselves, laying entirely aside his justice and his purity.

From the same source springs another objection, of equal validity as to revelation, founded on the doctrine of the perpetuity of punishment. Here again the incomprehensible, the infinitely perfect Being, is measured by the span of the low, blind, grovelling creature that makes the objection,—who, because he cannot comprehend why this justice is suited to the divine nature, concludes at once that the doctrine is impossible, and therefore false ; and, in consequence, rejects the revelation which is said to assert it, without giving himself the trouble to examine the evidence that supports that revelation, or to inquire whether the matter that thus shocks him is really revealed. A careful inquiry might possibly satisfy him that the perpetuity of punishments is not absolutely affirmed, and that no more is necessarily to be inferred from revelation than that the misery of the damned is to endure for ages. But such an inquiry would give him competent satisfaction that the revelation he wantonly rejects is in very deed the word of God, and would dispose him to believe whatever it clearly declares concerning the Deity and his ways, without considering how far that might or might not tally with his conceits.

And herein lies the monstrous, the surprising folly of the vain philosopher. Every new observation, every discovery, which his sagacity has been accidentally led to make in nature, and which blows up his pride, becomes to him a fresh proof of his own weakness and short-sightedness, and of the immensity of the Deity, of the perfection of his wisdom, and of the inscrutability of his ways to man in his present condition ; and yet, from his narrow notions, he will pretend to decide what God ought, or ought not to do,—what he can, or cannot do.

In the pittance of the material world which falls within his ken, the observations of the infinite wisdom, contrivance, and power of the Creator, daily grow upon him ; new and unaccountable properties in matter, acting by unerring rules, and tending to the perfection of the whole, hourly pour in upon him ; the magnet, the microscope, the telescope, the

prism, the air-pump, the crucible, electricity, &c., furnish him with complete evidence that he knows nothing of the real nature of *matter*, which he sees, tastes, and feels, whereof he is in part composed, and in which he is at present immersed; and give him undoubted reasons to conclude that there may be, or rather that there are, numberless other properties in matter, and rules of acting which it steadily pursues, of which he at present has no knowledge, and possibly, so long as he is confined to clay, never can.

By what means then is he to judge of the spiritual world, of which he neither has nor can have any adequate idea? A spirit acting in himself he feels, and is conscious of his actings; but what it is composed of, or how it acts, is all hidden from him. That there may be as many different classes of *spirits* as there are tribes of animals or plants, he dare not deny, though he can have no conception of the manner of their difference, or of the uses for which they may be in the creation. That the Creator is spiritual, he collects with certainty from the astonishing wisdom and artifice of so much of the universe as is disclosed to him; that he is good and beautiful in a sovereign degree, his works declare; and that he is possessed of all possible perfections, his self-existence demonstrates. But whence comes man to take upon him to determine what perfection in any of his attributes is,—that the justice of God must go thus far, and no farther,—that his mercy requires he should, or should not do this or that,—or that his goodness ought, or ought not, to operate on such an occasion? This, sure, is the most astonishing presumption? Supposing him to have an adequate idea of justice, mercy, and goodness, as those must be by the Deity exercised in supreme harmony as well as perfection, how dare he presume to define how far the exercise of either of them may go? Common sense, and that modesty which ought to attend consciousness of our dimness of sight, would direct us, when anything in the ways or will of God appears that we cannot account for, to receive and acquiesce in it with humble submission, and to believe that it is right and just.

Wherefore, when we see the whole brute creation, animate as well as inanimate, pursuing constantly, and without

erring, the intention of God in their formation; and when we observe, in that part of the rational creation which is known to us, the highest disorder and confusion, rebellion against God, injustice towards men, fraud and falsehood triumphant, virtue and sincerity despised and oppressed, and guilt contracted that must necessarily terminate in punishment, all the consequence of the freedom of will in man; let us not conclude, as madmen are apt to do, that all actions are indifferent to the Deity, or that no punishment is to attend guilt, upon a supposal that it would have been unbecoming the benignity of God, who must have foreseen the consequence of free-will in man, to have brought into the world so many millions of rational creatures, who he foresaw must become the objects of wrath and punishment.

Nothing is more certain than that free-will has been the cause of transgression in man, and that the Deity must have foreknown the effects it was to produce. But are we sure, that, in the scale of essential justice, it was not right and just to have created man in a state of happiness, with a fitness and capacity to preserve that state, and to acquire one higher, and with a power to choose between good and evil; with a sanction, that if he preferred evil to good, he must bear the dismal consequences of that perverse choice? Do we perfectly know the nature of the sovereignty and right which the Creator has to dispose of the creatures which he has made? Or are we acquainted with all the motives that induced the Most High to create man so qualified? Is it certain that no good effect, worthy the divine goodness, to other parts of the unbounded creation, could have flowed from the fate of man? Or is it clear that we are entitled to judge of the fitness or unfitness of any part of God's ways or works without considering the relation it has to, and the effect it has on, the whole? Until these questions meet with satisfactory answers, nothing can be more silly than to conclude as Freethinkers do.

A sober man, on the contrary, who sees and laments the disorders of mankind, will not give up the moral sense of his soul as to the merit or demerit of human actions; nor will he give up the justice or goodness of God because he cannot precisely assign the motive that induced the Deity

to endue man with that proportion of free-will with which he is possessed. Full conviction of the infinite disproportion that is between his limited understanding and that of the self-existent Being leads him to conclude with certainty that his not being able to comprehend any thing, is not evidence that the Most High cannot. He may entertain himself profitably, at least pleasantly, in meditating on such subjects ; but, though his invention should fail of solving the difficulty, he will not on that account deny principles, nor impeach the justice or goodness of his Maker.

That the end of God in creating man, endued with free-will, and with that proportion of reason, and of appetites, wherewith he was possessed, was not to discover to himself what use man was to make of those talents, must be evident to all who admit the omniscience and prescience of the Deity. But it is not so evident that one of the motives of the Creator for framing man so qualified, may not have been to render his justice and his mercy conspicuous to mankind, and to show those attributes, as well as the effects of free-will left to choose between the dictates of Reason and the bent of appetites, to other classes of rational beings, to us at present unknown.

Had all the rational creation unerringly pursued the dictates of reason, that is, had they unerringly done their duty, there would have been no occasion for displaying the justice or the mercy of God. His immensity, his eternity, his astonishing power, goodness, and wisdom, were legible in his works ; and it seems unreasonable to doubt, that one of the ends of the creation was, to exhibit to rational creatures complete evidence of those glorious attributes and qualities. But unless some rational creature had offended, there could have been no example of justice, nor any object for mercy.

Before any trespass committed, every rational being that supposed revolting against sovereign goodness possible, must have concluded that the guilty deserved to be, and would be pursued by the vengeance of the Omnipotent. But in what manner justice required that this vengeance should be exerted, it could have no comprehension of ; far less could it have any conception that essential justice, ungratefully affronted, should suffer thoughts of mercy

to interpose in behalf of the insolent offender, and should devise a method, consistent with justice, to deliver the criminal from punishment, and restore him to his pristine favour.

But the abuse of free-will has given occasion to the manifestation of those divine qualities, which otherwise might have remained unknown to men and angels, in a light so distinguished, as must needs produce admiration, with praise and adoration, and give a more noble and interesting idea of the perfection of the Deity.

We know but too well that man has fallen, and the scripture acquaints us with the revolt of some of the angels. Their crime, we are told, met with instant condemnation and punishment, but man's with a very different usage. The convicted and ashamed offender had hopes of mercy immediately given him. Infinite wisdom found means to satisfy essential justice, and to make way for the display of mercy, that glorious and adorable attribute of the Most High.

The cause of this diversity we can but guess at. The weakness of man, and the temptations he was liable to, we know; but the condition and temptation of the transgressing angels we are not acquainted with. If we may however conjecture, their knowledge, capacity, and power were far beyond that of man, and consequently their defection less excusable; and accordingly we find their condemnation was by so much the more prompt and severe. Whereas, with respect to man, the execution of the sentence against him was suspended; mercy was offered; a method of reconciliation with the Deity was set on foot; repeated intimations were made by the clement Deity of this purpose of grace; repeated and renewed institutions were backed by divine authority, to recall men to their duty; the sovereign and essentially just Lord of the universe was pleased to proclaim himself merciful and gracious, long-suffering and patient; and, through a long succession of ages, that declaration has by experience been found to be strictly true. His long-suffering, accompanied with continual invitations to accept of pardon, endures to this moment, to the inexpressible joy of those that love and fear him, though it must at last turn to the utter confusion of those who heedlessly or wilfully reject the proffered grace.

In the treatment of the fallen angels, for whom we know no shadow of excuse, nothing but strict justice appears. In the treatment of man the severity of the justice of the Eternal is made conspicuous, chiefly by the atonement which his mercy has provided to expiate the guilt, and avoid the punishment of unhappy creatures. But that boundless pity and compassion, that essential mercy, and that unwearied patience, which has been, and still is, exercised towards ungrateful man, could never have appeared to men and angels if the abuse of free-will had not given occasion for the display of it.

It is idle to inquire, because it seems impossible to discover, what gave occasion to the revolt of the fallen angels. But it is probable, their sudden and severe punishment has prevented trespasses of the like nature. That exertion of the justice and power of the Eternal must have made a deep impression upon all spirits of the angelic order. And if the rectitude of the remaining choir is owing to the punishment of the rebellious crew, who will presume to find fault with God, for giving angels such a portion of free-will as to leave them fallible, or for resorting to rigid justice for the punishment of their offence?

Had man upon his first offence been treated as he deserved, had threatened death immediately followed his crime, there would have been an end of the species; but there would have been no instance of the mercy, the tender-heartedness, the long-suffering of the sovereign Being; none to sing his praises or to bless him on account of that divine attribute. As his perfect wisdom and exuberant grace has contrived it, millions of the human race, who have tasted of his goodness in this respect, feast their souls on the contemplation of his amazing condescendence, and with their whole spirit adore and bless him.

And if it cannot be doubted, that the end of the formation of myriads of various plants, and other inanimate productions, is to give to intelligent minds some sort of idea of the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the Creator, why will conceited men quarrel with the divine economy regarding the human race? since without that part of it to which they object there could have been no tolerable idea of

the mercy or the long-suffering of the Deity, nor any heart to rejoice, or tongue to bless him on that account.

But this reflection goes still farther. We have heard of other rational creatures besides ourselves, under the appellation of angels, some of whom fell, as we have done; and we know not whether any or what diversity there may be of kinds amongst them. This much however may be concluded, that we cannot with any certainty determine, that there may not be between the supreme Being and us a vast variety of rational beings distinct from the human species, and differing from it as to the extent of understanding, affections, and inclinations; and considering the immensity of the universe, the high probability is that such beings there are.

Now, if it may be further supposed that those rational beings have any cognizance of what happens amongst the children of men, why may we not also suppose that their information on this grand article was one of the ends in view with the Creator, when man was framed with that capacity to err that brought on the fall?

That angels, who are believed to have been formed very pure and perfect, were possessed of free-will, is plain, because they made a bad use of it, and fell. And if there are various classes of angels, and different species of spiritual or rational beings between the highest order of angels and us, their actions must, at least, according to our conception of the actions of rational beings, may be determined by choice. And it is impossible for us to say what diversity there may be in the understandings and capacities of those different ranks of creatures,—what propensities or inducements to persevere in pursuing their duty, or what dispositions or temptations to err.

Now, who can tell how many myriads of those creatures may owe the state of felicity they now enjoy to the correction of the lapsed angels, and to the scene of misery and folly which the conduct of the vain conceited part of mankind has, almost since the creation of this system, presented them with?

If a philosopher views with just contempt the scandalous springs from which the actions of the vicious proceed, what must be the sense of intelligent beings of a superior order?

How foolish, as well as odious, must the notions of wicked men be in their eyes? And how noble and magnificent must their idea be of the mercy and long-suffering of the Eternal, who, for so great a series of ages, has been following such wretches with perpetual offers of forgiveness and felicity? If in such minds there are any appetites or impulses similar to those that lead the vain and the wicked of the human race astray, how careful must they be to restrain such desires; and how thankful to their Maker, for the admonition that has put them on their guard! * *

A FIT REBUKE TO A LUDICROUS INFIDEL

IN SOME REMARKS

ON

MR. WOOLSTON'S FIFTH DISCOURSE

ON THE MIRACLES OF OUR SAVIOUR.

WITH A PREFACE

CONCERNING THE PROSECUTION OF SUCH WRITERS BY
THE CIVIL POWERS.

Risu inepto res ineptior nulla est.—CATULL.

BY SIMON BROWNE.



PREFATORY NOTICE.

SIMON BROWNE, the author of the following tract, was born at Shepton-Mallet in Somersetshire about the year 1680. His abilities and acquirements were such that he was thought qualified to preach before he was twenty years of age. He soon was chosen minister of a considerable congregation at Portsmouth, to which he ministered with great acceptance, till in the year 1716 he accepted a call by the Presbyterian congregation in the Old Jewry, London, then one of the largest and wealthiest of the dissenting churches. Here he continued to officiate for seven years, but in the year 1723 he was seized by a very singular variety of mental malady, from which it does not appear that he ever completely recovered. He laboured under the strange delusion that the intellectual and moral part of his nature was gradually evaporating and ultimately completely annihilated. It was while in this state of mind that he wrote the very ingenious tract against Woolston, as well as an elaborate reply to Tindal's "Christianity as old as the Creation;" and it has been justly observed of him, that "at the time he imagined he had no soul, he could reason as if he was possessed of two souls."—It was his intention that the work against Tindal should have been preceded by a dedication to Queen Caroline, in which a very graphic account is given of the condition in which he supposed himself to be. This singular composition was very properly suppressed by his friends, but has been preserved in the eighty-eighth number of "The Adventurer." In the close of the year 1732 he obtained release from his delusions and sufferings, and entered, we have no reason to doubt, into the world of perfect light and joy. Besides a number of occasional sermons, he published a volume of excellent discourses, and a volume of "Hymns and Spiritual Songs." A considerable number of these have found a place in almost all collections of evangelical hymns. He was the author also of "The Charge of

Schism against the Dissenters Discharged," "A Sober and Charitable Disquisition concerning the Importance of the doctrine of the Trinity," and of some articles in an able periodical entitled "The Occasional Papers." He was also one of the Continuators of Henry's Commentary, the part assigned him being the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

Apart from the very singular circumstances in which it was composed, the following tract has strong claims on being inserted in such a collection as the present. The preface is a masterly exposure of the absurdity and wickedness of attempting to suppress religious error by civil penalties, and the tract itself is a spirited and most triumphant defence of the evangelical narratives of the resurrections from the dead effected by our Lord. It is impossible to read the late attacks on the credibility of the Gospel History by Strauss and others in Germany without being struck how much of these productions are merely a "refaccimento" of the works of the English Freethinkers in the earlier part of the eighteenth century.

"The infidel has shot his bolts away,
Till his exhausted quiver yielding none,
He gleans the blunted shafts that have recoil'd,
And aims them at the shield of faith again."*

It may serve a good purpose to see how completely some of these envenomed arrows have been blunted in this tract, and then to see in Strauss's misrepresentation of the same narratives how entirely he has failed in his attempts to barb them anew.—The fullest accounts of Mr. Browne I have met with are in Kippis' "Biographia Britannica" and in Wilson's "History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches in London."

* Cowper.

PREFACE.

I ALWAYS used to think that neither Christianity, nor any of the truths taught in it, could suffer by thorough examination or fair debate. The evidences for it will bear the most exact and accurate scrutiny. Nor could I ever think it could be for its prejudice to have these set in the strongest light. And yet very serious doubts have arisen in the minds of the wisest and best of men; and should any such arise, as are too much for themselves to master, what harm were there in publishing them, that the matter might be cleared up to themselves and the world?

Nor could I see reason why professed unbelievers should be hindered from offering their reasons against it. The first preachers of Christianity thought it reasonable, no doubt, though they did not expect it, that all men where they came should give them the hearing, weigh what they said, compare the religion they taught with that in which themselves had been educated, and not cry them down with noise, or crush them with power. And so would any Christian preachers now, who were to go on the same errand. And what Christians would reasonably expect from others, they should readily allow to others, or they transgress that excellent rule of their Master, of "doing to others as they would have others do to them."* If it would be unreasonable and injurious in heathens and Mahometans to run them down with clamour and violence, when they sought by fair reasoning only, to show the falsehood of their religion. They would think so. Now, would they act equitably, if by clamour and

* Luke vi. 31.

power they should stop the mouths of those who by argument only endeavour to show the falsehood of theirs.

Nor is this for the honour of Christianity itself. Can it not stand against fair argument, that recourse must be had to the civil power for its defence? It is treachery to it, to do any thing that fairly carries such an intimation. If it can, let its professors and ministers defend it, and show the weakness of what is objected against it, and in this manly way convince and silence gainsayers; not padlock their mouths by making it penal to gainsay it at all. If they take such a method to support it, both enemies and indifferents will be ready to suspect they distrust either their religion or themselves; that that is not defensible, at least that they cannot defend it. Or else, that they are content their religion should shift for itself, if they by power may secure the worldly emoluments annexed to it. And this is the way to disgrace their religion and bring themselves into disesteem.

One would think too, that Christianity looks best like itself when it looks most like its Author, the meek and lowly Jesus, who "did not strive, nor cry, nor lift up his voice in the streets."* He neither propagated his religion by force, nor run down its adversaries with noise; but would have it insinuate itself into men's hearts, in a way rational and divine, by conviction of its heavenly truth and original, wrought by proper evidence and the enlightening of his Holy Spirit, and show its power in the life by genuine fruits of holiness and virtue,—without which the profession can never be acceptable to him, nor of any advantage to them who make it.

And outward force is as unfit to support it, especially against mere argument, as it was at first to propagate it. Such a method seems to have more of that "wrath in it that worketh not the righteousness of God,"† than of the dispassionate, mild, kind and merciful temper of Jesus. Is it not most for the honour of his religion that itself, professors and ministers, should in this respect be like him, and by kind and gentle usage supple, as well as by sound reason and speech convince, gainsayers?

* Matt. xii. 19.

† James i. 20.

And though there is a vast difference between petulant cavils against the religion of Jesus and sober argument,—between ludicrous insult and scurrilous invective, and grave reasoning, and manly decent talk against it; yet if any who do, or profess to, disbelieve it, assault it with these weapons, and endeavour to expose it to scorn, can this do it any real harm? Would it become absurd and ridiculous by senseless cavils, empty jests, and rude invective,—or appear so to any who understood it, valued it, felt or desired to feel its power,—or to any others who had common sense, or common reverence for things sacred? And if not, must not such opposers, in the end, make *themselves* ridiculous, instead of *Christianity*,—even though they mingled some show of argument with their banter and scurrility? The utmost mischief they could do, would be to raise a laugh among people of a low taste and gay and trifling humour, that could be tickled with ribaldry; and beget a conceit in them, that Christianity is a thing to be laughed at, because this talk sets them a-giggling. But is the religion of Jesus hurt thereby? or would it be honoured by having others of this make among its professors? Are they ever the more Christians for bearing the name?

The blessed Author of this religion was the jest and scorn at times of the witty, the wise, the learned, the nobles, and the rabble. His religion was reviled and blasphemed by the Jews;* despised and scorned as foolishness by the self-admiring Greeks:† yet he never exerted his divine power to avenge these insults on himself or his religion. If men, instead of yielding to the evidence he offered, and “receiving his truth in the love of it,” rejected, renounced, reproached and railed at it, he did not miraculously punish them with death, or any lesser corporal penalties. Nor is there any thing in the apostolical story like it, but Paul’s striking Elymas blind for a season;‡ which does not seem to have been done so much in a vindictive way, as to make a convert of Sergius Paulus to the faith,§ which penalties inflicted by civil rulers have no fitness to do. *Fides suadenda est, non imperanda*, as Lactantius rightly says,—“Faith must be the effect of persuasion, not constraint.” Nor is

* Acts xiii. 45. † 1 Cor. i. 23. ‡ Acts xiii. 11. § Ver. 12.

there any thing in the whole religion of Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament, that gives orders or allowance to Christian magistrates, with fines, whippings, pillories, &c., to punish the despisers or rejecters of his religion, or stop their mouths who implead or revile at it.

Yet if the honour of his religion, when thus contemned, needed or required such vindication, it is strange himself should show no such regard to it, but be patient under all the reproaches thrown on him and it, and send his apostles out to preach it, armed with the same patience, and authorized to persuade men to receive it, but not to terrify them into the profession of it, nor corporally to punish them if they rejected or reviled it. And was not such patience much more honourable to him and his religion and them who spread it, than resentment of such usage, or revenge for it?

And is it not alike honourable in the present ministers and professors of it? Is it not still enough that "wisdom is justified of her children?"* Can it be expected, that when it does not gain or subdue men's hearts, it would escape the lash of their tongues or pens, especially when, by its heavenly tendency and holy laws, it carries such opposition in it to their lusts and taste? And should its professors resent and revenge this, and make them feel the weight of their hands? Is not this worse than upon "reviling to revile again?"† which Jesus never did, and his religion strictly forbids.‡ These reproaches of the religion of Jesus are deserved, or they are not. To say they are, is to join in the reproach; and if they are not, this may be made appear, and the power and excellency of it, manifested by patience under them, the meanwhile. Thus Jesus vindicated himself and his religion; so did his apostles; so should all his disciples. But to fly out into passion, and return these reproaches with hurtful revenge, is not to copy the example of Jesus, nor give a fair character of his religion. And if men cannot bear the banter of trifling wits for its sake, how are they likely to suffer bonds, imprisonment, or death?

And if it be not for the honour of Christianity for private Christians to beat and hurt those who revile it, and repay

* Matt. xi. 19. † 1 Pet. ii. 23. ‡ Rom. xii. 14, 17. 1 Pet. iii. 9.

their wrong and contempt with such injury, I cannot see that it is for its honour for Christian magistrates to do what is in effect the same, namely, avenge it with prosecutions and penalties. Revenge for such injurious usage is no more decent in them than in private persons, though legal forms may put a better face on it; and the temper of their Master should be as conspicuous in them as in others. Jesus and his religion look more like themselves, by patience under such abuse, than by passionate revenge for it. Magistrates, who have thought meet to profess and countenance this religion, may indeed think their wisdom affronted, and their authority despised, if it be reproached, and may resent this, and by prosecutions show their resentment; but this is really a mere human concern for their own honour, not a Christian concern for the honour of Jesus' religion. This would be much more honoured by their sharing in its reproach, and patience under it, than such a vindication as the example of Jesus does not recommend, his gospel nowhere enjoins or allows, nor does at all seem suited to his spirit or that of his religion.

Nor is such a concern for their own honour so creditable to their religion as at first appearance it may seem. The affront is not aimed at them. They are affronted only by implication and innuendo, as far as the reproach of the religion they profess and countenance involves theirs in it. If their religion be not really discredited by such reproaches, neither are they. But such attempts to vindicate their honour will, by a like implication, tend to the discredit of their religion; for they look as if they were fearful of it. And why fearful of their honour, which is not immediately affected, but in sympathy only with their religion? Must not this imply a fear of the discredit of their religion? And what does this intimate but a distrust of its goodness, and that it cannot bear up against such scoffers unless they stretch out the hand of power, and by prosecutions and penalties put them to silence. Is this for the credit of the religion of Jesus? *Magna est veritas, et prævalebit*: "Great is truth, and it will prevail." Christian truth has prevailed against confederated wit, learning and power. Can it not keep its ground in a Christian nation, where it is the profes-

sion of the learned in all faculties, and the rulers too, no not against mere banter and scurrility? What a reproach to it is the very suspicion? Why then should Christian magistrates discover any thing of a panic, by falling on them with the weight of their power, who make such rude and impotent, and the more impotent for that they are such rude, assaults on it?

As I have hinted before, I meet with no directions in the New Testament for magistrates to interpose in religious disputes, require the belief, (profession I mean, for it can go no farther,) of what they judge right, and enjoin all others silence. And in nature I cannot see why one magistrate should claim this power more than another; a Christian more than a heathen or Mahometan, or one Christian more than another. But if all magistrates may claim and exercise this power, Christianity must in most countries be enjoined silence; and in most Christian countries error will be declared truth, and all defenders of truth enjoined silence.

And is such a situation of things likely to help or hinder the spread of truth or Christianity? Would not free liberty to propose it to mankind, offer the evidences for it, and debate it with opposers, be a likely way to spread, settle, and establish it in the world? And can that liberty, which is so proper to spread and settle it everywhere, hurt it when it is established, or dissettle it again. Did it, on this foot, establish itself, and yet can it not maintain itself where it is established, unless magistrates interpose with their power, and silence all who say any thing against it? Is it not unaccountable, that Christian ministers or magistrates should go into any measures that countenance such a suspicion? Or, when once Christianity, by such freedom, becomes established, must it maintain itself, by denying this freedom to all who would dispute it? Would this be equitable? Or, because Christianity cannot meet with this fair usage from the other powers of the world, should this be done by way of reprisal on those who in Christian nations take this liberty with Christianity? Do then those rulers act a wise part, and for the credit of their religion, who fence it with their power against those who desire to use no other arms against it but reason and argument? Do they act a just part to those who would

show the falsehood of their religion to them and their subjects, and only appeal to their own reason whether it be so or no? Do they act a reasonable part and as becomes men, who would stop their own and their subjects' ears, and stop their mouths, who only desire to recommend, what they say against their religion, to every man's reason and conscience? No one can think so. And do Christian magistrates act more wisely, or righteously, or reasonably, by silencing those who in the same method oppose their religion, and employ no other weapons against it but the best reasons and arguments they can; and for want of better, laugh themselves, and endeavour to make others laugh at it? And should they then allow themselves in such reprisals?

Why then should they prosecute them? Not to convince unbelievers themselves. Such arguments carry no conviction with them. They may provoke men's wrath, but they will let in no light upon their minds, nor make a way for religion into the heart; and yet without this there is no religion. *Si animus aversus*, as Lactantius rightly observes, *nulla est*. By these means men may possibly be induced to make a profession of it without believing it, but this can do no good to them, nor bring any credit to it. It is the excellency of a religion in itself, recommending it to a man's own reason and sober judgment, that can alone lay a foundation for its just esteem, and make a way for it into the heart. And this is the only establishment of it that is pleasing to God or of benefit to men. The mere profession, without this, is worthy no Christian man's, or minister's, or magistrate's concern, either as a lover of God or mankind. Yet this is all the religion such measures are fitted to promote. And this is all they who take them, if they are wise men, can be supposed to have in view;—not religion in truth, but the name and profession of it, and perhaps the honours and profits in Christian countries annexed to it. The dishonest, unmeaning profession of Christianity may serve the worldly ends and interests of Christian ministers; but God can have no glory, nor Christianity any credit, from such professors; nor themselves any spiritual advantage from such profession. So that if worldly ends be in view, it is rational to terrify men into a profession of Christianity; but if the honour of

God, the credit of Christianity, or the spiritual good of these men themselves be aimed at, no measures can be more unfit for this purpose,—unless these ends can be obtained by men's dishonest profession of that with their mouths which they believe not in their hearts, and of which in their lives they show perhaps an open contempt—that is, by what directly crosses them.

But may not such be silenced to prevent their doing mischief? What mischief? Can they destroy the evidences for the religion of Jesus by their sophisms or drollery? Can they hinder the rational conviction of its truth, or the enlightenings of the Holy Spirit, on any serious mind fitted to receive the truth in the love of it, or be formed into the Christian temper? They may possibly furnish some, who hated it in their hearts, with topics of raillery, and prompt the merry triflers to discover that dislike which before was covered with a hypocritical profession. This is all the mischief they are likely to do. And is the religion of Jesus dishonoured hereby? Could it have any credit by such professors, or lose any by their renouncing the profession? A man who duly values his soul will not be laughed out of his religion. If he meets with arguments against it, himself is not able to answer, he will have recourse to those who can help him, and examine to the bottom, ere he will part with his religion. And as for those who have no such value for theirs, it matters little what religion they profess, or whether they make profession of any; seeing in truth they have none at all, and an honest heathen is as good, if not a better Christian than they.

On these accounts I cannot applaud the conduct of those who were concerned in Mr. Woolston's prosecution. There are many surely who could have shown the weakness of his reasonings, and rudeness and folly of his ridicule, to the satisfaction of all men of sober minds. Had it not been more humane, and more honourable to Christianity? He plainly prides himself on this prosecution, and triumphs as if he had the better of Christianity and the bishops; and will have many more admirers on this account, than ever he would have had for his ludicrous performances.

Had they been wholly neglected, one would think they

should have made no convert to infidelity among any that ever understood their religion, or felt its influence on the heart. And for those who disbelieve Christianity in their hearts, and show no regard to it in their lives, what does their professing it signify?

But this prosecution makes the man famous. The enemies of Christianity will naturally think him a shrewd fellow, and that his arguments must have great force, to bring upon him the wrath of the bishops and the weight of the civil power. And many, out of compassion to a sufferer, will look into his books, who perhaps had never else heard of him, or troubled their heads about his writings; and whilst they read under the influence of this passion, and therefore with a bias in his favour, will think better of the argument and cause than otherwise they had done. So that if it be any hurt to Christianity to lose such professors of it, this method seems very likely to further such damage. And though the fear of the civil power may temper men's tongues, this is not the way to gain their hearts, nor conciliate a respect for Christianity, or the ministers who are said to take such formidable, and as they will call them, injurious measures to support it.

And it seems to me a natural and unalienable right of mankind for every one to judge for himself about all matters that concern himself,—and therefore about religion, man's chief concern. And as others have this concern in common with him, if he has discovered—or thinks so—any mistakes which himself had made, and others still make about it, why should he not have liberty to set this before them in a way that seems to him most likely to convince? Such liberty of thought, of speech, of the pen and press, seems to me a natural appendage of the powers of thinking, speaking and writing, which God has given to men; and where it is equally and impartially allowed to all men, can never hurt truth. If one argues, talks, or writes against it, another may do the same for it; in which case truth could never be lost nor obscured, but must be set in the clearer light, and the evidence for it made more unquestionable, as the objections against it would be made to appear of no force.

And, as has been hinted before, this must be the case as to the truth of Christianity. If it might have this liberty, it would quickly become the religion of mankind, were the preachers and professors of it animated with the same zeal for its propagation as its first ministers, and as careful to adorn it by their lives. How soon it spread itself through the Roman empire, Christians need not be told. And sure, if all the wisdom and philosophy, all the wit and eloquence of old Greece and Rome, could not stand before it;—if by its internal excellency and external evidence, together with the zeal and integrity of its ministers, and exemplary lives of its professors, under the influence of the divine Spirit, it could make its way into men's hearts, and establish itself in the world, and that in spite of science and argument, cavil and sophistry, railing and calumny, wit and raillery, and these confederated with persecuting power,—need any be in fear for it from the attempts of modern unbelievers? Can they argue more solidly, plead more forcibly against it, or play upon it with greater wit than the old Greeks and Romans? Is Christianity grown less defensible? Or have they a new resource of arguments to batter it? If not, cannot Christians now, as well as heretofore, show the weakness and sophistry of them? And if they have, why should they not be permitted to produce their strong reasons? Have Christians any reason to fear they are good, and will ruin the evidence of Christianity? If this be the case, the supporting it by power may be needful; but why any reasonable man should be fond of it, or desire to support it, I cannot see, unless for the sake of worldly advantages accruing from it. If not, it will be an honour and advantage to it, and a confirmation of the faith of believers to see, upon re-examination, that the evidences for it are incontestable, notwithstanding these new arguments produced against it.

But, “shall they be permitted without restraint or penalty to reproach it, and call it imposture,—foolish, wicked, and gross imposture?” Why, will calling Christianity by ill names, and casting undeserved reproach upon it, really hurt it, or seduce any from it who indeed believe it and heartily embrace it? Is that real reproach that is undeserved? And if the

religion of Jesus deserves not to be reproached, may not this be made appear? And where then will the reproach rest, but on their licentious tongues or pens, their weak heads, or wicked hearts, who have thus abused it? If Christianity be not true, it is imposture. Such unbelievers must think it. If they speak this out, religion is no more hurt by their saying than thinking it. But if it be true, their thinking, or calling it imposture, does not make it such. And if they tack to this the most disgraceful epithets, this may show their enmity to religion, but it shows, at the same time, their folly and perhaps wickedness. Nor can any men of sense, who are friends to Christianity, ever think the worse of it for that its enemies are foul-mouthed abusers of it. But themselves must be thought the worse of for such abuse.

But "should they be suffered to make it their diversion, turn it into ridicule, and endeavour to expose it to common scorn?" Why, is the religion of Jesus ridiculous, because they laugh at it? Or are any, who are ever likely to credit this religion, to be laughed out of it? If it be not in itself ridiculous, but wise, venerable, divine, they only render themselves ridiculous by so absurd and monstrous an ineptitude: it is laughing at a judge instead of a jackpudding. Such laughers must be the scorn of all the sober world; and must look exceeding weak, or appear in a much worse light. If a religion be indeed ridiculous, it deserves to be laughed at; and the gravest of men have thought it no impropriety or indecency to treat it in that manner. Elijah the prophet mocks Baal and his worship. When his priests cried to him in vain to fire their sacrifice, he thus ridicules them and him: "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he is asleep, and must be awaked."* Such a god deserved to be mocked; and worship rendered to such a god is a ridiculous absurdity. But had he, after this mockery of Elijah, heard the cry of his priests, and fired their sacrifice, who then had been ridiculous? Would not Elijah have been laughed at for such misplaced mockery? And may not the ludicrous mockers at the religion of Jesus be thus rebuked and exposed, by

* 1 Kings xviii. 27.

showing how unfit a subject it is for ridicule, and making appear that they laugh at what they do not understand, which is gross folly? Or also that they are such ridiculous creatures, that, rather than check the merry humour, they will laugh at the most grave, solemn, and venerable thing in the world, which is somewhat worse.

If herein they are guilty of indecency and rudeness, are they not the more likely to fail in their design? Must not this disgust all who have a taste of decency and good manners? And may it not be improved against them? And if to this they add barefaced calumny and slander, and gross misrepresentation, must not this, when it appears, do their cause disservice? Such methods of attacking it must render the attack more void of force, and give Christians a great advantage against them. And what harm is likely to ensue, if they take their own way, and propose their reasons in a dress most suitable to the relish of their own vain minds? May not the friends of Christianity set it in a light that shall make it triumph over weak reasoning, plain sophistry, low ridicule, and base and gross misrepresentation? This must shame and silence such opposers, or show they are past shame. The reproaches levelled at Christianity will recoil on themselves, and instead of making that be scorned, they will become the scorn and aversion of all the wise and good. Should Christians seem afraid in such a contest, by calling out for help to the civil powers? But if they had no such apprehensions, it is mean in them to add the weight of civil vengeance to all the disgrace and contempt these men are bringing on themselves.

But "should they be suffered, in so saucy a manner, to affront the established religion of a country, or do it with impunity; that is, the religion set up and supported by the civil powers?" Does the establishment of a religion by the civil powers, manifest the excellency of it in itself, or add any to it? If it does, the adversaries to Christianity had an unanswerable reason against it, on its first publication, both among Jews and heathens. And the Mahometan and Pagan religion, in all such countries, have, on this foot, the advantage of it still;—as has Popery in Spain, France, &c., against reformed Christianity. But is Popery the better for

being established in France, or Mahometanism in Turkey, or the religion of Confucius in China, &c.? Or is it a fit reason for my believing any religion, that it is the religion professed by the rulers, or taught by the bishops or preachers, in my country, how wise or good soever I imagine them to be? No one, who has a due sense of religion, will maintain this. And why then should such establishment be pleaded in favour of Christianity? If it be in itself an absurd and ridiculous religion, it was a ridiculous thing for magistrates to make it an establishment; and it is yet more ridiculous for the maintenance of their authority, and credit of their wisdom, to silence by their power those who would set this in view. But if it be, as all Christians must believe it, a religion wise, well-founded, rational, and indeed divine, and it is no discredit to it for foolish, bold, proud, and rash men to expose themselves by vain endeavours to make it ridiculous, why should rulers reckon their honour or authority endangered by such vain attempts?

Was it not the religion established in his country, having the sanction of the royal command, that Elijah ridiculed, in the passage above cited? Was not Christianity at first published in opposition to all the religious establishments then in the world? And did not the ancient writers for it endeavour to show the absurdity of the religions then established amongst the Greeks, Romans, and other nations? that is, in other words, how ridiculous they were? For that, and that only which is absurd or inept, is the proper subject of ridicule. Let Minucius, Arnobius, and Lactantius, who all wrote before the empire became Christian, be consulted. Might they take this liberty with the religion then established, and why may not unbelievers take the same liberty with Christianity, when become an establishment? Should the civil rulers *then* have crushed by their power the writers against the established religion? Should not both priests and rulers, for their own sakes and for their people's sakes, have examined themselves, and have put *them* on examining into the truth, and whether what was offered deserved regard? Or, because their religion was established, must they take it for granted it was true, and therefore never examine, but by dint of power destroy or silence

opposers? If this was wrong in them, is it right in Christian ministers to call on the civil powers to destroy or silence unbelievers now? Or must Christianity have a privilege against all other religions, which none must be allowed against it? Is this equitable in itself? Or is it for the credit of this religion that it only must never be re-examined?

“But did the apostles or ancient defenders of Christianity use rudeness and railing in their speeches or writings? Did they treat the established religion with scoffs, insults, or ill names?” Admit they did not, but used more meekness and gravity in their arguments, and talked with more caution, decency, and good manners. This was the more for the honour of religion, and no disadvantage to their cause. One would be sorry to see Christians employing the same ill arts, or using the same ill manners, in defending their own religion or attacking an adverse one, as the enemies to it may in attacking theirs. If they fairly represented what they opposed, and talked of it as it deserved, they did it no wrong. If they misrepresented it, this was but slandering it, and hurting their own cause. This could make no impressions to the disadvantage of the religion they opposed. The same I say here. And had that been the case, civil punishments had been a much more improper method to silence them than sober refutation, at least it had been much less humane.

I could wish, therefore, Mr. Woolston had never been prosecuted for his discourses,—or that he might now be graciously pardoned; and that even my lords the bishops, if they were concerned, as he says, in his prosecution, would be petitioners first, and put up all the indignities offered themselves, for the honour of Christianity. Let him go on in his own way. If he can demonstrate the falsehood of Christianity, Christians must get a better, or make the best of the religion of nature. If he cannot, as Christians must believe, let him, if such be his list, use his endeavours; and if where his reasons fail, he will misrepresent, calumniate, and crack a jest,—this may make some mirth for fools, but cannot hurt Christianity, nor impress any one soul to its disadvantage, who is ever likely to be a real Christian, or a credit to the religion of Jesus.

But, “can I plead for such a man,—an infidel, a scoffing, drolling, insulting infidel? Can I have any compassion for one who has done, and is likely to do, so much mischief? Should not every Christian detest the man, and rejoice to see him punished?” I own I have no apprehensions of any mighty mischief he has done, or can do. And the worse I think of the man, the more reason, upon Christian principles, I have to pity him; and mere humanity should restrain from joy at his punishment. Did God himself take the matter into his own hand, and by immediate infliction make him incapable of using either tongue or pen, it were unchristian to rejoice at his calamity. And to pity him, and pray for the restoration of both, would be much more becoming. Indeed, this might look like an indication from heaven that both should be laid under future restraint. And under these apprehensions, none should pray for their restoration, with liberty for like abuse. But I see nothing in reason, or the religion of Jesus, authorizing men to lay him under such restraint. And whilst I plead against this, I am not pleading for him, but for the honour of Christianity and of Christian ministers and rulers. Let his reasonings be refuted and his ridicule exposed; but let not his person be hurt, his property broken in upon, nor his liberty as a man, a reasonable being, infringed.

His prosecution, in my account, is likely to do more mischief than his pamphlets. These may pleasure some merry unbelievers, some gay fellows, who are at a loose from all religion. That will shock serious doubters, and impress some who before had no doubts. It will be natural for thinking people to ask, and if they should not, himself and his favourers will be apt to suggest, “What, are his arguments against Christianity so strong, that he must be chained up by the civil power and an embargo laid upon his pen? and this in a nation where it has the countenance of the laws, and so many his equals in sense and learning are engaged, in honour and interest, in duty and good policy, to defend it? If he can be answered, a triumph over him at argument one would think were enough. The man would be hereby sufficiently mortified, and the mischief he may do obviated. But to rout him at argument, and shut him up

in jail, and silence him into the bargain, is unmerciful. Sure he must be a formidable adversary, or he had never been thus served." I plead for nothing, but that he and his favourers may have no such handle. For him I plead not.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to plead against him, and show the weakness and sophistry of his reasonings, the impertinence of his cavils, the meanness of his jests, the vanity of his bluster, and the rudeness and scurrility of his whole manner. I have passed nothing worth notice, in what he objects to the letter of the evangelical story. And since himself lays so huge a stress on the sedate reasonings of his Rabbi's letter, as to defy my Lord of London, in this discourse, to answer it, and that in a very indecent and insolent manner; and in another of his pieces, as I am informed, to call on the author of the 'Trial of the Witnesses,' though in somewhat more modest a manner, to reply to his Rabbi's objections, as a novelty and curiosity,—I have given them a thorough examination, and endeavoured to show that, however curious and novel they are, they are mere noise, and little more than the tautological repetition of his own arguments, though put off in the name of a Rabbi, with improved effrontery and insolence.

I have given myself the liberty to imitate him somewhat in his manner, not to such a degree as to be like him,—and yet enough, one would hope, to make him less wise in his own conceit: as Solomon advises in a like case.*

If he has any serious doubts concerning any passages of the evangelical story, I wish him at liberty to propose them to the public, and doubt not but they will have a fair and impartial consideration. But if he issues any more discourses on these subjects, I wish, for his own sake, and for the sake of many serious Christians, who no more approve his prosecution than the writer of these sheets, that he would treat a subject, for which they think they have a deserved veneration, with more gravity and decency, that he would write with more guard on his ludicrous disposition, and not mingle his sneers at my lords the bishops and an hireling priesthood, with his arguments against Christianity, to which they

* Prov. xxvi. 4, 5.

add nor weight nor ornament. If there appears anything to him absurd in the religion of Jesus, or the belief of it, let him set this in the best light he can, but let him forbear to interlard his discourse with trifling jests, ridiculous insult and gasconade, and unmannerly flirts at his superiors. If he would write with the gravity of a philosopher, the good manners of a gentleman, and the sobriety and decency of one of academical education, methinks I could dare promise that my lords the bishops would allow him liberty to write, and take care that his arguments be candidly considered, and that in a manner becoming gentlemen and Christian divines. And if he has anything worthy a man in view in writing, one would think that for his own sake, and the credit of his cause, he should no more write in his former manner.

I have no more to add by way of preface, but only to request that if any serious Christians, into whose hands this may fall, meet with anything in these papers to their own satisfaction and to the credit of their religion, they would, in their most serious hours, and most solemn addresses to the throne of grace, be petitioners for me, in my present melancholy and unhappy circumstances, and make their earnest prayer, in the name of Jesus, whose religion is so much the ridicule of Mr. Woolston, his admirers and disciples.

REMARKS

ON

MR. WOOLSTON'S FIFTH DISCOURSE.

THE author is pleased at once to open his design, in "examining," as he calls it, "the three miracles of Jesus, in raising the dead." This is, "to show that the literal stories consist of improbabilities, incredibilities, and absurdities."* For what end? "In order to the *mystical interpretation* of them." That is, no doubt, when his humour serves, to make himself and his friends as much diversion with the *mystery*, as he has now endeavoured to do with the *letter*.

Having opened his design, before he pursues it he stops to observe, "that it is uncertain from the evangelical history whether Jesus raised more than these three persons from the dead."† And I must observe, that if he may be the interpreter of it, it is as uncertain whether any one of these was raised. But what need he concern himself what *divines* hold at present about it,—since he can, it seems, "assure them, that whatever they hold, (that is, that he *did*, or that he *did not*,) the consequence would be neither better nor worse than that they must espouse the allegorical meaning, or grant that Jesus literally raised none from the dead at all."‡ Whoever reads this discourse of his, will soon see he is a man of much assurance. But Christians need be in no pain for his rhodomontade; for if one may

* Pp. 1, 2.

† P. 2.

‡ P. 3.

judge of what he can do, by what he here has done, he will never reduce divines to a necessity of “espousing allegorical meanings, or granting that Jesus raised none from the dead.”

To make out that the “literal stories consist of absurdities,” &c., he offers six observations, of which the five first have little to do with the literal story; nor will, with all the weight he lays upon them, prove any absurdity in it. They only prove, in his own account, inaccuracy in the relation; or, at most, that Jesus wrought miracles with too little guard and caution, to prevent the exceptions that such self-opinionated critics might make to them,—which is a circumstance in their favour, and shows that he performed, and the evangelists related, with all simplicity and plainness. And as neither had any design to impose on the world, in what was done and reported, neither were they so cautious and critically exact as this writer would have had them. Such as fear detection, act and talk with caution. They who act openly as occasion offers, before friends and enemies, and relate events in a plain, unaffected, artless manner, without studying to dispose their materials to advantage, manifestly show they have no such fears.

Before he proceeds to his observations, he tells us, (I suppose to add strength to his first,) “That it is visible enough these three miracles are not *equally* great: that the greatest of the three is that of Lazarus’ resurrection, because his body is supposed to be putrefied; whereas Jairus’ daughter was but just dead, and the widow’s son carrying out to his burial.”* But supposing the facts *real*, and the change made, at the word of Jesus, by power divine—I see no room for this comparison. All who are *truly* dead are *equally* dead; and the calling them back into life, *equally* the act of omnipotence. And as he elsewhere observes, “where Divine Power accompanies the voice, it matters not towards the effect, whether it be a scream or a whisper;”† so where Divine Power produces the effect, putrefaction or non-putrefaction makes no difference. Death is the entire cessation of the vital functions in the body. Whether this

* P. 4.

† P. 40.

be occasioned by the unaptness of the fluids to be driven about, or that of the solids by reciprocal tension and relaxation to drive them, or both, the restoring one and all is easy to Divine Power. And if there be also a dissolution of the solids, and an evaporation of the fluids, it is as easy to Divine Power to unite all again, as to restore the unbroken solids to their former tone, or stagnant fluids to their former fluidity, and recall them to the exercise of their several functions. So that, as he says in another case, "this way of talking is adapting his argument to the capacities of the vulgar, who have no apprehensions of God's power, out of sensible representations of it."*

"The restoring a person indisputably dead to life," himself says, "is a stupendous miracle; and two or three such well-circumstanced, and credibly reported, are enough to conciliate the belief of mankind, that the author of them was a divine agent, and invested with the power of God;"† as to *mission*, I suppose he means, as well as *operation*. Of what importance is it then, whether there be degrees in the miraculous operation or no, if every such effect be in itself stupendous, and so proper an attestation? If these three miracles are well circumstanced, and credibly reported, it is enough, according to his own account, whether there be degrees in them or not.

SECTION I.

MR. WOOLSTON'S FIRST REMARK CONSIDERED.

No, says he, "for the chief, the most illustrious miracle is referred till last, which should have been told first: told by Matthew and Mark, who could not be ignorant of it nor forget it, had the story been really true; and not by John, sixty years after our Lord's ascension. Here is too much room for *cavil* and question, whether the whole be not his mere invention."‡ What room for *cavil* there may be, matters little: Mr. Woolston, it is to be hoped, would not

* P. 41.

† P. 3.

‡ P. 6.

pass upon the world as a *caviller* at Christianity; though according to the critics,* the character but too well fits him.

But how does John's telling this story last, and "sixty years after our Lord's ascension, though Matthew and Mark knew it, nor could forget it, and yet report it not, give just ground to question whether it were not his mere invention?" Why, "it was the design of all the evangelists, especially the three first, to aggrandize their master's fame for a miracle-worker." This is not a fair representation; their manifest design was to give a concise and true account of the birth, ministry, discourses, preaching, parables, miracles, apprehension, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, and indeed religion of Jesus. It was a necessary branch of this design to give some account of his miracles; and if they were true miracles, this author grants, (if he be in earnest,) that they were proper attestations to his divine character. Nor could they have been omitted. And they must, it is true, aggrandize him, or make him great. But that they had any design to make him out of measure great, and either multiply or magnify his miracles, with this view, appears not. There is not the least colour for it. And how consistently he here says, this was the design of the three first especially, when he makes John invent a thumping miracle, because theirs were under size, I cannot see,—perhaps he may.

It is not therefore "to be presumed," as he says, "that they must make a report of *all* or even the *greatest* Jesus wrought." As to the first, it cannot be presumed, unless by

* "Cavillari," says Scaliger, "est proprium *leguleiorum* et *moratorum* verbum; nam jurisconsultorum *cavere*. Cavillare non *cavere* *leguleios* dicebant, propter *tricas* et *morosas* juris *præstigias*." 'Lawyers were said *cavere*, when they answered such as consulted them. But *tricksters*, *wresters of law*, who by arts and querks used to delay justice, were said *cavillari*.' And in another sense, "cavillatio est *jocosa calumniatio*," *Fest*. 'cavilling is sportive calumniating.' Hence Cicero, "consul autem ipse *parvo* animo ac *pravo*, tantum cavillator, genere illo *moroso* quod sine *dicacitate* videtur. *ad Attic.* l. i. Epis. 13. Nay, and in another sense still, Boethius calls the *ars σοφιστικὴ* of sophistry, *cavillatoria*. And Seneca, "quid vocentur, latine *σοφίσματα* a me quæstisti—Aptissimum mihi videtur, quo Cicero usus est verbum: *Cavillationes* vocat, quibus quisque se tradidit, quæstiunculas quidem *vafras* nectit: cæterum ad vitam nihil proficit." Either character, that of a *Barrator*, *Calumniator*, or *Sophister* but too well suits him.

so *presumptuous* a writer as he, because it is over and over contradicted in their writings. They give an account of many miraculous cures wrought by him, besides those particularly related. Matthew, in the beginning of his gospel, tells us, "he went about Galilee, healing all manner of sickness;" that "they brought him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them."* After he had healed the centurion's servant, and Peter's wife's mother, "in the evening they brought him many sick, and he healed them."† The like is said when John sent his disciples to inquire "if he were Christ."‡ So when the "multitude followed him into the wilderness."§ And when afterward he went over to the land of Gennesareth, "they sent out into all the country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased, and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched him were made perfectly whole."|| After his coming down from the mountain, and choosing his apostles, "great multitudes out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coasts of Tyre and Sidon, came to hear him, and be healed of their diseases—and sought to touch him. And there went virtue out of him, and healed them all."¶

And though raising the dead was not so common as other miraculous operations, yet that it was not limited to these three, seems very likely to me, from Jesus' reply to John's disciples. For he tells them, that the "dead were raised," as well as the "sick healed, the blind made to see, the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk," bidding them go and "tell John what they had *seen* and *heard*;"** that is, seen him *do*, and heard him *say*,—not merely what they had heard concerning him from others. However, there is no more room to suppose these three were all the dead Jesus raised to life, than the five, or at most six,†† upon record in the evangelists,

* Matt. iv. 23, 24. † Chap. viii. 16; Mark i. 32; Luke ii. 40.
‡ Chap. vii. 21. § Chap. ix. 11. || Matt. xiv. 25, 26. ¶ Luke vi.
12—20. ** Matt. xv. 5; Luke vii. 22.

†† Viz. the two at coming out of Jairus' house, Matt. ix. 27, 28; the blind man brought to him at Bethsaida, Mark viii. 22—26; the

were all the blind to whom he gave sight. Nor is it to be presumed these evangelists report *all* the miracles they knew Jesus did, because they tell us the quite contrary. Nor is it to be presumed that John, who wrote last, has made up the complement, because he tells us Jesus did a multitude more than are recorded.*

Nor is it to be presumed that these three have reported the greatest miracles of Jesus of which they had knowledge. The foundation on which Mr. Woolston builds this presumption being mistake, viz., that to "aggrandize their Master's fame for a miracle-worker was in an especial manner their design." The account they give of his miracles is but a necessary branch of their general design, which was not to give us a detail of all the circumstances of Jesus' life, ministry, miracles, &c., but only a summary account of what, under each head, they thought proper to be communicated to the world. It is not therefore to be presumed that the three first evangelists must have reported the *greatest* miracles of Jesus of which they had knowledge, more than that they must have reported *all*. And though another evangelist makes report of a miracle greater than they have mentioned, this carries in it no more contrariety to sense and reason than his reporting some facts by them omitted. If such *presumption* will pass with his critics for proof, and his infidels will judge upon such evidence, I can lay little stress on the approbation or applause of the one, or judgment of the other.

But critics, it seems, "will not admit the belief of any story in history told in so disorderly a manner;" that is, when the last historian only tells the greatest occurrence. Why so? "Because the first writer of the life of a hero, to be sure, makes mention of all the grand occurrences of it, and leaves no room for biographers afterward, but to enlarge and paraphrase on what he has written, with some other circumstances and additions of less moment." † If a third or fourth biographer shall presume to add a more illustrious transaction "of the hero's life, it will be rejected as *fable*, because

man born blind at Jerusalem, John ix.; and blind Bartimeus and his companion, Mark x. 46. Luke xviii. 35—43.

* John xxi. 25.

† P. 7.

had it been *fact*, the first writer must have been apprized of it, and would have inserted it." For my part, I am not skilled in the biography of heroes, nor shall dispute with him whether *critics* establish this as a rule to be observed by their biographers. Matthew and Mark were no such biographers, I dare say, nor understood any of the rules of criticism to be observed in drawing up the lives of heroes. Heroes, in my notion hitherto, were fictitious persons, and their transactions the business of poets, not historians. And the evangelists were no writers of romance.

But if by heroes he means great men only, how will he prove "that the first writers of their history make mention of all the grand occurrences of their heroes, and leave no room," &c. I see none offered but his "to be sure," which with me will never pass for proof. It is true, if these biographers undertake to give a true and full account of such great men's lives, either from their own perfect knowledge of all transactions, or from having all the authentic records or reports relating to the matter laid before them, and are men of probity and skill sufficient for the work, there were some reason that after-biographers, who relate facts by them omitted, should be distrusted. But where this is not the case, a third or fourth biographer may relate a fact omitted by those who went before, and a more illustrious one than they had reported, without being immediately deemed a writer of fables; and if *he* be a writer of probity, may deserve as much credit as *they*, notwithstanding these additional occurrences. Cornelius Nepos and Plutarch were as eminent biographers as most this writer has been acquainted with. They have written the lives of several of the same persons. Nepos is the first historian. Will this writer now maintain, that if Plutarch has added one illustrious transaction that Nepos has omitted, or a more illustrious than he has reported, that he must be a mere romancer, and Nepos also? "To be sure." Why? "Because, had it been fact, Nepos had been apprized of it, and would have inserted it!" But, notwithstanding his assurance, I say, Plutarch might have information of what Nepos was not apprized of; or might relate what Nepos did not think proper or needful to his purpose, and yet if he be an honest careful writer, deserves equal credit.

And since neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke are professed biographers, nor pretend to give a perfect account of all the occurrences, grand or not grand, of Jesus' life (however otherwise qualified, by personal knowledge of the facts, or unquestionable testimony of eye and ear-witnesses) yet might John insert, in his gospel, facts, and those illustrious ones, omitted by them, and notwithstanding deserve all credit, without impairing theirs. Their credit must rest upon their character, and the opportunities they had to know the truth of what they report. If their integrity is not to be suspected, nor their advantages to know the truth to be doubted, what they all report deserves all credit, this circumstance notwithstanding.

But "what was the reason that the three first evangelists neglected to record this renowned miracle of Lazarus?"* Suppose that—without allowing it to proceed either from ignorance or forgetfulness—no special reason were now to be assigned, is this an argument that it was not fact? Must I be able to render a reason for omissions or insertions, in ancient historians of several hundred years' standing, or pronounce them romancers? Where several facts of the same kind occur, may not one historian report what another has omitted, without impairing the credit of either? Suppose two historians now alive—one of which now composes the history of his times, and the other twenty or thirty, or even sixty years hence—should record the present appearances of infidelity amongst us, and the first should give an account of the writings of Mr. Grounds and Mr. Scheme, without any mention of Mr. Woolston's discourses, and the other of the discourses of Mr. Woolston without mentioning the writings of Mr. Grounds, &c. Suppose each thought the mention of one of these authors enough for his purpose, but one thought the writings of Mr. Scheme, &c., and the other the discourses of Mr. Woolston most proper to be mentioned by him,—would not any man *presume* too far hereafter, who would conclude both these historians to be writers of fables, for that the discourses of Mr. Woolston were the most renowned and illustrious in their way, and had there been any such writings, the first must

* P. 8.

have "been apprized of them," and "would have inserted" an account of them in his history. Would all the "judicious critics in the world approve this reasoning, and applaud the force of it?"* Perhaps in the world of infidels; but all other critics must think such a way of judging would destroy the credit of all history. We at present know these different relations to be fact. And if the historians appear, in all other respects, men of truth and probity, those in future times have reason to believe their report of these facts, though they cannot account for the reasons by which they were determined to do this in their history.

Suppose then that the two first evangelists thought, with Mr. Woolston, one resurrection-miracle sufficient, which must they have chosen to report? "*To be sure, the greatest, that of Lazarus, or the widow's son, if they knew of either.* But when, instead of one of these, they tell us a story of Jairus' daughter, an imperfect and disputable miracle in comparison of them, they must know nothing of them, or they would have preferred to make report of them."† For thus it seems "wise and considerate historians always do."‡ If Mr. Woolston's assurance may pass for argument, "to be sure," he'll be too hard for Christians and their religion. It is but to *presume* that all *wise* and *considerate* historians will tell their story in that order which to *him* and his *judicious critics* appears most proper, and then *presume* that Matthew and Mark are *such* historians, and therefore must have told the greatest transaction of the kind, had they known any thing of it; and this being the story of Lazarus, must therefore be a new invention of John. Q. E. D.

But suppose Matthew and Mark were no such considerate historians, but persons who had never been instructed in the art of biography, had never been fellows, or so much as students in any college, to learn the critical rules of writing history,—then, sure, they might transgress these rules, and yet honestly tell the truth, though not according to art. And this was the known case. And where then is his consequence?

Or suppose they were such *wise* and *considerate* historians,

* P. 12.

† P. 9.

‡ Ibid.

who yet thought that in resurrection-miracles there were no degrees of comparison;—that all *really* dead were *equally* dead, and not some *more* and some *less*;—that divine power only could restore such, and all with *equal ease*, whether putrefied or not putrefied, whether whole or crumbled into dust,—that they knew the persons raised by Jesus were all perfectly and indisputably dead, and not imperfectly and disputably so, whilst *one* resurrection-miracle was enough they thought for them to report: which now should they choose? Not the *greatest*, not the *most perfect* and *indisputable*. There is no room for such choice. All with them are *equally* great, perfect and indisputable. They must then be determined in their choice by some other consideration.

Suppose regard had by them then to the circumstances of the person. Mr. Woolston tells us, the raising a more *public* person was fitter than a more *private* and *obscure* one.* The evangelists did not presume to say what was fittest for their Master to do. But in making report of what he did, they might, from some such consideration, prefer the telling of the resurrection of Jairus' daughter, he being a ruler of a synagogue, however inconsiderable a girl his child was. He also intimates, that "perhaps an enemy was a fitter person for Jesus to raise, than Lazarus his friend."† Such himself tells us the rulers of synagogues universally were.‡ And the evangelist tells us, few of the rulers professed faith in Jesus.§ that is, owned him for the Christ, and embraced his doctrine. Nor does it appear Jairus did, antecedently to the raising of his daughter; but all other means failing, in the very article of death he applies to him for her cure. Now Jairus being a man of figure, one of that rank of men who, in the general, had little reverence for Jesus, and his application to him being therefore an uncommon event, they might reckon the revival of *his* daughter, more proper to be reported by them than that of any other.

It seems also to have been a more public miracle than that of Lazarus. For though there were more persons at Lazarus' grave than were in the chamber when Jairus' daughter was raised,—yet the time, and concourse of people,

* P. 25.

† P. 24.

‡ P. 36.

§ John xii. 42.

and condition of the man, made this the more public miracle. It was in the time when Jesus went about Galilee preaching and healing, and multitudes followed him wherever he came. A multitude attended him to the ruler's house, and though they were not admitted, many had heard Jairus' request, most had heard the servant's message concerning her death on the road, and had heard this confirmed by the pipers put out, and went away satisfied concerning both her death and revival, so that "the fame of it spread into all that land."* Lazarus' resurrection was more private, whilst Jesus was in the parts beyond Jordan, withdrawn from the malice of the Jews, who sought his life. Here, though he received all who came, both friends and enemies, he was not so crowded as at the other season. The message brought him of Lazarus' sickness was private.† He goes to raise him without being sent for. His disciples knew nothing of the matter till himself informed them.‡ His coming was to the sisters unexpected. And though it is probable he brought some company along with him, some attending him wherever he came, nor could he pass unobserved,—yet the purpose of his coming being unknown, it is not likely the crowd was great; and though many of the Jews were there to comfort the sisters,§ it does not seem to have been near so public an event as the raising Jairus' daughter. Now Mark is, in a manner, an epitomizer of Matthew; and Matthew, a Galilean, might on these accounts choose to report the miracle done on Jairus' daughter, in his own country, in a more public manner, and in the time of Jesus' more public ministry, rather than that on Lazarus at Bethany.

And indeed, in conformity to their general design, which seems to be to give an account of the more public transactions of Jesus' life, to which they do in a manner confine themselves, passing over things of a more private nature, and such as were antecedent to John's imprisonment, which yet are reported by John;—such as his turning water into wine at Cana in Galilee,|| and healing the nobleman's servant of Capernaum, which John calls his second miracle,¶ his dis-

* Matt. ix. 26.
§ Ver. 21, 32.

† John xi. 3.
|| Ch. ii.

‡ Ver. 11, 14.
¶ Ch. iv. 46—54.

course with the Samaritan woman* and with Nicodemus.† It therefore better suited his purpose to relate the more private miracle of Lazarus' resurrection, as it did that of Matthew and Mark, the more public one of Jairus' daughter,—to which his love to Jesus' friend, as himself was his beloved disciple, might contribute somewhat. So that here is a likely account why this miracle might be related by John, though it was omitted by the other evangelists. Nor is it at all contrary to sense or reason to believe it, though it comes in this order.

But the raising the widow's son at Nain falls within the period of Jesus' public ministry, and was more openly and so far publicly done. "Why did not Matthew and Mark mention this story, who must more certainly know it, if true, than Luke the companion of Paul, who alone reports it?"‡ So that, it seems, it is not true, because it has no other reporter. But why must Matthew and Mark know this fact more certainly than Luke the companion of Paul? Matthew indeed, was very likely an eye-witness to both,—and as far as knowledge upon eyesight is more certain than knowledge upon report, may be said more certainly to know of it. But why Luke might not as certainly know of it as Mark, appears not. The miracle was done in Galilee; Mark was an inhabitant of Jerusalem,§ and if there be any argument in Luke's being the companion of Paul, such was Mark of Barnabas.||

But if Luke were not an eye-witness, he had opportunities enough to get certain information of the truth of what he reports. He assures us he had been very exact in his inquiries, and wrote, that Theophilus "might know the certainty of what he had been taught."¶ Is an honest faithful historian, in such circumstances, not to be believed, because former writers on the same subject have not given us the same relation, unless, at this distance of time, we can assign the particular reason of their omission? Then every first historian must report every fact he knows, and all after-history must be a mere transcript, transposal or paraphrase

* Ch. iv.
§ Acts xii. 12.

† Ch. iii.
|| Ch. xv. 39.

‡ P. 8.
¶ Luke i. 1—5.

of his, without the insertion of new facts he might be supposed to know; or blast the credit of the first history, and ruin its own, unless a man, many hundred years after, can assign the special certain reason of the omission. This may be a rule in judging of facts among infidels perhaps. It is wonderfully fitted to make infidelity general, and spread it as wide as ancient history reaches. But what Luke reports, must with me meet with credit, unless he can prove the things reported by him incredible in themselves, or produce authentic counter-testimonies that shall destroy their credit. When this is done, he will make me so far an unbeliever, but not by talk that must destroy the credit of all history.

“But Grotius,” says he, “tells us, Matthew and Mark content themselves with one instance of a miraculous resurrection,” and assigns this as a reason of reporting no more, though they knew of them. And “one such,” himself says, “is sufficient.” Why then might they not content themselves with one such; and this be a good reason why they mention no more? Why, “had they reported two or three more of the same sort, *nobody* would have thought their history of Christ overcharged with impertinent and tautological repetitions.”* I am not sure of this. Indeed with tautological repetitions it could not, in this case, be overcharged; for two or three stories, though of the same sort, needed not be told in the same words: but I am not sure *one body*, whom he knows, would not have thought it overcharged with impertinent repetitions. I cannot find but, as the matter now stands, the whole literal story is, with this merry writer, silly and impertinent. None can be sure but more relations of the same kind would, with him, have been additional impertinence. But suppose no one would have had such a thought. What then? Therefore Matthew and Mark might not think one enough, or content themselves with telling no more. The consequence, I own, I cannot see; nor why this may not be assigned as a reason of their omission.

But everybody, one would think, should suppose Matthew and Mark as fit to judge what was proper and pertinent to

* P. S.

the purpose of their history, and what to insert or omit, as this gentleman, without losing their own credit, or ruining the credit of after historians, who may insert some passages in their history, which these, though they knew, pass over in silence. Himself tells us, "if Matthew the first historian had recorded the story of Lazarus only, whose resurrection was the greatest miracle,—and Luke had added that of the widow of Nain's son,—and John lastly had remembered us of Jairus' daughter, which the other evangelists, not through ignorance or forgetfulness, but studying brevity, had omitted; then all had been well, and no objection had hence lain against the credit of any of these miracles, or the authority of the evangelists: but"*—I own had this been the case all had been well, nor had any objection, &c., but I cannot see but as it is, it is even so, though what he would have had told *first*, happens to be told *last*. It is the credibility of the things reported in themselves, and the care and faithfulness of the reporter, on which the credit of the report must rest, not the order in which they are reported. As to this, historians will use their own pleasure. And it is very weak for any in aftertimes to make this a reason for disbelieving the history. But to say it is utterly incredible, because not told in the order they judge proper, is wild and extravagant.

But if the study of brevity, had *his* order been observed, might have been a reason for their omission, without supposing it proceeded from ignorance or forgetfulness, why must it be supposed to proceed from ignorance in them, and be mere invention in John, because the stories are told in another order? Why may not the study of brevity be such a reason still?

Certain it is, the use to be made of their history required both plainness and brevity. It was intended for persons of all ranks and capacities. And writings designed for the use of all must be on a level, as much as may be, with the meanest among them. Plain, artless, brief narrations are manifestly most fit for this purpose. Accuracy in them had been lost on the unlearned, and not so proper to inform them. A multitude of writings had distracted the readers, and been

* P. 9.

unfit for the busy and labouring part of mankind. Great volumes had been tiresome to all; and yet some variety would render the writings delightful. Histories, on all these accounts, most fit, have the four evangelists given us: such as, when brought into one volume, is not large, and yet contains a vast variety of matter,—the history of Jesus' birth, ministry, journeyings, sermons, parables, discourses, miracles, apprehension, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection, and a compendious account of his religion, besides the history of John's ministry. In this view, all must omit some things, and be short in all they relate. This is the case with regard to his miracles: some they briefly tell, others they summarily report without being particular. Matthew and Mark, the first writers, must and do omit many things they knew; though therefore they report but one resurrection-miracle, they knew of more. Matthew certainly did. This is plain from the relation he gives of Jesus' answer to John's disciples, "the dead are raised," (in the plural,) as well as "the deaf hear,"* &c. If he had known of but one such, and had thought his mentioning no more would have given any just suspicion that this was the case, he would have corrected this answer, and not have made him assert what his own narrative must contradict. Their study of brevity fairly accounts therefore for these omissions.

And Christians do not consider these evangelists as mere private historians, but under the especial conduct of God's Spirit in their writings. No one amongst them was to give us the history *complete*. One gospel had been then enough, and the rest needless. The entire history was to be made out of all. Yet every one was to give us a *general* account of Jesus' ministry; for *this* reason, many of the same passages must occur in all: and yet for the *former* reason they must be written with some variety. What one therefore omits, another records. Some were eye-witnesses; all were informed of the facts they relate. All are persons of equal and undoubted credit. Their narration is simple, plain, and concise, yet persons and places are often named in it. The very last writer had not outlived the remembrance of the

* Matt. xi. 5. *νεκροί*, as well as *κωφοί*, &c.

events. Neither Jews nor Gentiles were so favourable to their cause as to let gross inventions and fables pass for facts. If this author's judgment may be taken, they had no cunning at devising fables. They were mere bunglers at it. They must then have been presently detected, if they had not reported facts. And they were so thoroughly persuaded of the truth themselves, that they went about the world, renouncing their own country, friends, and relations, to spread the story, and persuade men to believe it. All of them exposed themselves to insults, injuries, contempt, and scorn, and ventured their lives for it, and some cheerfully laid them down. And they maintained it in the face of senates, judicatories, rulers, and the whole world, "God also bearing witness to it, with signs, wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."* Is the credit of such reporters to be called in question, because one relates one part of the story, and another a different, and not every one all,—or do not happen to tell their story in the order Mr. W.'s biographers would have told it in, but that which seemed good to themselves?

Yes, says Mr. Woolston, "this unnatural and preposterous order of time in which these miracles are recorded, administers just suspicion of the credibility of all these stories."† Why? "Because the greatest miracle is postponed to the last." "To prove the story of this miracle false and fabulous," says this infidel, "we need say no more than that it is last recorded. Had there been any truth in it, the first evangelist had remembered us of it."‡ Whether there be anything in this talk, has been seen already. But to show what an enemy this gentleman is to tautological repetitions, and how fitly he assumes the character of a primitive believer, the *allegorist* goes out, and the *infidel* enters, but not till he has passed a compliment on himself.

"It is lucky," says he, "for Christianity, that Jews and infidels have not hitherto hit upon the absurdity of this preposterous narration."§ Modest man! Had not all the infidels of past ages been men of more shallow reach or less lucky imagination than himself, what had become of Chris-

* Heb. ii. 4.

† P. 10.

‡ P. 11.

§ P. 10. *ibid.*

tianity? Has he not a right to laugh at believers, who, in his turn, can trample on all the past champions of infidelity, and make very pigmies of them? What bunglers at their business were Celsus, and Porphyry, and Julian, that they could never discover this preposterous way of telling a story, and so cross to the method of all heroical biographers? Had there been no such biography in their times? or were the rules of biography not then settled? or did these men understand nothing of them? that so gross a transgression should escape their notice, and never be stumbled upon till the days of Mr. Woolston?

But why so lucky for Christianity was this oversight? Why, "otherwise they might have"—What? I wonder!—"formed this cogent objection against these miracles." Who could have thought all this parade, this *tantus hiatus*, was a preface to such a speech? I should have expected Christianity had received its death's wound, and was lying gasping at his feet. But this cogent objection, what is it? Just what we have already had and considered, only uttered with more assurance *en infidel*.

However, let him be heard out, that he may not pretend this cogent objection has been avoided. "Jesus, it is manifest, raised not the dead at all."* He sets out, you see, in triumph. But how is this manifest? "The only person Christians can reasonably pretend Jesus did raise, was Jairus' daughter, of whom Matthew writes; and she, according to the story, was only in a sleep or eestacy."† If I did not by this time know the man, I should say, it was manifest this infidel never read the story. Mr. Woolston comes over with this again hereafter, where it will be considered. But if this be fact, Christians cannot reasonably pretend Jesus did raise even her. For Matthew, it seems, who tells us she was raised from the dead, and that the fame of it went all over the country, tells us, at the same time, and in the same place, that she was not dead, but asleep only, at most in a trance, out of which Jesus waked her, and that only with taking her by the hand, and calling to her with his ordinary voice! If Matthew be such a silly taleteller, we cannot reasonably

* P. 10.

† Ibid.

believe even him. But if this be misrepresentation, and Matthew tells us she was dead, and Christians then and now reasonably believe it on his report, as an honest writer, and well apprized of the fact,—on the same foot do they as reasonably believe the reports of the other evangelists. But,

“The Galileans, after called Christians, finding their account in a resurrection-miracle, viz. this of *Jairus’ daughter*” *—(What must he make of all the rest of mankind, when these stupid Galileans could find their account in this inconsistent story of the raising one from the dead, who was only asleep? But what then?)—“Luke, for the farther advantage of the cause, devised another story, of better circumstances, in the widow of *Nain’s son*.” † But why devised? Are we to take his word for this? Then we shall part with our religion at a very cheap rate. Or must it be devised, because it is better circumstanced than that of *Jairus’ daughter*?—that is a bigger miracle, for of such circumstances is he here talking. But may it not be fact, and not fable, this notwithstanding? This single circumstance surely forbids it not. Does Luke, in his gospel, discover any affectation to outdo Matthew and Mark, in his account of *Jesus’ miracles*? Is there any show of this? He omits several mentioned by them. He mentions none they had omitted, but this, and that of the *hydropic* healed on the Sabbath in the *Pharisee’s house*. ‡ Is this a better circumstanced, i. e. bigger miracle of the kind than any reported by Matthew and Mark? If not, is it not presumption, and strong prejudice, to make this single circumstance, that the widow’s son was carrying out to his burial, when *Jairus’ daughter* only lay dead in the house, an argument, or show of an argument, that this must be Luke’s device and invention?

But, “this being not so great a miracle as the church wanted, John, when nobody was alive to contradict, or expostulate with him for it, trumps up a long story of a thumping miracle, in *Jesus’ raising Lazarus*, who had not only been dead, but buried so long that he stunk again.” § And summing up this argument in the next page, “the three historians visibly strive to outstretch each other. The first is

* P. 10.

† Ibid.

‡ Luke xiv. beg.

§ P. 10.

modest and sparing in his romance. The second, being sensible of the insufficiency of the former's tale, devises a miracle of a bigger size; which still not proving sufficient for the end proposed, the third, rather than his prophet's honour should sink, forges a story of a monstrously huge one;—or, as Mr. Woolston has it elsewhere, “a most illustrious one;”* “an huge and superlatively great one;”† “a miracle of miracles.”‡

But how comes the church to be in want of another miracle?—the Galileans had found their account, it seems, in the first, that *miracle* and *no miracle*; and Luke had invented one better circumstanced, which sure must turn to more account. Why then still in want? Another might do them farther service, indeed, but the want appears not. But taking his word for it, what then? Why John, “when nobody was alive to contradict or expostulate with him for it:” how so? Mr. Woolston says, John wrote “sixty years after our Lord's ascension;”§ admit it, and sixty years and a quarter, say, after this event. Was nobody alive to contradict it now? Our bills of mortality mention sometimes two or three of ninety and upwards, dying in one week, and many more of eighty and upwards; and it is reasonable to think that out of the city more in proportion live to that age. Persons of eighty must have been twenty at the time of this event; those of ninety, thirty. It happened a little before the Jewish passover, at which all their males were obliged to attend. John tells us “six days before the passover many Jews resorted to Bethany, to see Jesus and Lazarus;”|| and when Jesus next day made his public entrance into Jerusalem, “multitudes went out to meet him, for that they heard he had done this miracle.”¶ Jerusalem must now begin to fill, at least, with Jews and proselytes, to observe this feast. An event so timed, must have been known to the whole body of the Jews. And had it been invention, must sixty years after have been contradicted by thousands**

* P. 6.

† P. 7.

‡ Ibid.

§ P. 6.

|| John xii. 9.

¶ Ver. 18.

** The bill of mortality from December 9, 1729, to December 15, 1730, amounts to 26,701, of which 779 are above 80, about the 35th part of the whole. According to this calculation, if all the males of the Jews be counted but at 1,500,000, there must have been above

still alive, who from their own knowledge could, and from their hatred to the religion of Jesus would have done it. It must therefore have been plain honest fact, not to be contradicted.

But John “now trumps up a thumping miracle of Lazarus’ resurrection, who had been so long buried as to stink again.” It is the thumpingness, the monstrously huge size of this miracle, that is the sole foundation of his close reasoning and pertinent banter on this head. “So that, to prove this story false and fabulous, no more needs be said, but that it comes last,”* for that it is so thumping an one. It need not be observed, that John nowhere else shows any design to heighten his Master’s character, by making report of superlative miracles. Two he reports mentioned by former evangelists: that of Jesus walking on the sea, and feeding “five thousand with five barley loaves and two fishes.”† Does he say any more of these than they had done? If his purpose had been, in fabulous invention, to outstretch former reporters, could he not have diminished the number of loaves, and multiplied the number of eaters? Four miracles he reports which the others had omitted; of which that of turning water into wine‡ is perhaps the very least of all Jesus’ miracles. Those of the nobleman’s son,§ the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda,|| and the blind man,¶ are no such superlative miracles, compared with those the rest report; why then should he be supposed, in the single history of Lazarus, to rack his invention for a superlatively great resurrection miracle? Is this fact or fancy, reasonable supposition or presumption?

And if we attend to the miracles themselves, there is no such

40,000 living, who at the time of this event, or shortly after, must have been at Jerusalem, and either seen or heard of Jesus’s public entry, and the circumstances; and supposing half their males cut off, in the ensuing wars, above 20,000. And these being dispersed, on the dissolution of their state, must give force to this consideration: A thousand who could contradict this invention, when dispersed through the Roman empire, and other adjoining countries, being capable of doing the reporters more mischief, than many thousands pent up within the bounds of Judea.

* P. 11.

† John vi.

‡ Ch. ii.

§ Ch. iv. 46, &c.

|| Ch. v. 1—10.

¶ Ch. ix.

huge disproportion in them as he here affects to set forth. Jairus' daughter is raised, indeed, not long after she expired; the widow's son, as carrying out to his burial; and Lazarus after he had been buried four days, which according to the phraseology of the New Testament, as himself observes, might be only three nights and two days.* This is the plain, naked fact; is there any appearance that Luke or John, in these relations, strained their inventions to make up the deficiency in Matthew and Mark, by a resurrection miracle of a bigger size, even a monstrously huge one? The raising the second, who hardly yet stank, could not, even in the low conceptions of the vulgar, appear a matter of much greater difficulty than raising the first, supposing her dead; nor that of Lazarus than this, upon the same supposition, though he began to putrefy. Three or four days can make no such change in bodies so lately dead, as that the raising one should, to any conception, vulgar or unvulgar, appear a monstrously huge miracle, compared with the other.

If these be fables, not facts, mere inventions on the insufficiency of former tales, I should easily believe, not only John but Luke too in his dotage. He was a physician, and so of liberal education. When Matthew now had told a tale of a resurrection-miracle that was under size, and Luke was to tell another better circumstanced, that is, of bigger and juster size, that he should hit on no more lucky a one than that of the widow's son, as insignificant a boy as she was a girl, and dead but two or three days longer, must argue him a man of a very poor invention, a mere bungler at romancing.

But, say he was more upon his guard, and must not stretch too far, for fear of contradiction, that John, who was to outdo Luke by a miracle of miracles, should only tell us the story of Lazarus, not above four days longer dead than the widow's son, proves him a dotard, as to *story-telling* indeed. His invention was surely past age, perfectly effete, or he might have told us, since "no soul alive could contradict him, the Jewish state was dissolved, and all their records destroyed," (as his Rabbi has it,†) of one raised, who had

* P. 30.

† P. 53. Luke viii.

been dead forty years, whose very bones, as well as flesh, were crumbled to dust, and this an useful magistrate too, and have brought together, not only the magistrates of a town, but the whole Jewish sanhedrim, nay the whole body of their males, at one of their three feasts, and have had the feat done in the view of them all. How much more superlative a miracle had we had, if John's withered, decrepit invention had been assisted in his biography, by the facetious Mr. Woolston?

No, it is manifest these relations are of plain facts, where invention had nothing to do. Things are told as they were, without considering whether the miracles were greater or less, or which, for its size, should go first; nay Luke, as if on purpose to confute this suggestion of Mr. Woolston and his infidel and Rabbi, tells Matthew's story over again, and that in the very next chapter, after he had invented that of the widow's son,* because the former was under size. Had he herein strained his invention to the uttermost, that when he had a mind to tell two resurrection stories, he should come over again with Matthew's diminutive one of the raising Jairus' daughter? Mr. Woolston and his infidel, it is manifest, were not in the secret. And this dead-doing argument, which had escaped all infidels till the sagacious Mr. Woolston, is as harmless as a popgun. I cannot but think he would have invented a miracle more to his purpose, had that indeed been his purpose, which Mr. Woolston and his infidel suggest, and not have told us the story of Matthew over again, which he apprehended under-size.

But that Mr. Woolston should make such a flourish with this cogent objection is somewhat unnatural, if anything could be monstrous in such a writer. If there be anything in a future remark of his, this monstrously huge miracle is no miracle at all.† It has hardly the appearance of one. "Lazarus had not been long enough buried, to put it out of doubt that he was dead."‡ These three miracles, if he is to be believed, are questionable, and differ no more than "one in a swoon;" § one "carried out to burial before he is dead;"|| and "one voluntarily shut up in a cave, as long as he might live there

* P. 53. Luke viii. † Rem. 4. ‡ P. 26. § P. 27. || P. 28.

without food.”* Nay, the two last may differ no more than one “consenting to be carried out as a dead man, though alive,” and another “consenting to be interred alive in a cave, either with food, or as long as he could live fasting.” Is it not monstrously probable now, that these two last resurrection-miracles should be invented, because the first was under-size; when they differ so little, and neither appears a real miracle at all? And this superlative one is, in his account, the very least of the three. The girl he allows might be in a trance or fit. The widow’s son might be in a lethargy, and taken for dead. But Lazarus was only shut up in a cave alive. Or taking it in his other turn, the two supplemental miracles are inferior to the first, being only tricks of persons alive, mere counterfeits, whereas the first had some such appearance.†

Mr. Woolston has given full conviction by this contradictory tattle, that neither Luke nor John understood the biography of heroes. They had very heavy heads for fable. What! not be able to frame one story, of an unquestionable resurrection-miracle? When there were more trials of skill than one, to invent a greater than the first, and then one monstrously greater than that; and yet after all hammer out nothing that appears like undoubted miracle? Such dull fellows might possibly tell a tale of what themselves had seen or heard reported by others; but doubtless never took pen in hand to write down their own inventions. Or if they had so little sense as to commit them to writing, such *dull, senseless, fable*, one would think, should have made them as much the common jest of mankind, as they are now of the smart and ludicrous Mr. Woolston. But that such fable should make its way into the world against all the wit and learning of old Greece and Rome, and that favoured by the powers of the world, and settle itself not only throughout Judea and the East, but the whole Roman empire, and be received as undoubted fact by such multitudes of all ranks, is, in his Rabbi’s language, “improbable, incredible, and impossible.” Mr. Woolston therefore is mistaken in making these resurrection-miracles fable, or he is very weak in endeavouring afterward to make them

* P. 29.

† P. 28.

no miracles, or he must make sots and fools of all mankind that could not see through the forgery, and set such heavy, senseless, barefaced, imposture in the view of the world, and crush it in its rise.

When he therefore says, "That had three historians of Mahomet reported these miracles of him, in this disorder of time, you Christians would have argued against them in just the same manner," (I thought this argument had escaped the sagacity of all past infidels till Mr. Woolston; how should it ever enter into Christian heads!) "and concluded them forgery and imposture! And there is not a judicious critic in the universe, but would approve the argument, and applaud the force of it;"* this is only a specimen of the man's *consummate modesty*. Indeed, on the first starting it, some Christians might possibly be pleased with it. There is a bias in all men towards their own party, a partiality to themselves, and prejudice against opposers, which may make sophistry appear like sound reasoning, till it is seen through. But does he think, that if Mahometans had the same good opinion, upon as good grounds, of these historians, as Christians have of the evangelists, that one man of sense among them would, upon this single circumstance, believe the report forgery? Is there one Arabian critic (and many amongst them have in times past been very judicious writers) that will "approve the argument," or "applaud the force of it?" Not one, I dare say, any more than Christians do, as he uses it. The *judicious critics*, in the *universe of infidels* may, perhaps approve and applaud it; but if they do, it is not from their deep judgment, but their bias in favour of their party, as, from what has been said abundantly appears.

His talk of Clemens' "incredible story of the resurrection of a phoenix,"† is at best a piece of trifling impertinence, and what has nothing to do with his argument. Does Clemens' story of the phoenix stand upon the same foot with the resurrection stories in the gospel? Does he report this story from his own knowledge, or as what he had heard from eye-witnesses? If he gave into the belief of a story, so commonly believed in his time, though since known to be false, is

* Pp. 11, 12.

† P. 12.

that any argument that the evangelists tell false stories, of which themselves and thousands besides were eye-witnesses, or which they had from the faithful report of others? If Mr. Woolston produces this as argument, it proves nothing but his unmeasurable confidence. If not, it is ridiculous impertinence.

SECTION II.

MR. WOOLSTON'S SECOND REMARK CONSIDERED.

A second remark Mr. Woolston makes to show the absurdity, &c., of the literal story of these miracles, is, "That we hear nothing more of these raised persons in the evangelical or ecclesiastical story, neither how long they lived nor of what use they were in the world." What then? "Is not this enough to make us suspect"—(I hope all the suspicions of infidels are not arguments)—"their stories to be mere romance or parable? We must have heard somewhat of their station and conservation in the world had they been indeed raised."* Is this argument now, or presumption given out with daring confidence? What has their after-life to do with the miracle of their resurrection? Might they not be raised for the present proof of Jesus' divine power and mission, though no more is said of them in his history?

But, says he, "Epiphanius found it among the traditions; that Lazarus lived thirty years afterward; that in reason and gratitude to Jesus his benefactor, he should have spent his time to his honour, in the service of the church and propagation of the gospel. Had it been so employed, history, surely, would have informed us of it. But hereof it says nothing."† What then? Perhaps there was no more in Epiphanius' traditional story of Lazarus, than in Clemens' of the phoenix. Or possibly he did not thus spend his time; what then?—therefore he was not raised! Is this argument or presumption again? Must Jesus heal none, raise none, but such as proved grateful for the favour, and careful to make fit returns? Was it no miracle without this? If it were, is

* P. 15.

† P. 16.

it now any reason to disbelieve the miracle, because we have no report of such returns? It is plain from the history some were ungrateful. Of the “ten lepers cleansed at once, only one returned to thank Jesus, and he a Samaritan.”* Or is it to be thought that all the multitudes healed by him were duly concerned for his honour and the propagation of the gospel, because they were in reason and gratitude bound to do it? Do men then always act as in reason and gratitude bound? I doubt Mr. Woolston is not at present acting this reasonable and grateful part, how much soever he “abhor the thought that Jesus’ favours should be lost on undeserving persons.”† This surely does not lessen the favour:—“God makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall on the good and evil, just and unjust.” And what absurdity is there in supposing that Jesus, in dispensing his favours, should resemble his heavenly Father?

But suppose all three,—Lazarus, the widow’s son, and Jairus’ daughter (of which two we meet with nothing among the traditions)—were grateful, and did what in reason they ought. What then? Must apostolical men neglect their proper and more important business, to write memoirs of private persons’ lives? For what end? That they might hereby procure the belief that such were healed and raised. Was this any way needful? It seems so. Why? This “silence about them makes the miracles questionable, and like Gulliverian tales of persons and things, that, out of the romance, never had a being.”‡ Is not this a very decent comparison, and at the same time exceeding just? The gospel that gives a particular account of the life of Jesus, the place and time of his birth, viz. the country of Judea and town of Bethlehem, in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, when Cyrenius or Quirinius was governor of Syria, &c., and as particular an account of the places and times of his public ministry and death,—is this a history like “a Gulliverian tale, of persons and things that no where exist out of the romance?” Or because the names and places of abode of all healed by Jesus appear not on record, is the history of their healing a Gulliverian insertion? Or because we meet

* Luke xvii. 17, 18.

† P. 17.

‡ Ibid.

not with an after-account in history, of them whose names are there mentioned and places of abode too, are these Gulliverian tales? If Caesar in his Commentaries mentions any heads of countries in Gaul or Britain, of whom we read nothing in after-history, does this argue that his account must be a Gulliverian tale? What ruin would this make in the credit of history? But if the history of these miracles is not to be believed on the credit of the evangelists, on what must the credit of these corroborating relations depend? Has not Mr. Woolston as much right to call these after-reports Gulliverian tales, as the former? And will the telling a dozen Gulliverian tales establish the credit of that history, which deserves none if it reports but one?

But "one would have expected that Lazarus and the widow's son should have been eminent ministers of the gospel."* Admit this reasonable. How knows he that they were not? "Because ecclesiastical history has made no such report."† But was there no eminent minister of whose life and labours we have no account in this history? Himself owns "the ecclesiastical history of the apostolical age is very scanty."‡ The evangelical story gives no account at all of many of the apostles' labours. Must it hence be concluded they did no service for the church, or propagating the gospel? I doubt not but the seventy were all eminent ministers, yet ecclesiastical story has hardly preserved their names, and hardly gives any account of their labours.

But, "In the wisdom of providence, one would think, more remembrance should have been left of one or all these persons."§ Why? "Because such a remembrance of them would nowadays no less gain the belief of these miracles, than this silence tend to the discredit of them." I am not sure of this. This silence, it seems, tends to their discredit, with Mr. Woolston. I question whether he would have been gained to their belief by such remembrance. He would have hit off, by his lucky invention, absurdities in these literal stories as well as in that of the gospel. The "wisdom of providence" seems no way concerned to gain such persons' belief of the miracle, by after-reports of this kind. The credit of the

* P. 17.

† Ibid.

‡ P. 18.

§ Ibid.

miracle is already sufficiently secured. This must rest on the veracity of the reporter, and the evidence we have for it. If after-memoirs are not written by persons of equal veracity, or of whose veracity we have not equal evidence, how should they strengthen our belief of the miracle? Could not Mr. Woolston tell us these were Gulliverian tales, fresh romances to support the credit of the former? And how was the "wisdom of providence" concerned to humour such unbelievers? Divine wisdom has made no provision of this sort, nor shown such concern to gain their belief. It has taken care that the miracles should have evidence sufficient to satisfy all reasonable men. And for those who are not, it is content to leave them to themselves, and shows a becoming neglect of them herein.

Had Mr. Woolston any leavings of shame in him, I would here put him in mind of his gross abuse of Grotius, even according to his own citation, when he makes him opine that "for the rest of his life Lazarus skulked about for fear of the Jews;"* and this for the sake of some low banter. Whereas Grotius, who is giving a reason why Matthew and Mark might omit the story of Lazarus, says no more nor less than this, that "when they wrote, Lazarus was still living, and there might arise danger to him from the Jews, were his story published, as they did lay snares for him on the resort to him and Jesus after his resurrection."† Not one word is dropped by Grotius of his skulking about the country, or absconding. Can any writer, using such base arts, or rather indeed that is so barefaced a falsifier, be a credit to any cause?

But why must "it have been expected Lazarus and the widow's son should have been eminent ministers?" Perhaps their living privately at home might have been as much for the honour and service of Christianity. Whilst one lived at Bethany and the other at Nain, such as doubted of the truth of the apostles' report might have repaired or sent thither,

* P. 16.

† "Mihī hoc succurrit: cum illi scriberent vixisse Lazarum, ac periculum ei fuisse a Judæis, si quod illi acciderat palam vulgaretur. Nam etiam ut mox narratur c. xii. 10. ob hoc ipsum structas ei insidias." GROTIUS in *John xi.*

and known whether such persons were living there, and had been raised from the dead. They were upon the spot, to confirm the truth, or confront false reports. But if no such persons were there to be found, would not this at once have ruined the credit of the miracle with such sagacious unbelievers as Mr. Woolston?

And was he to be consulted, who were most fit to make ministers of the gospel? Might not divine wisdom think these persons fit to be raised, and yet others more fit to be made ministers? Were not others as fit at least, if not more fit, to be made reporters of their resurrection than themselves? Or who was to judge what was fit for him to do,—Jesus or Mr. Woolston,—divine wisdom or his wisdom?

And does he not, in his very “next remark,” tell us, “Jesus should have raised persons of more importance than these.”* “An useful magistrate, an industrious merchant, the head of a family.”† Why? “Because these were of more consequence to the public;” where they abode, he must mean. Had this been done, would Mr. Woolston have expected that these too should have been “eminent ministers of the gospel?” Such expectations had been founded on the same, or even better reasons. Should not these have been equally grateful, and concerned for Jesus’ honour? Should not Mr. Woolston have as much “abhorred the thought, that such a favour should have been lost on persons undeserving?” Would not such worthy persons have been as proper, if not more so for the office, as the obscure Lazarus? &c.

But had they been such ministers, they would have been as improperly raised, as those Jesus did raise. They had been of no more consequence to the public. They would not have gained Jesus’ love, therefore, “as a benefactor to mankind.” They must have quitted their useful stations, and gone about spreading the gospel. And where then had been the credit of the miracle?

But if they might have stayed at home, without impairing the credit of the miracle, or being ungrateful, though they became not ministers, so might these. But perhaps had Jesus raised such as Mr. Woolston thinks proper, he would not

* P. 23.

† P. 24.

have expected their being “eminent ministers,” but since he raised such as he deems improper, he has lost all his credit with him, for not making them ministers, and taking care that the history of their ministry should be recorded. And I will venture to say, Jesus and his religion would have had little credit from him, had he been humoured so far as to be made his disciple, even in his own way.

SECTION III.

MR. WOOLSTON’S THIRD REMARK CONSIDERED.

A “third remark” of Mr. Woolston is, “that these three persons were improper ones to have been raised by Jesus, nay, according to the letter, almost the most improper that he could have exercised his power upon. It was not indeed necessary he should raise all that died wherever he came. Two or three instances of his almighty power in this kind” will be allowed, it seems, “sufficient. But out of the great numbers that died during his ministry, he should wisely and judiciously have chosen out the most fit.”* Two or three such instances we have,—enough even by his allowance. But the story of their resurrection is *incredible*. Why? Because Jesus “has not made a wise and judicious choice of the subjects of his reviving power.” Why? “These were not the most fit for him to exercise this power upon.” But supposing them not the most fit, yet if they were fit subjects, how does this impair the credit of the miracle? Suppose Mr. Woolston had been present when Lazarus was raised, and had thought it more proper for Jesus to have raised one of the “civil magistrates” † of Bethany, who had been longer dead, would he not therefore have believed his own eyes? If he would, why should he not believe the miracle now, on the report of an honest eye-witness? If not, he is an incurable unbeliever.

But why may not a divine messenger, vested with divine powers, be a judge himself who are the most proper subjects on whom to display his reviving powers? Or must his judgment be conformable to Mr. Woolston’s? Suppose he should

* P 20.

† Rabbi’s Lett. p. 51.

judge those very proper, perhaps most so, which Mr. Woolston, and such wise men as he, so very wise in their own conceits, think less proper, or downright improper? What then? Then, it seems, they will not believe the miracle. Then they must even let it alone. Must Jesus please their unaccountable humour, or else be looked on as a juggler? Is not the consequence unavoidable?

And why are these so very improper? Why, "Jairus' daughter was an insignificant girl of but twelve years old."* Be it so,—her resurrection was as significant, as plain a proof of Jesus' divine power, and attestation to his mission, as if she had been a woman of thirty. And this was the main end of Jesus' working miracles.

But says he, "there could be no reason for raising her, but to wipe tears from the eyes and sorrow from the hearts of her sorrowful parents, who should have been better philosophers than to have immoderately grieved for her."† I will suppose he means, besides the forementioned display and attestation; and that by *no reason* he means no reason for such display of, &c., on her, but this. And what if Jesus, out of compassion to the sorrowful parents, was influenced to take this occasion of displaying his powers, was it not an instance of his great tenderness and humanity? Or would it have been more becoming the character of a worker of miracles to have appeared destitute of all such things? Yes, "for the parents should have been better philosophers, than to have immoderately grieved for her death." Allow it, men do not always act the philosophers when they ought,—or Mr. Woolston would not so often act out of character. Indeed, the cynical arrogance, and the democritical grin, the *facilis cuius censura cachinni*, the impertinent laugh, so easy even to the most vulgar, appear everywhere, as the unsympathizing stoic does here. But if the parents had not philosophy enough to put due bounds to their grief, must Jesus play the insensible philosopher, show no compassion, nor give any relief? Yes. "A lecture of patience and resignation had been enough. Their grief was not sufficient reason for his interposing with his almighty power." Admit it. Might not

* P. 21.

† Ibid

Jesus, from a perfect knowledge of time, place, persons, and all circumstances, have reason to judge this a proper occasion to show both his humane compassion and his divine power? Some circumstances offer themselves to us, at this distance, which make the occasion very proper. The father applies to Jesus, entreating him to come and heal his dying child. He is a ruler of a synagogue. Such application from such a person was very unusual. And he thinks fit hereupon to break off his discourses, and the business he was about, and goes with him. In the way a message is brought that the child is dead. What now should Jesus do? Go on, and read the parents “a lecture of patience on this mournful occasion?” Interrupt his public business for this, which was more properly the business of friends, at least of more private persons? He was come so far to heal, as the multitude knew. Should he return *re infecta*? Did it not rather become him to show his power to revive, since he was come too late to heal? Was not the opportunity very pat for showing, both to Jairus and the multitude, that he had power to raise the dead, as well as heal the sick? And if a regard to Jairus’ rank and station brought him thus far, to give him a conviction of his divine power, in healing his sick daughter, what more proper than, on the news of her death, to go on, and in pursuit of this purpose, raise her to life? And how fitly does he, on this view, tell the father, that he should “not fear, only believe.”* But “the widow’s son was a youth too, a νεανίσκος, perhaps no older than the girl; but his life was certainly of no more importance to the world, after, than before his resurrection.”† This man has certainly a superlative assurance. He pronounces certainly in matters of which he can know nothing. But he goes on, “Why had he this honour done him, before others of greater age, worth, and use to mankind,”‡ This will presently be considered. “Some will say, for the comfort of his sorrowful mother. And is this reason sufficient? A discourse on the pleasures of Abraham’s bosom, where she would ere long meet her son, was enough to cheer her heart.” Therefore Jesus should not have raised her son, but only talked to her of the pleasures.

* Mark v. 36.

† P. 21.

‡ P. 22.

of "Abraham's bosom," where she should shortly meet him. But how does he know that the son was gone thither, or the mother would follow? Would he have had Jesus, as well as himself, make a jest of "Abraham's bosom," or talk as impertinently as he, rather than raise a dead youth, an only son, for the comfort of a sorrowful mother? I cannot understand the make of this man. He is such a composition of criticism, allegory, philosophy, and grimace, that nothing of the tender enters into his constitution. He is all apathy to persons in distress, and so full of himself, as to think every great character must be deeply tinctured with the same dulness and insensibility.

But whatever his own taste be, he will never persuade the good-natured part of mankind that Jesus had acted a more becoming part, in drolling on the pleasures of "Abraham's bosom," than by taking such an occasion, as here casually offered, to show his divine power in raising the dead, and his great humanity and compassion to a disconsolate widow, now made more forlorn by the death of her only son. The state of such is very comfortless in itself, and what renders them in a peculiar manner objects of divine compassion and protection;—(his Rabbi can point him to many passages of the Old Testament, where this in the letter is very plain)—this widow is a second time destitute by the loss of her only son. And though perhaps as a *philosophess*, she should have wiped all tears from her eyes, yet as a *tender mother*, having more of what the poet calls *nostræ pars optima sensus*, human and maternal affection, she doubtless followed the corpse all drowned in tears. If, as the same poet observes,

"Naturæ imperio gemimus cum funus adultæ
Virginis occurrit."—JUV. STAT. xv.

"Nature extorts a groan whene'er we meet
The funeral of a maid for wedlock fit;"

Had not she been unnatural to feel none of this impulse, when following the corpse of her only son, not yet so much matured? And was not her case proper to move compassion? And did not the Son of God look like himself when, on the offer of such an occasion, he imitates his Father, and

commiserates the widow, in this very sorrowful plight and distressed state?

It is likely there were not many critics or philosophers at the funeral, and very likely not one Merry-Andrew. But, I dare say, every one present thought the raising the dead child a very godlike act, not only on account of the divine power exerted, but the tenderness, mercy and compassion manifested in it. But

“Lazarus was indeed Jesus’ friend. This is a better reason for raising him,” than those he has assigned for raising the other two. “But supposing Jesus was to raise but three persons”—(which yet he has no right to suppose)—“this reason is not sufficient against the cases of many others that may be put.” Sufficient for what? “For the manifestation of his power, illustration of his wisdom and goodness, and the conversion of unbelievers.”* If by manifestation and illustration is meant making more show of his power and goodness, such cases may perhaps be put, but whether this had been more becoming his character, will presently be considered. What he means by the conversion of unbelievers, I do not understand.

If he means making such creatures as himself professors of any religion, it had hardly been for the illustration of Jesus’ wisdom to have accommodated himself to their taste and humour. Their conversion would have done little honour to his religion. Such a ludicrous humour, such a propensity to inordinate laughter, on the most unnatural subjects, and on the most impertinent occasions, would have little suited the spirit of his religion. And such merry fellows, however they might appear among critics and philosophers, would have made but a very odd figure among grave and serious Christians. Nor can I think Jesus wrought miracles for the conversion of such, that is, to induce them to profess his religion; which is all this man seems to mean by it. He offered evidence enough to convince such as were reasonable; but if any were obstinately unreasonable and humorsome, it was fit they should be left to themselves.

Jesus had to do with some such whilst on earth. His

* P. 22.

conduct towards them, to me, illustrates his wisdom, though he takes no such measures for their conversion. "The Pharisees and Sadducees come to him, and" (notwithstanding his many wondrous works, done in all places, before thousands, and in view of many even of them) "desire he would show them a sign from heaven."* Such, say, as raining manna, or some preternatural appearance in the air. Now the gratifying them, in Mr. Woolston's language, would "have begotten the applause and wonder of the world, and most extensively spread Jesus' fame." But he humours them not. He shows no concern for their conversion, but sees through, and lays open their hypocrisy. "When it is evening, ye say it will be fair weather, &c.—Ye *hypocrites*, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" *q. d.* "Must miracles be fitted to your own taste and humour ere you will believe? Nor would you believe were you so indulged, but expect to be humoured farther." The hypocrisy is very discernible.

But hitherto he has been only skirmishing. Now are we to understand why these three were more improper to be raised, than many other cases that might be put. "An insignificant boy and girl, and the obscure Lazarus, should not have been raised by him preferably to such public and more deserving persons. The doing this is perfectly unaccountable."† What public and more deserving persons? Why, "an useful magistrate, whose life had been a common blessing; an industrious merchant whose death was a public loss; a father of a numerous family, which for a comfortable subsistence depended on him."‡ But because Jesus made so preposterous and injudicious a preference, therefore the whole narration is improbable, incredible, absurd,—Jesus raised none from the dead at all. Q. E. D.

But how does it appear that wisdom required Jesus to prefer, such as he would have had him raise, to those the evangelists report, and Christians believe he did? "Why, he raised the dead not only to manifest his own power and glory"—(nor at all in a way of ostentation and vain-glory)—"but his love to mankind, and his inclination to do them

* Matt. xvi. beg.

† P. 25.

‡ P. 24.

good. For which reason his miracles are useful and beneficial, as well as stupendous and supernatural; to conciliate men's affections, as well as their faith. On this topic our divines are copious and rhetorical, as if no more useful or wonderful works could be done than what he did."* And what more useful works could have been done than "healing the sick, casting out devils, giving speech to the dumb, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and legs to the lame, and preaching the gospel to the poor?" or more wonderful than raising the dead?—and this without sending any away who came to him, however poor and mean their condition, without help and relief? And sometimes taking occasion, when it came fairly in his way, to do such works, without waiting for such application. And can the beneficence of one "who went about doing this good" be too copiously or rhetorically displayed? But hear him: "And I do agree with them, what reason bespeaks."† What is it reason bespeaks, and that so plainly, that he will agree with divines on it? "That the miracles of a pretended auctor of religion ought to be both as great and useful as well could be." What he means does not at once appear. Most men would think the wondrous works of Jesus, as before mentioned, were such.

"No, such were not Jesus' miracles, and least of all his raising the dead."‡ Why? Can any work be well greater than raising the dead, in the account either of the vulgar or philosophers? Such a philosopher as Pliny, if I mistake not, thought it out of divine power *revocare defunctos*, "to call the dead back into life." He would have thought, to be sure, that raising the dead was as great a work as well could be. And Mr. Woolston himself allows the raising such, if indisputably dead, a stupendous miracle. § And a miracle, in his account stupendous, reason bespeaks should pass for a work as great as well could be. Reason and Mr. Woolston and we then seem agreed, as to the greatness of these works; but we seem to differ whether they were as good as could be.

"For if we consider the persons raised by him, we shall find he could hardly have exerted his power on any of less importance to the world, both before and after their resur-

* P. 23.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

§ P. 3.

rection.”* Persons of no consequence to the world either before or since! Where is this to be found? Mr. Woolston has complained that neither the evangelical nor ecclesiastical story says any thing of them. It is not to be found there. Has his Rabbi helped him to any of the Jewish records that were destroyed ere the invention of this story? Or has he met with it in any Gulliverian tales? Is he not a man of singular modesty? But he has found what is nowhere to be found.

But how does it appear these were persons of so very little consequence? Indeed neither of them was an useful magistrate, industrious merchant, or head of a numerous family. But the girl was the daughter of a ruler of a synagogue, and so a man of some rank, and the daughter might become, for anything he knows, the mother of a family, and have great numbers depending on her for a comfortable subsistence.

The widow of Nain was no contemptible person, as is plain from “the much people” attending her son to his grave. And she herself, with her son’s assistance, might be as useful a person at Nain as an industrious merchant in a trading city. Merchandise was not the business of Jews. They had few ports, and little foreign traffic. Tilling land, and feeding and breeding cattle, were their chief employments. And a wealthy farmer might be as useful a man amongst them as a merchant in London, *cæteris paribus*. So that this youth, considering the help he might give his mother in her business, might be a person of as much importance as any at Nain, for ought he knows.

Nor was Lazarus, though a friend of Jesus, (with which this grinning unbeliever makes himself so merry,) that despicable wretch he would pass him for. It is plain, from many circumstances, this was a family of some note. The entertainment frequently made by it for Jesus and his apostles, and resort of the Jews to condole with his sisters, † prove it. The “box of precious ointment” with which Mary anointed Jesus’ feet, which Judas said “might have been sold for three hundred Roman pence,” ‡ even though he be supposed to

* P. 23.

† John xi. 19.

‡ John xii. 5. Between nine and ten pounds sterling.

stretch a little, evidences it to be a family of some considerable wealth. If the sister had substance, sufficient for so expensive a piece of respect, the brother may well be supposed no worthless man, even according to Mr. Woolston's way of estimation; and if he were not the father of a family, might have been as useful a man, and have as numerous dependents.

And supposing some persons of more worth, in his sense, might have been raised than either, must Jesus raise none from the dead, whilst there were any more useful among those who died during his ministry? None but the most useful. Had he raised a useful magistrate, though he had been selected at the recommendation of the people of any place, might not this unlucky man, with as much reason have told us, he chose a very improper person for this exercise of his power; for that, doubtless, there were persons of much more importance than he, that died during Jesus' ministry? Nay, had this been the magistrate of any city, except Jerusalem the capital; nay, any magistrate there, but one of the sanhedrim, and he the most useful of them all; there had been still the same reason for cavil, and just the same reason for accounting the whole story absurd, &c.

But "an useful magistrate, an industrious, &c., had been the most proper for him to raise, if he meant to be as useful as he could."* But what if, in Mr. Woolston's sense, he did not mean to be as useful as he could, nor in any sense to do good to the utmost of his power; was he not then fit to be the author of a religion? It seems Mr. Woolston thinks so; or else his consequence is very wrong. But if this is a wrong thought, then he might be the author of a religion, and work miracles to attest his authority, though they were not the most useful he could do. And those in the gospel may be credited, though he did not raise the most important persons to life that in his time could be raised.

And Mr. Woolston seems quite out, in the proper business of the author of a religion. The spiritual weal of mankind was what, in this character, Jesus had in view. And to teach them a spiritual religion, suitable to the nature both of God and man, was his business. His miraculous powers were

but instruments to forward this design. By these, his divine authority and mission were to be attested; and among the rest by his "raising the dead." But even in prosecuting this design, he was not to do the utmost good he could, or the utmost good that could be done. He might have made a conquest of every heart that heard him; for who can doubt whether this were within the reach of divine power? But his religion was to be settled in the world in a way more accommodated to the state of man;—in a way of rational instruction and conviction, such as might leave room for choice. And it was to be embraced upon proper motives and considerations. Fit it was, that he who came on so useful an errand, furnished with miraculous powers, should employ his divine power in acts of external beneficence, to display the benignity of both himself and his religion,—and those in the general the most useful that could be, if Mr. Woolston pleases. But not that, in every particular instance, he was to consider if there were not some other person in being, on whom his power might be more usefully employed. This I am sure must have left room for endless cavil. And himself was fittest to judge on whom the power was to be displayed. If he had not discretion for this purpose, he was not fit to be intrusted with such full powers. And Christians will think it much more reasonable to argue, Jesus did raise such persons, therefore they were proper for him to exercise his power on, than the contrary way into which Mr. Woolston has fallen. He had a full view of his own design, and fully knew what was proper for him to do, which, it is no presumption to say, Mr. Woolston does not, nor can know; and it is the height of presumption in him to pretend to it. And to define with that confidence he does, on such presumption, may humour his own vanity, and pleasure thoughtless infidels, but must shock all men of sense and sobriety.

But "The raising such persons would have begotten the applause, as well as wonder of the world; and must extensively have spread Jesus' fame, and have gained him the love and discipleship of all who heard of his being such a benefactor to mankind. This had proved him a most benign as well as mighty agent. And none in interest or prejudice could have opened their mouths against him, especially had the per-

sons raised been selected on the recommendation of this or that city.”* Now the secret is out. No wonder Mr. Woolston can discover so many improprieties in the miracles of Jesus. He thought he should have been “altogether such a one as himself,” who would work miracles to be stared at, and gain the esteem of the great and rich, and spread his fame. Had Jesus been covetous of human esteem and applause, or ambitious of empire and worldly dominion, or fond of flattering the fleshly prejudices of the Jews, who expected a great temporal prince in their Messiah; this had been no improper way to compass his ends. But it had been utterly unsuitable to his character, and directly counter to his true design. A minister sent from heaven to teach men deadness to the world and all its interests and glories, and raise their hearts to God and heaven, would in this way have destroyed his character and ruined his design. He would have appeared the reverse to what, by precept, example, and his miraculous powers he was to recommend to the world. Jesus’ business was not, by such pompous show of his powers, to court the rich, the great, the rulers of the world, and gain himself a name amongst them; but rather to expose himself to their scorn, contempt, and hatred, that in his own lowliness, meekness, patience, and self-denial, he might show forth the excellency and power of his religion, and by his own example recommend it. Nothing that looked like vanity, affectation or fondness for a name, was becoming him. For him to have singled out the “useful magistrate,” the “industrious merchant,” &c., the worthy persons on whom Mr. Woolston would have had him exercise his healing and reviving powers, would have had such an appearance.

His chief business as the author of a religion, was to instruct his disciples and the people in his religion, and engage them to embrace it. Working miracles was but an under-business, in subserviency to this. And they who gave attention to his doctrine, and applied to him for the exercise of his useful divine powers, were ordinarily the most worthy, that is, fit and proper persons for such exercise. Such he never refused; and very rarely took occasion to exert his

* Pp. 24, 25.

power on any others,—or if he did, it was commonly as they came in his way in the course of his other business. And persons of the meanest condition were as welcome to him as the greatest; beggars and the poor, as merchants or rulers, without any derogation, one may hope, to his benignity. And this was every way more becoming his character, than to have selected himself such worthy persons as Mr. Woolston would have had him raise, or have gone at the call of magistrates or people, to raise such as they might recommend.

Nor was the condition or rank of the person raised, any way material in the case. The raising miraculously was the proper attestation to his mission. Where that was done, this was attested. They who saw it done, should have believed it then, as they should who heard it credibly reported, and so should all now.

But when he tells us “the raising such worthy persons would have gained Jesus the love and discipleship of all who heard of his being such a benefactor to mankind, such a benign as well as mighty agent; no one in interest or prejudice would have opened their mouths against him;” he should at least have added, had they liked his doctrine and relished his religion. His benignity and benefactions had never else made them his disciples. If instead of a boy, a girl, and the obscure Lazarus, he had raised “an useful magistrate,” &c., can any, can Mr. Woolston or his Rabbi think, the scribes and Pharisees, and hireling-priests of that day would have loved him, and become his disciples? Would such instances of beneficence have prevailed with them to renounce their corrupt principles, all the honour and esteem they had with the people, all the worldly emoluments accruing to them, and pocket up all his plain-dealing with them, for their gross hypocrisy into the bargain?

Jesus had, could have, no reasonable expectations of this sort. His doctrine, he knew, could not procure many disciples,—it carried too much contrariety in it to the humours, appetites, and prevailing vices of mankind. He sought no fame, but in subserviency to his design of setting up his religion in the world. The most extensive renown for a miracle-worker, without this effect, would have been of as little esteem with him, as to have been celebrated for “an useful

magistrate" or "an industrious merchant." And if in Mr. Woolston's way he had procured more followers, and admirers of his person, what would this have signified if they did not heartily embrace his religion? Did he covet, did he seek, such disciples? From many passages in his story it is plain he did not. The honour of God, the advancement of true spiritual religion, as became a messenger from heaven, was his plain manifest design: not to procure fame by the renown of his miracles, or the great numbers and high rank of his professed followers. That the great, the noble, the wise in common esteem, should become his true disciples, he had no reason to expect. And to get renown and procure their esteem, by benefactions suited to their taste, was every way unworthy his character, and unsuitable to his design. And Mr. Woolston must grossly misunderstand both, or he would not have argued at this rate.

And had *his* method been taken, and the effect he promises followed hereupon, "and all that heard of such a benefactor been made lovers and disciples of Jesus," a main end of his coming into the world had been directly frustrated. Christians believe a chief purpose of his coming was to be made a "sacrifice for sin." How should he have been put to death as a criminal, had all men loved him, and become his disciples? If his working miracles in Mr. Woolston's way had been proper for *this* purpose, it had been improper for *his*, as running counter to this great intention of his coming into the world. This Mr. Woolston may laugh at, but those who "glory in a Christ crucified" think this a matter of too much importance to be overlooked, in the propriety of Jesus' miracles. They found their hopes of pardon and life on his death, and cannot think those miracles, or that way of working them, which would have prevented this, to have been proper for him to work or take. And if Mr. Woolston be sure of *his* consequence, *they* will infer from it that all his talk on this head is contradictory and ruinous to itself; and that how sagacious and critical soever he is pleased to represent himself, he does not really know when he is disputing for or against Jesus' religion, and the proper evidences of it.

But now "it comes into his head to ask why Jesus did not raise John the Baptist to life. A person of greater

merit, and more worthy the favour of Jesus and this miracle, could not be. And why did he not raise *him*? Was it a thing out of Jesus' power?" No certainly. "Could he not by force or persuasion have rescued John's head out of the hands of his enemies?" Yes, and without either. "And the tacking it to his body, and infusing new life into it, was not more difficult to Jesus than the resuscitation of a stinking carcass." Doubtless, nor the infusing new life into both, without tacking them at all. What then? "If Jesus had exerted his power, and raised his dearest friend and choicest minister for the preparation, if not propagation of the gospel, none could question his ability to raise others, though he had raised no more."* This is not out of doubt. Mr. Woolston knows one who could and would have questioned it, unless it had been done in his own way, upon due recommendation, and before the persons he thinks fit should have been present. He could have suggested, the head might be stolen, and the body transferred to a place unknown, that it might not be found on inquiry, and a person resembling him, a mere Perkin, trumpt up in his room. He is such an enemy to the letter, that without the mystery, this story might have been as foolish, fabulous and fictitious as any now on our records, and ruined their credit.

And why should the raising him put Jesus' ability to raise others more out of question than the raising Lazarus? I can see no reason for it, unless he must, because his head was cut off, be *more* dead, or *more certainly* dead, than one who had been four days buried, and was become a stinking carcass. If both were *equally* dead, *equal* power must be shown in their revival: and Jesus' ability to raise must, in either case, *equally* appear. I cannot therefore believe that such as, upon three miracles, will not believe Jesus' ability to raise the dead, would have reckoned this ability out of question, on the single report of his having raised John, especially since the credit of it must have rested on the veracity and authority of the same reporters.

But says he, "since Jesus did not raise him,—since one of such singular merits and services towards him was overlooked,

* P. 25.

when three such insignificant persons were raised, if the mystery helps not, their literal stories may be accounted foolish, fabulous and fictitious."* And who can doubt, if John had been raised, but the same wise accounters, without the same help, would have had this story in the same account? But does he offer any reason for this? None, unless this be one: "If Jesus could raise any from the dead, *surely* he would have raised him."† His assurance never fails, however his reasons may. But how comes he to be so sure, that if Jesus could have raised any, he would have raised John? Not because he was his friend. For if Mr. Woolston guesses right, this was no reason why Lazarus should be raised.‡ But he was his "choicest minister for the preparation of the gospel," (we will understand him, to prepare for the gospel,) and so he was, not only his "choicest minister," but at that time his sole one. This work was done, and he was gone to his reward. Should his "singular merits" towards Jesus in this service be a reason for calling him back to the troubles of life? Not with Mr. Woolston; for it "was hardly a good work in Jesus," he tells us, "to call Lazarus' soul from paradise for this purpose."§

But perhaps he had been his "choicest minister for the propagation of the gospel."|| And perhaps not. I know no reason for it offered by this author, but the chime of preparation and propagation, for the sake of which he has blundered in the sense of this passage. John's business was the preparatory ministry. Others were to be employed in propagating the gospel, and furnished with ample powers to procure them credit. Nor had John, when alive, such ample powers; nor would he have had, when revived, more ample ones. Nor could his single asseveration, that he was raised from the dead, have rendered Jesus' power to raise such more credible than the apostles' testimony to the facts they report, confirmed by their own miraculous powers and operations. His saying then, "that if Jesus could raise any, he would have raised John," is no argument of anything but his own singular confidence.

* P. 26. † P. 25. ‡ P. 24. § P. 34. || P. 26.

SECTION IV.

MR. WOOLSTON'S FOURTH REMARK CONSIDERED.

But, “none of these three had been long enough dead to amputate all doubt of Jesus’ miraculous power in their resurrection.” Why? “Jairus’ daughter was but just expired, when Jesus brought her to life again, if she was dead.”* But if she was dead, she was as much dead as she would have been at three days, three weeks, or three years’ end. “The raising one indisputably dead,” himself says, “is a stupendous miracle.” † If then she was really dead, such a stupendous miracle was wrought in her revival. But if she were *really* dead, she might not be *indisputably* so. I know not what with him is indisputable. If all about her knew her to be really dead, I should take it that it was out of dispute this was the case. No, says he, “it is not impossible that the passionate screams of feminine by-standers might frighten her into fits, that bore the appearance of death. Why otherwise did Jesus turn these inordinate weepers out of the house, before he could bring her into her senses again?” ‡ Is the man in earnest, or only pleasing himself, to lead unthinking infidels by the nose? What “feminine by-standers” should scream her into fits? Her mother or nurse, or any relations present? These, if they saw her in a swoon, might possibly give a shriek; but this was more likely to recover her out of such a state, than to throw her into it. People do not use, unless in such a case, to scream about the sick. The “inordinate weepers” who were turned out of the house ere Jesus could bring her into *her senses*, as he says, were not “feminine by-standers,” but the *αὐληταὶ* and the *ὄχλος θορυβούμενος*, the pipers and crowd attending them, who wept and wailed to their doleful music. But these were not by-standers, but in another room. Nor were these pipers admitted into any house till the person they lamented was dead,—*indisputably* dead. By the screams of such by-standers it was impossible she could be frightened

* P. 26.

† P. 3.

‡ P. 27.

into a fit, therefore; unless she might be frightened into one when dead. But say it was not utterly impossible, that yet such a wild conceit, so remote a non-impossibility, should be made the ground of such an inference, that “this, with Jesus’ telling her parents that she was only in a sleep,”—(which is also nonsense)—“is destructive of the miracle, and makes no more of it than another man might do,” shows Mr. Woolston much in haste to come at his conclusion, be the premises what they will.

He does not pretend that this fact was the result of confederacy. The girl was only in a fit or trance, and Jesus only fetched her out of it, as another man might do! How improbable, if not utterly impossible, this is, any one who attends to the series of the story may see. Here is the ruler of a synagogue coming to Jesus, and begging he would go and heal his daughter, “at the point of death,”* “dying,”† in the last extremity, when he left her, as the reports say. And it is very likely one of his rank would not come on such an errand to Jesus, till all other means failed. A crowd hear him make this application, and attend Jesus to the house. It is very likely the crowd gathers by the way. In such a throng they cannot make the utmost haste. And by the way he is interrupted by the cure of the “menstruous woman.” At the close hereof, servants bring the father word that the child is dead, and desire he would give Jesus no farther trouble, it being now too late to heal. Had not those about her known she was dead, this message had not been sent. But Jesus, knowing his power and purpose, heartens him up with the hope of a revival. When they came to the house, the pipers were already there, which shows not only that she was dead, but had been dead some time. And this is the reason of their laughing Jesus to scorn, on his saying, “she is not dead, but sleepeth;” understanding him of proper sleep, as Mr. Woolston affects to do. These circumstances make it manifest that she was really dead, indisputably so. And

It is as manifest Jesus supposed her dead, both before his coming to the house, and after he was entered. When the

* ἰσχυρότος ἔχει. Mark v. 23.

† ἀπέθνησκεν. Luke viii. 42.

servants met their master with the report that she was dead, to prevent his coming forward, it is plain the family had no expectation of her revival. But Jesus tells the father, he should "not fear, but only believe." If he were an arrant juggler, as Mr. Woolston would represent him, how could he pronounce with such assurance? If she were dead, and he had no power to revive, he run a desperate risk of ruining his credit by such presumption. And how should he know she was only in a fit? Not from the father's first report, who brings word she was dying. Not by the servants' second report, who bring word she is dead. What secret intelligence can he be supposed to have? Had he spies in the family, more sagacious than all the girl's friends, who could perceive she was only in a fit, when they thought her stark dead? He does not talk here like a juggler, but a miracle-worker, who knew that the child was dead, and that he had power to raise her, when he goes on with this assurance to do it. When he comes into the house, and finds the pipers and their wailing tribe, he tells them, "she is not dead, but sleepeth;" by which he could not mean proper sleep, having not yet seen or inquired about her, nor been in the room where she lay,—but plainly means, that though she was dead, he would raise her. Otherwise to talk with such assurance upon the groundless presumption she was only in a fit, of which he could have no information or certainty, if he were a juggler, would prove him no cunning one. So that it is highly reasonable to believe she was dead; nor was there any need that, for the sake of an indisputable miracle, she should have been buried some days or weeks.

As to the widow of Nain's son, he says, "there was more appearance of death. He was carried forth to his burial, and so may be presumed to be really a dead corpse. But might there be no mistake?"* Impertinence! Has he any evidence to set against this report, or show this was the case? No, but it possibly might be, and therefore this was no indisputable miracle. If he means a miracle capable of strict demonstration, we allow it. Of this no fact is capable. But if he means as indisputable as any matter of fact may

* P. 27.

be, he concludes too fast, according to custom. It is no reason to question a fact, because abstractly considered it may possibly be a mistake. If counter-testimony may be produced of equal authority, this is a reason, and the only fair reason for calling it in question; unless there be plain marks of absurdity and incredibility in the thing itself. But let us hear him out.

“History and common fame afford instances of the mistaken deaths of persons, who sometimes have been unfortunately buried, and at other times happily, by some means or other, restored to life.”* But has he history or common fame for his belief, that this was the case of the widow’s son? If not, why should he not, on the history of the gospel, and the common fame among Christians, in all ages, believe his resurrection, as well as on his history and common fame believe these instances? Has he any proof of the mistake? If not, what does his may-be, his mere possibility signify, against the plain testimony of the evangelist? If some such instances have been, do we hear of two in an age? Now supposing two such fall out in London in an age, where five or six and twenty thousand are buried in a year, how many hundred thousand is it to one, that this instance was not mistake? And is such a remote may-be any reasonable ground to disbelieve the miracle?

And such instances seldom, very seldom happen, but in case of unexpected death. And because they have happened, is there no knowing with certainty that persons are dead, in all ordinary cases? I cannot see then, that any are to be buried till their stench makes them intolerable to the living, and gives certain proof of putrefaction, if they may be buried even then; or till they have been kept beyond the utmost time in which any supposed dead have come to themselves, it were very inhuman to bury any, if we may not be certain they are dead. But indeed there is not an old nurse in town or country, but can tell him they certainly know when the sick expired, and are verily dead. And this being so, is there any ground to imagine a widow would carry out her only son to burial, without such assur-

* P. 28.

ance? And are his may-be's of any force against such probability?

But, adds he, "Who knows but Jesus, upon some information or other, might suspect this youth to be in a lethargic state, and had a mind to try if, by chafing, &c., he might do, what successfully he did, bring him to his senses?"* Who knows but Mr. Woolston is really out of his senses? It is the best construction to be put on his present conduct. One in his senses could never offer such wild, unaccountable suppositions and might-be's as serious argument, against a plain, honest narration of a matter of fact. Had he any other history of equal character and credit, any authentic records of ancient times that never yet saw light, to oppose to it, and support these may-be's, there were reason why we should attend to him. But to combat history of such established credit with wild, improbable may-be's, is not reasoning, but raving.

This widow supposes her only son dead, makes a funeral for him, carries him out to burial. Could neither herself, nor any about her, friends nor physicians, perceive any symptoms of life, any tokens of lethargic dozing; and yet an unknown somebody gives such hints of this to Jesus, as might "raise suspicions in him, that by chafing, &c., he might fetch him to his senses?" They must be very plain hints, and very well-founded suspicions, upon very good information, that would carry a juggler this length, and make him set up for a raiser of the dead. And yet neither mother, nurse, physicians, &c., have the least suspicion of it! *Credat Judæus Apella.* Let Mr. Woolston and his Rabbi believe this if they can. To all the reasonable world this must look improbable. But when Mr. Woolston says, "Jesus had suspicions that, by chafing, &c., he might do what successfully he did, fetch him to his senses," it is a specimen of his honesty and ingenuity. Is there the least hint in all the story, that by chafing, or any other means, he fetched him to his senses?—or that he did any thing more than "touch the bier," and bid the "young man arise?"

But he has another may-be in this case. "Might not a piece of fraud be here concerted—and the formalities of a

* P. 28.

death and burial contrived, that Jesus, whose fame for a worker of miracles was to be raised, might have an opportunity to make a show of a grand one.”* This is gross, and, to be feared, wilful misrepresentation. Jesus nowhere appears to have affected fame or renown for himself by working miracles, as has been shown above.† He wrought miracles in subserviency to his other design, as an attestation to his divine character and mission. Nor do his evangelists magnify his miraculous operations, nor say anything of them, but as a branch of their general history. Nothing can be more remote from Jesus’ character than greediness of fame, or coming at his wish by artifice, sham, and fraud.

And by whom might this fraud be concerted? “By Jesus, a subtile youth, his mother, and others.”‡ *Risum teneatis!* A little way off, this youth is an “insignificant boy, hardly older than the girl not above twelve years old.” Now he is ripened into such a head-piece, as to be in concert with Jesus, his mother, and others, no one knows who, to cheat the world with a sham-resurrection; in which he is to play the hardest part, to feign himself sick and dead, and be carried out to his burial, that Jesus might have the fame of raising him to life. That this “insignificant boy” should be of such significancy as to be taken into concert, for laying, and be intrusted with the conduct and execution of the most difficult branch of such a plot, is monstrously probable, is it not?

And for what end should this subtile youth play this part? For the honour of Jesus, “to raise his fame for a miracle-worker.” Exceedingly likely! What, out of pure disinterested regard to Jesus’ fame, without fee or reward? This boy had early a very high taste for fame, and a very great and generous mind, when regard to a juggler’s fame would carry him such a length, without any prospect of recompense. And who should recompense him? Who should be even at the charge of the formalities of a death and burial, besides himself, mother, and those others, no one knows who? Jesus himself could not, unless he were indeed a worker of miracles. And what should move others to help him out?

* P. 28.

† Pp. 117—119. supra.

‡ P. 28.

Could he propose any worldly advantage to bring them into his measures, and make them so exceedingly thirsty of his fame? Had he any places of honour or profit in his disposal, who "had not where to lay his head?"* Or was it a mere lust of growing renowned themselves, by being his followers and confederates?—one so hated by the men of chief rank and esteem in the country where he lived? Would they come into a plot, to make a juggling cheat a worker of miracles, and clothe him with divine authority, in plain defiance of the wrath both of earth and heaven, and without any prospect of advantage to themselves, but empty fame? Strange witchcraft indeed! It is a wonder the Pharisees had not hit on this proof of his confederacy with Beelzebub. But the sagacious Mr. Woolston was not among them.

But how should this fraud be covered, when "much people of the town was present?"† Were all in the secret? And all so reserved as not to blab it out? Or had none the curiosity, so common in our days, to turn aside the napkin, and look on the sham corpse? Or was this bound about too close to be loosed? Or had this "insignificant boy" an art to counterfeit death, and, in all his bloom, look as pale and wan as a carcase? Or if an artificial colouring might alter his hue, had he the art to set his eyes and teeth, and accommodate his other features to those of a dead face?—or hold his breath, whilst curiosity might sate itself by looking on him? Or had he the power in his grave-clothes to be stretched on a bier, or in a coffin, whilst he was carried out of the city to his burial, without shifting postures, or any motion to ease himself? If not, must not this be perceived by the bearers? And were they too in the secret? Or if he were bolstered up, could the juggler, in the view of such a multitude, convey the bolsters off unobserved? Or were all the multitude in the plot? Every considerate reader will see how utterly unlikely it is this should be a fraud.

To which may be added, that the evangelist reports, that upon his revival "fear fell on all, and they glorified God,

* Luke ix. 58.

† Ch. vii. 13.

saying, that a great prophet was risen amongst them, and that God had visited his people."* Can it be imagined that the great God would in this manner countenance a wicked juggler, and let him go on abusing the people in his awful name, without detection or control?

But he has not done; "The mourning of the widow, who had tears at command, and Jesus' casual meeting the corpse on the road, look like contrivance, to put the better face on the matter."† Did ever writer copy nature so exactly as this parabolist? I dare say, not one man in the world besides but would conclude, upon seeing a widow following her only son, weeping, to his burial, that he was verily dead. But to him, the mourning of the widow looks like contrivance, to put a face on a sham. Indeed her following with dry eyes would not have well covered such a contrivance, but it had been much more natural. No, says he, "the widow had tears at command." How does he know? Was he one of her acquaintance? Or is it a compliment to all widows as mere mock-mourners? That Mr. Woolston may laugh he observes no decorum. All that come in his way are outraged by him. But not only do the widow's tears, "but Jesus' casual meeting the corpse look like contrivance." There had been some sense in this, had he here been content with a might-be; but to say accident looks like design, makes him look like a very careless writer, or a very bad judge of look.

To this shrewd argument he tacks a piece of horrible profaneness: "God forbid that I should suspect there was any fraud of this kind here."‡ To what purpose then is all his preceding talk? What his immediate hint that Jesus "the juggler had been detected in other tricks before?" What his close of the paragraph, "that without the mystery, Jesus' stopping the corpse on the road, leaves too much room for suspicion of cheat?" Yet "God forbid he should suspect any fraud." Is not this shocking, and making a jest of God himself, as well as Jesus' miracles? Or is it enough to say the possibility of a cheat was all he aimed to make out, and of this "none can doubt?" But all circumstances con-

* Luke vii. 16.

† P. 28.

‡ Ibid.

sidered, a cheat in the case is hardly possible; however, it is utterly unlikely. And this is sufficient ground for believing the story, on the credit of such a reporter. But he has not done.

“Where there is a possibility of fraud, it is nonsense, and mere credulity, to talk of a real, certain, and stupendous miracle: especially where the juggler and pretended miracle-worker has been detected in some of his other tricks.”* This is he who, but a few lines before, could say, “God forbid he should suspect any fraud,” &c. Is not much regard, after this, due to any thing he says? But what “other tricks” are they wherein Jesus has been detected? Who detected them? When Mr. Woolston has made this out, some regard will be due to him: but to intimate such a thing without proof, and expect his word should be taken for it, is monstrously huge effrontery.

But why, where there is a possibility of fraud, is it nonsense? &c. Is not a miracle a matter of fact? Is it not enough for the reasonable belief of any fact, that it is reported by eye-witnesses of undoubted credit; and there is nothing in the report that carries any mark of deceit, falsehood, or improbability? Is nothing to be believed for a real certain matter of fact, unless he may be sure mistake is impossible? Should this maxim pass in common life, would it not put a stop to all human affairs, and indeed make a common wreck of all the business of the world?

Would this very author be willing that in his own case men should make this a rule of judging? I doubt not but “Thomas Woolston, B.D., sometime Fellow,” &c., values himself superlatively on some ludicrous discourses uttered in his name, on the “Miracles of our Saviour:” nor would lose the fame of being their author, at almost any price. Now when those who saw him write these out for the press, without a copy before him, report this fact, his friends and intimates concur in the same report, the copies in his own handwriting may be seen at the printer’s, would he not reckon the world very incredulous, who should call this fact in question, and diminish, so far, his fame and glory? And yet

* Pp. 28, 29.

it is possible, full as possible, as that the miracle of raising the widow's son should be sham; that this Thomas Woolston is not the real author, but the mere retailer of this ribaldry, having both matter and form at second-hand, or from the clubs and company he is said to attend. To talk therefore that he is the real, certain author of these discourses, is nonsense and mere credulity. Is this argument in his case? then he is a mere pretended writer of these discourses. But if not, neither is it in the case before us.

The certainty of mathematical truth or evidence, facts are not capable of. What we are not witnesses to ourselves, we must take upon credit from others. And that is evidence in this case, that should put it out of doubt with all reasonable men. Those who were witnesses to the raising the widow's son, and knew all the circumstances, must know certainly whether it were fraud or fact, a real or a sham miracle;—whether the death and burial were real or mere formality,—whether the widow's tears were unfeigned or counterfeit,—whether Jesus' meeting the corpse were casual or contrived. Such witnesses report this to Luke as fact. He tells it us upon their authority. There is nothing in the fact or report that has any appearance of cheat. Why then should it not be believed?—especially when these reporters were ordained of God “to bear witness” to these facts, and to them himself “bore witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.”* It is not nonsense and credulity to believe this a real miracle on such testimony; but it is wilful and stubborn incredulity to disbelieve it, and upon this author's foot, wild and extravagant.

As to Lazarus, he says, “Had he been buried four days, and putrefied, his resuscitation was a grand and indisputable miracle.” † Well then, has he any evidence to the contrary? None at all but some mere may-be's. Only as he is pleased here to talk *en infidel*, these may-be's are out of doubt. “Whether Lazarus, who was Jesus' friend and beloved disciple, would not come into measures for the defence of his honour and propagation of his fame, infidels, who take Chris-

* Heb. ii. 4.

† P. 29.

tianity for imposture, will not question.”* And if what infidels take for imposture, must be such, and what they will not question, is out of question, the business is done;—and Mr. Woolston has taken much unnecessary pains, and deserving little thanks. But if Christians take their religion for divine, and every thing in the evangelical history to be out of question, they are even with infidels, and all further debate is superfluous.

But the question is, whether infidels have sufficient grounds to support this acceptance of Christianity,—or to conclude that Jesus would take any dishonest measures to defend his own honour, or propagate his fame,—or any beloved disciple of his would come into such measures with him. If not, it is neither wisdom with regard to themselves, nor justice to him and his religion, to believe or suggest any such thing, but blind and foolish temerity. And nothing can be more injurious to his character and theirs than such a supposition. If infidels will make no question of this, they are very prone to believe one way, however slow to believe another. They can believe at a venture against Christianity.

And Lazarus' coming into such measures with Jesus, as Mr. Woolston suggests, is utterly improbable. He was an inhabitant of Bethany, near Jerusalem, in no manner of alliance with Jesus of Nazareth, whose usual residence was very remote from the place of his dwelling. He was, in all probability, a perfect stranger to him, any farther than his teaching and mighty works recommended him to his esteem and respect. No other good reason can be assigned for his friendship or discipleship. It is hugely improbable that he should take Jesus for a juggler, and much more that out of regard to his fame he should come into such measures as Mr. Woolston's infidel suggests, who thus goes on: “And whether he would not consent to be interred in an hollow cave, where only a stone was laid at the mouth, as long as he could fast, none of them will doubt.”† Is it not strange they should make so many doubts of Christianity, who are so much out of doubt here? “Four days was almost too long for a man to fast without danger of health. But if the four days are

* P. 29.

† Pp. 29, 30.

numbered according to the arithmetic of Jesus' three days in his grave, they are reducible to two days and three nights;—which time, if no victuals were secretly conveyed to him, a man might fast in Lazarus' cave." But we shall hear by and by, that Lazarus came out of his cave in grave-clothes;—was there no danger to his health in being shut up two days and three nights in this equipage?—and perhaps more in that warm, than in a colder, climate. Or will infidels make no question, but for the raising the fame of a juggler, he would risk his health at this rate, and fast three nights and two days, and lie all that while in his grave-clothes, in a cave. Let us see whether this be a reasonable thought, which with them is out of question.

What could induce Lazarus to do this penance for a known juggler, that he might pass upon the world for a raiser of the dead? If Jesus were such a juggler, he must be a very wicked man; and Lazarus, on this supposition, must know him to be such. Had he no conscience, no fears from entering into such a confederacy, and bearing a part in so wicked a cheat? Is it fair to suppose Jesus' disciples such a set of abandoned profligates? Is there any thing in their history to countenance such a supposition? Would Mr. Woolston and his infidels take it well to be passed on the world under so vile a character, and that at a venture, without any foundation; and that Christians should have this out of doubt? But if he had any checks of conscience, what should baffle them? Would he, without any prospect of advantage, from mere blind attachment to a wicked deceiver of mankind, break through these restraints? Nay, though he had no such checks, would he act thus without any such prospects? And what prospect of advantage could he have?—especially at a time when Jesus was in a remote desert country, to avoid the malice of the Jews;* and his very coming into Judea was, in his disciples' account,† offering himself to certain death. Is it likely the timorous Lazarus, who, if he is to be believed, "skulked about the country for fear of his life, even after his resurrection,"‡ should confederate with the "poor-spirited Jesus,"§ in such a scheme to raise his

* John x. 39, 40.

† Ch. xi. 8, 16.

‡ P. 16.

§ P. 39.

fame? If he had no conscience, had he nothing to lose? He had a life to lose at least. Is it likely that, at this juncture, he should risk it, and venture on a cheat, where the danger upon detection was so very great; and do such penance to effect it? Or if himself, by such extravagant friendship for a known cheat, were carried so much above his natural fears, would his two sisters, who must have their parts in this farce, have no misgivings; or baffle these, and all their female fears, and be content not only that their brother should run so great a risk, but venture themselves on the same danger? And this for a cheat, that could make them no compensation in the world for such a hazard? If infidels can admit this without question, they are very credulous on the side of infidelity.

And must there not have been the formalities of a death and burial here? If so, all the improbabilities in the case of the widow's son will here also recur.* But if Lazarus walked to his cave, and his sisters there put on his grave-clothes, and bound his face in the napkin, and then closed him up, —they must hereupon give out that he was dead and buried, no one knew when or where. Would the Jews have come from Jerusalem to condole with them on such an unaccountable funeral? Nay, must not this have raised much suspicion? Or were there no infidels as sagacious as Mr. Woolston and his friends then in being? How utterly unlikely is that now, which with his infidels “is out of question?” But he goes on.

As “to the stinking of the carcass, that infidels will say, is but the assertion of his sister, like a prologue to a farce: none of the spectators say one word of his stinking,”† &c. His infidels, “to be sure,” will say after him, right or wrong. This is no assertion of hers in the evangelist; but an inference from his having been so long either dead or buried, for the Greek is mystical.‡ But take the expression in either sense, it was likely that he should begin to putrefy by that time. And it looks so far from the prologue of a farce, a design to raise Jesus' fame by a concerted sham-death, that it speaks her plain apprehension of her brother's death, and

* See p. 131. supra. † P. 30. ‡ τεταρταῖος γὰρ ἔστι. John xi. 39.

her non-expectation of his revival,—especially as connected with what had passed between her and Jesus before. At first meeting him, says she, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died: but I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give thee.”* This last clause, indeed, intimates some hope in the case; but this soon fails. For when Jesus tells her, “her brother should be raised again,” she replies, “I know he shall be raised, in the resurrection of the dead, at the last day:”† which speaks very plainly her belief and expectation of a general resurrection, but no expectation of his present revival, much less that she had concerted a sham-death with Jesus, for an immediate resurrection. Jesus having hereupon told her that “he was the resurrection and the life,”‡ &c., and she having professed her faith in him “as the Christ,”§ occasions a rebuke for her starting this difficulty,|| when he was going to the cave:—a difficulty naturally offering itself to a doubting mind, upon knowledge that her brother was dead, but very unnatural in one who had concerted with Jesus a sham-death and resurrection.

Nay, had this been the case, this very difficulty must have detected the sham. On opening the cave, it had been natural for all near it to have expected this token of putrefaction. And had they been as sagacious as Mr. Woolston, had they not scented the carcass, they would have scented the sham. And this needless difficulty, started by the confederate, had blown up all. Supposing the truth of the gospel report, every thing is natural; but supposing it a cheat, this difficulty, especially as timed, is most unnatural. What for a confederate, just as the cave was to be opened, to suggest that he was already stinking, whom herself and Jesus knew to be there alive! Could a juggler have the heart to proceed, after such a blunder; and bid the cave be opened, to let out a living man, who could emit no scent of putrefaction before, nor leave any behind him? If this were a prologue to a farce, it must have laid the sham naked to the view of every by-stander, and ruined the reputation of Jesus not only for a miracle-worker, but even for a juggler too.

* John xi. 21, 22. † Ver. 24. ‡ Ver. 25. § Ver. 27. || Ver. 40.

So that this assertion, as he calls it, of the sister, is no shadow of a reason for this miracle's being a juggle. And the silence of the spectators concerning this scent, on which he lays such a stress, is nothing more than the omission of a needless passage in a concise narration,—a circumstance of no weight nor importance in the story. Nothing depended on the putrefaction of the carcass. It was the dead Lazarus Jesus came to raise, whether putrefied or not putrefied. But neither himself nor any there had any concern whether the dead man stank or no.

“As to the weepings and lamentations of Jesus and the sisters, infidels will say, that was all sham and counterfeits the better to carry on the juggle of a feigned resurrection.”* And we must believe it upon their saying it, and adding “to be sure” to it. Jesus and the two sisters had an art of counterfeiting tears, and seeming to weep when it was all sham! Or are we to understand it of their shedding real tears, to counterfeit grief? They all, as well as the widow, had tears at command. They could weep at pleasure, reason or no reason, *mirandum unde ille oculis suffecerit humor*. This is a very likely thing, infidels will say, and believers on their say-so, will readily subscribe to it, “to be sure.” This was all mock-mourning; and so no doubt was the condolence of the Jews, though some of them appear in the evangelist to be no friends to Jesus. They came to lend assistance in carrying on the cheat. They were in the house with these sisters, many of them had likely been at the funeral (for Lazarus shutting himself up in the cave is highly improbable), these sisters must have been extraordinary counterfeits if, in these circumstances, their mock-mourning could not be distinguished from the real grief of sisters for a dead brother.

But the story in the evangelist makes it very plain that Lazarus was indeed dead, and this grief was real and not counterfeit. Lazarus is first seized with sickness. A messenger is sent to Jesus, then beyond Jordan, at some considerable distance from Bethany, to let him know it. Thither he had withdrawn himself from the malice of the Jews. But they hoped his friendship, on this message, might, if he

* P. 30.

could come with any safety, bring him to see their sick brother, and restore him. But when Jesus came not whilst he was alive, his revival was unexpected by them. They did not so much as send him word of his death; for the disciples knew nothing of the matter till Jesus tells them of it; * whereas such a message from the sisters could not have been unknown to them: so little likelihood is there that Lazarus shut himself up in the cave, or that his resurrection was concerted. When Jesus comes to Bethany, he comes unlooked for. The news of his coming is a surprise. Had he come upon invitation, it is not likely Martha should start upon hearing it, and be gone at once to meet him. † It had been more decent to have waited, and received him at home, had he come by appointment. But from his unexpected arrival springs a joy not to be resisted, and therefore she runs away to meet him. The address of both sisters to him, at some distance of time, is, “Lord, hadst thou been here, our brother had not died.” ‡ How plainly does this address, especially in connexion with Martha’s discourse, signify a non-expectation of a revival! And how natural an address is this to one of Jesus’ character,—a prophet and worker of miracles,—supposing their brother dead! How unnatural to a juggler, with whom they had concerted to sham the world, by fetching out of a cave, one whom they knew to be shut up there alive! The Jews present when Mary goes to meet Jesus, suspect she had “stolen away to the grave to weep there,” § and on this suspicion follow her. How artfully does she play her part, that these Jews should so much mistake counterfeit for real grief? When she meets Jesus, she throws herself all in tears at his feet, and addresses him as above: the Jews are so affected with her tears and sorrowful case as to “weep with her.” || Is it natural to suppose, a grief thus circumstanced to be grief for a dead brother, or one she knew to be living, and only shut up in a cave, to impose a sham miracle on the world? One would think, that if they had concerted such an imposture with Jesus, they should rather have wiped up their tears at his arrival,

* John xi. 10—14.
§ Ver. 31.

† Ver. 20.

‡ Ver. 21, 32.
|| Ver. 33.

and been calm at least, if not joyous, at what was to follow, without starting any difficulties.

But Jesus' tears, which are here made so fit to carry on the *juggle*, in a few pages,* are a huge absurdity in a miracle-worker. Is not this mighty consistent? How comes it about, that these tears of Jesus were so fit to put the better face on his juggling design, and yet such an absurdity in the miracle-worker? Was it not the intention of the *juggler* to be famed for a *miracle-worker*, and yet be so absurd as to shed tears for one, he, in appearance, was to raise from the dead? I cannot see but, according to Mr. Woolston, it had been impossible for Jesus to weep. He could not naturally weep for the death of one whom he knew to be alive. And to counterfeit tears was to forget his assumed character. Or else he did not understand the juggling character as well as Mr. Woolston, for sure he did not stand at Lazarus' cave in the character of a juggler, but a miracle-worker,—in whom Mr. Woolston knows, tears would have been an arrant absurdity. And Jesus, in his account, must be as very a bungler at juggling, as Mr. Woolston appears by this time at reasoning.

He tells us, "Lazarus was not long enough dead and buried, to leave no room to doubt of the miracle of his resurrection."† If he means *reasonably* to doubt, this is left to the reader's judgment; if he means for infidels to doubt, who, according to his representation, can say, and affirm, and doubt, and question, right or wrong, with reason, or without it, little regard is to be had to them. If they have no room, they will make it.

His saying, "If Jesus could raise the dead, he might have made choice of other persons more unquestionably dead, who had lain longer in their graves, and were in a visible state of putrefaction,"‡ is mere talk. To those who saw these persons raised, and knew them to be unquestionably dead, none could be more unquestionably so. And if the present reporters are not to be believed, who tell us those whom Jesus raised were unquestionably dead, would they have deserved more credit for telling us he raised those who were in a "state of visible putrefaction," even though

* P. 39.

† P. 31.

‡ Ibid.

they added, that they were persons nominated by magistrates of such a city, and before multitudes who beheld the putrefied bodies, and saw them recover their pristine form?"* Could he have started no *may-be's* in this case, which his infidels would say were out of doubt, nor to be called in question? As "*May-be* these were not putrefied bodies, but coloured with paint, and scented with carrion. *May-be* the magistrates were in concert with Jesus, to sham the world with a counterfeit miracle. *May-be* the multitude present were *confederates*, or there were none else there but the *vulgar*, who only could stare and wonder, but had nor heads nor hearts to examine into a *juggler's tricks*. However, the reporters were all Jesus' disciples, who, to be sure, would come into any measures, right or wrong, to raise their master's fame; and by telling such a story, they appear no bunglers in biography, but artful fellows, well-skilled even in the critique of the history of heroes." And then it is but to add, "infidels, who take Christianity for imposture, will call none of this into question, but admit these *may-be's* for *undoubted facts*:" and then even such a miracle deserves as little credit as others now on record. If these reporters are not to be believed, who tell us those were unquestionably dead whom Jesus raised, neither must we have believed them if they had made report of his raising others, in Mr. Woolston's account *more* unquestionably dead. It is upon the unquestionable credit of the historian that the unquestionable faith of the fact must rest. If the fact be in itself probable, or even possible, and the reporter be well informed, and honest in his report, the truth of the fact is not to be questioned. What in itself might be, and is thus creditably reported to have been, is not to be called in question, for the sake of any *may-be's* else whatever.

SECTION V.

MR. WOOLSTON'S FIFTH REMARK CONSIDERED.

But, says Mr. Woolston, "None of these persons did or could tell any tales of the separate existence of their souls."†

* P. 31.

† P. 32.

How does he know? Why "otherwise the evangelists had not been silent in this main point, which is of the essence of Christianity." What is this "main point essential to Christianity?" The knowledge of the particular state of souls during their separation from the body? Who has made this so main and essential a part of Christianity? I never met with a Christian who thought it any branch of Christianity, essential or nonessential. About it Christian revelation is silent. So that the "dilemma to which divines are reduced," by this thought of his, "either to deny the separate existence of souls, or the precedent deaths of these raised persons," is nothing but presumptuous talk, as usual. Must the separate existence of souls be denied then, unless we know where they are, what they do, and how they live and act? What credulous fools have Christians in all ages been, to believe the existence of separate souls, without this knowledge! Since God has thought fit to conceal this from them, if Mr. Woolston and infidels reason right, they should have denied the truth of what he has revealed. How "incompatible, now, must the belief of these persons' resurrection be, with the Christian belief, of the separate existence of souls?"*

But "was any person in this age, who had been any time dead, to be raised to life, the first thing his friends and acquaintance would inquire of him, would be, where his soul had been, and in what company, and how it had fared with him; and historians would certainly record his narrative."† But what if he made none, would he then record it? Not if they were true and faithful historians: and it is very probable this was the case. But if not, must the evangelists do as all other historians would? For what reason? Why "the same curiosity could not but possess people of old, as does now. And if the raised persons had told any such stories, the evangelists unquestionably would have recorded them."‡ What, from the same curiosity? But what if they thought this a vain and perhaps a faulty curiosity? Would they have humoured it in themselves or others? Without doubt they would not. This was the case, and he is unquestionably wrong.

* P. 32.

† Ibid.

‡ P. 33.

But, "such a report would not only have been a confirmation of a doctrine, which is of the essence of our religion, but an absolute confutation of the Sadducees and Sceptics of that age, and Materialists of this."* But the evidence of this doctrine has nothing to do with such a report. The doctrines of a judgment to come, of future recompenses, and the existence of souls departed, are in the general plainly revealed in Scripture. Had a more particular knowledge been necessary, a more particular account had been there given. The credit of these doctrines rests on that of Jesus and his apostles, whose divine authority has been made out, as Christians think, by many clear and incontestable proofs. What additional confirmation can the report of one from the dead give to this? Can Christians give more credit to such a reporter, than to Jesus and his apostles?—or have a firmer faith in a doctrine received on their authority, for the sake of this farther authority? Or would infidels, whether ancient Sadducees and Sceptics, or modern Materialists, who disbelieve all the doctrines and facts of Christianity besides, have come into the belief of them, for the sake of these reports? Would not Mr. Woolston have made himself merry with these tales of an "insignificant boy and girl," and an "obscure and inconsiderable Lazarus?" The evangelists knew that, were such reports inserted, it could answer no end, but gratifying curiosity; and therefore if they did make any reports, they wisely omitted them,—though for the same good reason, it is very likely they made none.

I see not, therefore, that this "silence of the evangelists is of any bad consequence either to the doctrine or the miracles." Why should it? "Must we not almost necessarily hereupon hold, that these raised persons were not dead, or their souls died with them?"† The modesty of the man, in this passage, is singular. It is not to be matched in the whole piece. *Almost necessarily!* It should have been necessarily *at least*, to be of a piece with the rest. But I cannot see that it is so much as "almost necessary," to admit either of these two consequences. They were certainly dead, and as certainly revived. In what state or region their souls

* P. 33.

† Ibid.

were, between their death and revival, has nothing to do with the miracle. Nor was their making any report where they had been, or in what state or company, needful to the knowing whether they were dead and revived. Those who saw them dead and restored to life, knew the miraculous change, without any such reports; and knew hereupon, that Jesus had divine powers, and was a prophet, and therefore that his doctrines, and this of the separate existence of souls among the rest, deserved all credit and regard.

The "apocryphal story"* of Lazarus' having been in hell, may afford some merriment to his infidels, but has nothing to do with the argument. It proves, indeed, his great lust to be laughing, though at his own impertinence. And his talk of Lazarus' "soul being fetched from paradise," is equally trifling.† Had this been the case, Lazarus would readily have come back into life, at the command of God and call of Jesus, and have exposed himself to all the miseries of it, and could, and would have been abundantly recompensed for it at last.

But this "ridiculous jest, about his having been in a bad place, or else he had not absconded after his resurrection, for fear of the Jews, as if he was afraid to go back to the place whence he came,"‡ argues him a very careless or a very dishonest writer. The evangelical story says nothing of Lazarus' absconding at all. So that this is a mere slanderous invention, for the sake of a poor jest, on so tremendous a subject as hell.

The rest of his talk, "where the souls of these dead persons were,"§ I pass over as trifling. It has nothing to do with the argument. If it might be known that the persons were dead and made alive again, and this is reported by proper witnesses, it is all on which the credit of any fact, to which ourselves are not eye or ear-witnesses, can depend. This reason Christians have to believe these facts; and for this reason do believe them, without concerning themselves where their souls were between their death and revival, or in what state. And Mr. Woolston might have as reasonably told us, that we must not believe they had souls, because

* Pp. 33, 34.

† P. 34.

‡ Ibid.

§ P. 36.

upon coming back into life they did not tell us what they are, as say their souls died with them, because they did not tell where they had been.

SECTION VI.

MR. WOOLSTON'S SIXTH REMARK CONSIDERED.

We come now to the "intrinsic absurdities," as he calls them, of these relations. And if there be any such, they are to his purpose; all the rest is flourish.

He begins with the story of Jairus' daughter. And here he makes Hilary hint, that "there was no such person as Jairus; that the name is fictitious, and coined for the sake of the parable." Suppose this to be fact, (though I cannot trust his quotations) and that Hilary has given such a hint, is this a reason why we should believe it? None at all. But he supports this hint with a good reason. What is this? It is "elsewhere intimated in the gospel, that none of the rulers of the synagogue *confessedly* believed on Jesus."* But perhaps this is only said,—if it be said,—for the sake of a parable. And then it carries no hint of a contradiction to the story before us. But the gospel history must be allegory or story, as will best fit Mr. Woolston's purpose; and one of his taste may, at this rate, make anything or nothing of it.

I cannot but observe too, that the reason in Hilary, according to his own citation, is not that of Mr. Woolston. In Hilary it is, "*Nam nullum principem credidisse legimus:*"† 'For we read that no ruler believed.' To which Mr. Woolston foists in "confessedly." So that Hilary's reason was not a good one, without Mr. Woolston's amendment. And one of the texts referred to by Mr. Woolston directly contradicts what Hilary, as he cites him, says. For the text says expressly, that "many of the rulers believed on him, but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess it."‡ Is not this now a plain, evident reason, that Jairus is a fictitious name, and that really there was no such person? Why, because Hilary says we read "that none of the rulers believed

* P. 36.

† Ibid.

‡ John xii. 42.

on him." Yes, says St. John, "many of the rulers believed on him." Ay, but they did not confess it. What then? Why then, it is as clear as day-light, there was no such man as Jairus. But might not Jairus come to Jesus for the cure of a dying child, without having confessed he was the Christ? If he might, then this reading notwithstanding, there might be such a man as Jairus.

In the other text, to which he refers us, it is said, "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?"* In both texts it is *ἀρχοντες* rulers, not *ἀρχισυνάγωγοι* rulers of synagogues. So far his citation is unfair. But supposing the more general term *ἀρχων* ruler, to include the more restrained *ἀρχισυνάγωγος* ruler of a synagogue; yet we do not read in the evangelist, that "none of the rulers believed on him." This is only a saying of Jesus' enemies, which the evangelist honestly reports, but without any hint whether it were true or false. But it is an angry saying, on the officers giving this reason, for not seizing him, "that never man spake like him;"† and a saying with this spiteful one tacked to it, "But this people (or mob‡) who knoweth not the law, are cursed." Is it likely that those who, in the close of their saying, could pass so bitter and contemptuous a censure on so great a body of their own people, should pay such sacred regard to truth, as not to stretch a little in the beginning? And is this spiteful saying of Jesus' enemies, in a fit of passion, a good authority for saying, "we read no ruler believed on him?" Or can it be a good reason that there was no such person as Jairus, but that it is a fictitious name? And is not this, after all, an evident intrinsic note of absurdity and incredibility in the story?

But, "why did Jesus say the girl was but in a sleep? When he was going to work a miracle in her resurrection, he should not have called death sleep."§ Is this argument against Christians, or mocking, senseless, and illiterate infidels? Is not the resemblance between sleep and death so obvious, that in the language of philosophers as well as poets, one is often put for the other? Does not Tully the philoso-

* John vii. 48.

† Ver. 46.

‡ ὄχλος, ver. 49.

§ P. 36. vide p. 126. supra.

pher say, “*Quid melius quam in mediis vitæ laboribus obdormiscere, et ita conniventes somno consopiri sempiterno?*” Is not sleeping here dying, and death an endless sleep? And why might not Jesus talk of death, in the same language? No, “he should not have called death sleep, when he was going to work a miracle in the girl’s resuscitation.” But to me it looks that, in this very view, he does it with great propriety and elegance. If Cicero calls death, from whence he expected no revival, *somnus sempiternus*,—as properly, at least, does Jesus call death for a time, *somnus*, ‘sleep.’ It was rather a sleep than death, because both vital and animal functions were soon to be called back into exercise, as the animal ones are on awaking after a temporal cessation in sleep.

And the story of Lazarus’ revival makes this out to be his plain meaning here. When the message of his sickness is brought him, he tells his disciples, “this sickness is not unto death.”* By this he could not mean, he would not die. For, in his way to Jerusalem, he tells his disciples, “Lazarus our friend is asleep, but I am going to awake him.”† But when they reply to this, “If he sleep he will do well,”‡ he plainly tells them, “he is dead.”§ And the evangelist remarks, in a parenthesis, that in this metaphor he spake of dying and death, though they understood him without a figure, of “taking rest in sleep.”|| So Lazarus’ sickness was not unto death, in the common acceptance of the word. From such death there is no revival till the general resurrection. He was rather asleep than dead, since it was his purpose soon to revive him. The same is the manifest reason of the language here.

But Mr. Woolston goes on, “If others had been of a contrary opinion.” To what? To that of her being asleep; to his, as Mr. Woolston represents it. What then? “He should have convinced them of the certainty of her death, before he did the great work on her;”¶ that is, of what they were convinced already. One would think that Mr. Woolston had been here asleep. But let us suppose he means by

* John xi. 4.
§ Ver. 14.

† Ver. 11. *περιύομαι*.
|| Ver. 13.

‡ Ver. 12.
¶ P. 37.

those of a *contrary* opinion, those of the *same* opinion, that she was only asleep. "If any such were here, he should have convinced them." But it is plain there were none such here. For all there, mistaking his meaning, as Mr. Woolston pretends to do, "laughed him to scorn."* Why? For saying she was but asleep, when they "knew she was dead." And, "to be sure," Mr. Woolston, had he been there, would have joined in the laugh, as he here endeavours to make Jesus ridiculously silly, in the character either of a juggler or miracle-worker, who, when his business was to do "justice to his fame" as a "raiser of the dead," sets himself to persuade the people that one he was about to raise, was not dead, but asleep only. This is a very *natural* account of things, is it not? If his parabolic interpretations are as wise as his literal ones, he will make infidels merry indeed.

But, "why did he charge the parents of the girl not to speak of the miracle? If he meant it as a testimony of his divine power, he should rather, in justice to himself, have exhorted them to publish it, and make it well known."† He certainly meant it as a testimony of his "divine power." But why, "in justice to himself, must he exhort the parents to publish it?" That he might not lose the fame of it. I cannot doubt but an itch to be famous might prompt Mr. Woolston to publish his ludicrous discourses on the miracles of our Saviour, and distinguish himself from every other Thomas Woolston by annexing B.D., sometime fellow, &c., to his name. It is reported that one fellow was so greedy of fame, as to fire Diana's temple to become renowned. But the meek and lowly Jesus acts as becomes himself, when he shows no concern to do "himself justice" this way. He is content to do the works, and leave them to spread his fame. This work could not be concealed. The witnesses were too many. The multitude who attended Jesus to the house; the crowd turned out by him, who knew the girl was dead, and it is likely, told how ridiculously, as they thought, Jesus talked concerning her; many no doubt, stayed to know the event: the neighbours, who knew the girl was dead, and saw her afterward alive, must all know the miraculous change,

* Luke viii. 53.

† P. 37.

and Jesus' concern in it. And how then should it be concealed? "The fame of it was soon spread over all that country."* It was needless, therefore, "in justice to himself," to exhort to such publication.

But "why then did he charge the parents of the girl not to speak of it?" Not to "aggrandize his fame" for a miracle-worker, which, if we may believe Mr. Woolston, was the grand design of his evangelists. But when others would publish it, why must the parents be silent? I suppose this was a charge in common to his disciples † as well as the parents, who it is likely became his disciples too. And he would have none of those forward to publish it, and that in "justice to himself too," that he might not appear to affect popularity, to seek fame, or endeavour to make himself great; as also to set an example of humility to his disciples, and that they should be much more concerned to do good and be good, than to make such an appearance. Nor is it unlikely that kindness to the ruler himself might have a share in it, to restrain him from what gratitude and wonder might prompt him to do, and the doing of which might render him obnoxious to others of the same rank, few of whom Mr. Woolston has told us, were friends to Jesus. But whatever were the reason, there could be no meaning in it prejudicial to the miracle, or Mr. Woolston's unlucky invention, "to be sure," had hit it off.

But, "Why did he turn the people out of doors, before he would raise her? The more witnesses are present at a miracle, the better it is attested, and the more readily believed by others. And who should have been present at the miracle rather than those who were incredulous of Jesus' divine powers?" ‡ But who were the people turned out, but the pipers and their wailing tribe? Had they been present, would Mr. Woolston have thought the miracle better attested? Does he not equally attack the credit of these three miracles, without any regard to the numbers present? Would he not have thought half-a-dozen, as sagacious as himself, much better attestors to the truth of Jesus' miracles, than all the multitudes who saw them? But, "who should

* Matt. ix. 26.

† Mark v. 42.

‡ P. 37.

be present at the miracle rather than those who were incredulous of Jesus' divine powers? Does Mr. Woolston know any such were present and excluded? It does not appear any such were there. Must Jesus have waited till some were sent for? Were none but these capable judges?—or were they the most unprejudiced ones? Let those who have read Mr. Woolston's judicious critique on our Saviour's miracles, judge.

Here were the parents of the girl, who must know whether their child was living or dead. Here were Peter, James, and John, three of his apostles, who upon being admitted into the room where she lay, could easily see if there were signs of death, and easily know if she were dead or no. They were all capable witnesses, had fairer opportunity to make a judgment, and observe all circumstances, than any could have had, in a promiscuous crowd in a close room. And these apostles were of chief rank, and among the most forward in spreading their Master's hated religion afterward. Can it be thought that, in defiance of every human appetite, but mere thirst for fame, they could have shown this zeal for one they knew to be a deceiver, and all his pretended wonders mere juggling cheats? That without any prospect of worldly advantage, of honour or estate,—nay, with prospect of encountering the rage of the people, and wrath of all the great men, in a manner, of the world, they should go about and propagate a religion, 'so plainly prohibiting all fraud and deceit, and every other wickedness, and this in the name of Jesus, without the firmest assurance of his having wrought real miracles, and being endued with divine powers, is, as his Rabbi says in another case, impossible to be believed. And had more people been there, and among these the incredulous, and had the evangelists told us these had gone away convinced, could we have any further evidence of the fact, than we now have in the evangelists' report? Must not all have rested on the foot of their testimony? Till that be proved to be not worthy regard, all endeavours else to discredit the story they tell us, are but trifling. And it is so far from being either "folly or nonsense to talk of a miracle in this case,"* that it is somewhat

* P. 37.

much worse than either to talk against it. But when he adds, “against Jesus’ express word and prohibition,” the reader must be astonished,—but that by this time he knows the man.

As to the widow of Nain’s son, he has no more to say than he has said ; but “that is enough,” if you will take his word, “to overthrow the credibility of the miracle ;”^{*} and I leave this to the reader’s judgment. But what are become of those “intrinsic notes of absurdity to be hereafter mentioned,”[†] with which Bishop Smalbroke is insulted by this mannerly and modest man ?

But for that he is so sparing here, we shall have large amends in his remarks on the story of Lazarus, which, it seems, is so “brimfull of absurdities, that remarks on all would fill a volume. And had not St. John outlived his senses, he could not have committed them. This story is such a con-texture of folly and fraud, in its contrivance, execution, and relation, as is not to be equalled in all romantic history.”[‡] But for the evidence of this *modest hyperbole*, we must wait till hereafter. At present we must rest content with four out of the monstrous heap, and these, to make the more of them, eked out by repetitions too.

First, then, “Observe,” says he, “Jesus is said to have wept and groaned for the death of Lazarus. But why so ? says St. Basil.”[§] But whatever St. Basil says, I desire Mr. Woolston would show us where St. John says this ? It is twice said, indeed, that Jesus groaned. When he saw Mary in tears, and the Jews weeping with her, it is said, “he groaned in spirit, and was troubled.”^{||} And a second time, that he groaned when the Jews said, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that this man should not have died.”[¶] And once to have wept, when called upon to see where Lazarus lay.^{**} If the Jews present thought these tears the effect of his love to Lazarus,^{††} the supposition was natural, but might be a mistake. And other motives might give rise to these tears, which lay out of their reach. But Mr. Woolston should not tell us, that is said

* P. 37. † P. 13.

¶ Ver. 37, 38.

‡ P. 38. § Ibid.

** Ver. 34, 35.

|| John xi. 33.

†† Ver. 36.

which is not said, and then go on to ask questions on his own supposals.

And other considerations arising out of the circumstances might occasion these tears and groans, not the death of Lazarus. Mary and Martha show much distrust of his power and good-will. This might occasion them. It is elsewhere said, "he was grieved at the hardness of heart" (or stubborn unbelief) the Jews discovered, and "looked round with anger upon them."* Hardness of heart in his disciples must be more grievous to him; but as a frowning look had not been so natural in their case, where weakness not wilfulness was the chief cause of unbelief, especially when they were in such distress as well as doubt, his grief naturally vents itself in groans and tears. The incredulity of the Jews there present might contribute also to his grief. His second groaning is upon their saying, "could not this man," &c., which, though it implies some faint persuasion that it was in his power to have prevented Lazarus' death, had he come in time, carries manifest doubt in it of his reviving power,—and this after he had inquired where Lazarus was laid; which, if he signified his purpose no other way, must have intimated it to them;—for they could not reasonably think he made this inquiry merely to see his place of burial, or to have it opened that he might look in upon him. And the incredulity of the Jews present might bring to his mind that of the people in general; and his own death approaching, when, by their final unbelief and rejection of him, they would "fill up the measure of their sins," their approaching calamities might present themselves to his view, and very deeply touch his tender and compassionate heart,—as we find he wept when he beheld the city, Luke xix. 41. All these thoughts naturally, and by a quick transition, arise out of the circumstances. And Mr. Woolston has therefore no right to suppose the death of Lazarus was the occasion of his tears, and much less the sole occasion.

But admit that, in some respect, the death of Lazarus his friend was the occasion of both. What then? "Was it not absurdity in him to weep at all, for the death of

* Mark iii. 5.

one whom he could, and was about to recover to life? —even as much as for a man to grieve for the absence of a friend, whose company he can retrieve in an instant.”* Suppose this an absurdity in such a man whilst by himself; yet when many are about him, to whom the absence of this friend is more grievous than to him, who know nothing of this power of his, or at that time advert not to it; and are faulty too for this non-attention, and who think his presence irretrievable, and are hereupon all drowned in tears, might not this distress of theirs wring groans from the breast and tears from the eyes of a tender sympathizing friend,—even though he knew his own power and purpose to call him into their presence, for their common joy and comfort? Where humanity is in any breast to an eminent degree, is not such a scene of sorrow catching? Is Mr. Woolston sure he could on such an occasion control himself? If he be, I shall not make it an evidence that he exceeds in common pity or good nature. I am pretty sure he would join in a laugh on an occasion much less proper. Jesus, therefore, who had much compassion, as his office of a Saviour required, though he “knew his power and purpose,” &c., might weep with his own friends, and the near relations of the dead, without acting out of character, or being guilty of any absurdity in conduct.

But, “if he could not or would not raise him, he ought not, as a philosopher, (who knows man is born to die) to betray so much weakness, as to weep for his dead friend.” † Certainly it is no reproach to Jesus that, on so poor a consideration, he did not refrain tears. He who had no better reasons to comfort himself, on the death of a child, than *genitum mortalem*, ‘I begot him mortal,’ did wisely, perhaps, in making the best use he could of this, to moderate his grief. But he who considers death as the penal consequence of sin, and an inlet into eternity, and looks on the death of a good man as an important loss to his family and the world, will find but poor relief from this *philosophical* consideration. Jesus had much more powerful considerations to stop the gush of his tears. He is very calm when he first communi-

* P. 39.

† Ibid.

cates the news of Lazarus' death to his disciples, and tells them he was going to revive him. He came to Bethany for this end, and certainly knew his own intention and power. Yet the moving scene before him, the little faith and great grief of the two sisters, with other considerations, might excite a compassion that would vent itself both in groans and tears, without derogating from his philosophy or diviner principles. This proved him a man, "one who could be touched with the feeling of human infirmities,"* though he came to bring them relief. This I cannot think his reproach. No man who saw a physician drop tears, over a patient in agony and danger, while the compassion stirring in his breast gave no obstruction to his proceeding for the patient's relief, would reasonably judge him to act unbecoming his manhood or profession, but rather that he showed himself an artist, of great humanity and generous compassion. And those who look on Jesus as their Saviour, and know how much they need his compassionate regard to their infirmities, will be very thankful to meet with these instances of his tenderness in the evangelical story, however cross they may run to the *philosophical* character, in Mr. Woolston's notion of it.

But "patience and resignation to the will of God on the death of friends, is what all philosophers have rightly taught." "To be sure" Mr. Woolston is as well acquainted with all the philosophers, as all the judicious critics in the universe. Admit it. What then? "And Jesus, one would think, should have been the most heroical example of these graces. And how came he to fail of it here? A stoical apathy had better become him, than such childish and effeminate grief, which not only makes him a mean and poor-spirited mortal, but" †—What? The same thing over again, which began the paragraph; is an absurdity, and now it is a gross one, and incredibility into the bargain, "because he had power and will to fetch him to life."

Was ever such stuff obtruded on the world for argument, and that with such arrogance, before? What *his* philosophers have taught concerning patience and resignation to God, is not worth while to inquire. But patience without

* Heb. iv. 15.

† P. 39.

pain, and resignation to God without reluctance to the event, have the appearance of inconsistencies. If his philosophers teach such patience and resignation, they are fit masters for such a scholar. That is patience that is willing to endure pain, though it extort tears and groans; and that is resignation in which reluctance against the displeasing event is mastered by a submission to the divine will: but to bear what a man does not feel, is not patience but insensibility. Or in other words, it is not to endure pain, but not to feel it. And resignation to the will of God, where there is no sense nor dread of evil, no resistency against it, is not resignation to the will of God, but a stupid unconcern whether God's will be done or no, whilst the man has no will of his own, to reluct against or submit to it, to counteract or fall in with it.

Jesus was indeed the most glorious example of patience and resignation that ever was in the world. I can show him such an instance of both in his conduct, as no philosophy in the world could ever reach, no philosopher ever parallel; and that, not heroical and romantic, but real, religious and divine, without any spice of stoical apathy. When a little before his death and sufferings, and with these in full view, he prayed in the garden,—the prospect so affected him, that he was “sorrowful,”* “amazed,”† and in “grievous anguish,”‡ as the evangelists express it. “His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,”§ as himself expresses it. He could hardly live under it. Yet in all this sorrow, distress, and anguish, he prays, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”|| “If this cup may not pass from me, unless I drink it, thy will be done.”¶ “If thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.”** Here is patience and resignation. Here is the most pungent, almost oppressive sense of expected evil,—nature relucting against the bitter potion: yet the inclinations of nature not only resisted but subdued, and all the

* *τυπνισθαι*, Matt. xxvi. 31.

† *ἐκθαμβευσθαι*, Mark xiv. 33.

‡ *ἀδημονεῖν*, *ibid.*

§ Matt. xxvi. 38.

|| Ver. 39.

¶ Matt. xxvi. 42.

** Luke xxii. 42.

counter-tendencies of it submissively yielded up to his Father's pleasure. Here is a persevering firmness to meet all this evil, so painful in expectation, out of obedience to the divine will. His is not a soul insensible, but having the quickest sensations of pain, and strong aversions to it, and yet his divine principles make him patient, that is, willing to undergo and endure it. Reason and religious deference and duty overpower all these natural aversions to suffering, and bring him to acquiesce in his Father's will.

How much superior is this to stoical apathy? Patience under the sharpest sufferings, to no suffering at all? And indeed human nature must be put off ere such apathy can be put on. It is not manly, but worse than brutal: the stupidity of a post or a stone, not the patience or firmness of a man. It is what had been utterly unbecoming in Jesus, if he had had no will to raise his friend. Power to raise him, he could not want. But sympathizing tears mingled with those of his sisters had, in such case, not been unbecoming in him, as a man, or in his diviner character, but a great instance of his humanity, tenderness, commiseration and good nature;—of all which this ludicrous infidel seems to have no taste. A childish laugh, a disdainful arrogance, and a stupid insensibility to what should give him either compunction or pity, are, with him, the ornaments of man, and the glories of philosophy. How much better did the Roman poet understand human nature than Mr. Woolston and his *philosophers*, who says,

———“mollissima corda
Humano generi dare se natura fatetur
Cum lacrymas dedit.”—JUV. SAT. xv. v. 131.

‘Nature, which gave us tears, hereby design’d
To show the tenderest hearts become our kind.’

It is *this* that, in his account, raises man above the herd of mutes, and entitles him to *animus*, a *mind*; when they who are destitute of human affections have no more than an *anima*, a *sensitive soul*. But

Secondly, he observes, “that John says, Jesus called

Lazarus out of his cave with a *loud* voice.”* True; and what then? “Was dead Lazarus deafer than Jairus’ daughter or the widow’s son?” No certainly. All were equally dead, and equally deaf. “Or was Lazarus’ soul out of the call of a lower voice?” How souls, out of the body, can hear voices, or whether they can hear them at all, is nothing to his or our purpose. “Some such silly reason must be given for the loud voice here. And how absurd this is infidels will judge, till Christians can assign a better.” But his invention is only lucky in finding out silly reasons, it seems, for Christians. His business is to make Christians silly, and set infidels a-grinning. But he really exposes them, when he thinks they will judge as *he* represents. “The dead can hear the whisper of the Almighty if power go along with it,” (I suppose it should have been) “a whisper, if almighty power go along with it, as soon as the sound of a trumpet. John then should have said nothing of a loud voice, unless he meant to adapt his story to the conceptions and capacities of the vulgar, who have no apprehensions of God’s power, out of sensible and human representations of it.”† John had no meaning but to relate the fact as it was. No consideration of the capacity was needful. It is a circumstance every one can understand, who knows what it is to speak with a loud voice. Only Mr. Woolston has a mighty lust to make the professors of Christianity a set of men with mere mobbish capacities, that he may insult them with the greater apathy, I mean inhumanity. For if they are such low, despicable creatures, pity were more manly than such unmerciful scorn. What he means by “sensible and human representations of God’s power, out of which these mobbish capacities of Christians can have no apprehensions of it,” himself and his infidels may fathom,—it is out of my reach, I own.

But as low as he supposes the capacities of Christians, there are few among them but know, that a “whisper, when attended by divine power, will be as easily heard by the dead as the sound of a trumpet,” if by this he meant a whisper thus attended, will as soon call them back to life.

* P. 40.

† Ibid.

And what then? Must Jesus have only whispered at raising Lazarus, to show he acted by divine power! The dead may be raised without even a whisper, if divine power be exerted. Was not even this, therefore, to have been avoided, on the same account? If it be good arguing, Lazarus could have been raised with a whisper, therefore he should not have spoken with a loud voice; is it not full as good, he could have been raised with a nod, therefore he should not have so much as whispered, nay by a mere volition without a nod, therefore he should have stood there mute and motionless. Had this been the case, can we be sure Mr. Woolston would not have hit on some merry conceit, to make this look silly too, and refer it to the judgment of ludicrous infidels, whether this were not an absurdity in the story?

But, "why was he not content on this occasion to speak in his ordinary voice, as at raising Jairus' daughter and the widow's son?"* How does he know he then spake in his ordinary voice? The evangelists say not whether it were in this voice, or one louder than ordinary. He might, for any thing appears, call on all three with a loud voice. But admit his supposition, that there was a difference, may no reason be given of it, besides his silly ones? Sure there may.

Though the effect is certain where divine power is the agent, yet a worker of miracles, who would make it evident that he acts by divine power and commission, must give some sign that the power of God is exerted at his direction, when, where, and on whom he pleases. Can any sign be more proper than the voice, when any one is to be fetched back from the dead?—or than calling on them, "damsel, arise;"† "young man, arise?"‡ And is it not proper that this should be loud enough to be heard by all the witnesses of the miracle, and distinguished to be the miracle-worker's voice, that his interest in the effect may be discernible, as well as the operation of the divine power?

And though the human voice of the miracle-worker can contribute nothing to the effect, because the dead must be made alive ere they can, at least in the instant, hear it,—

* P. 40. † Mark v. 41. Luke viii. 54. ‡ Chap. vii. 14.

yet is it highly proper that the revived person should hear the voice, at the call of which it comes back into life; and therefore that the divine power should exert itself, in the instant the voice reaches his ears, that he may perceive life return at its call, and be directed thereby to the person who utters it.

There might, therefore, be a reason for Jesus' lifting his voice, when Lazarus was raised, though he only spake with his ordinary voice in the other cases. Jairus' daughter was in a chamber, where only five besides Jesus and herself were present. His ordinary voice could reach her ears, and was sufficient to let her and all present know, she came to life at his call, especially as he took her by the hand, and it is likely held it, till her life and senses were restored. The widow's son was raised before a great multitude, consisting of those who attended Jesus, and those who followed him to his burial. Jesus here leaves his attendants, meets the corpse, and stops the bier. His ordinary voice might reach the young man's ears, and though the whole multitude might not hear, the other circumstances, on the youth's revival, sufficiently manifested his agency in it, especially on his presenting him alive to his mother. And though it is not improbable the company present at his revival was greater than at the raising Lazarus,—yet as he was laid in a cave, to which the voice from without does not so easily penetrate, and Jesus' agency could not otherwise so plainly appear, as in the former case, it was proper that he should raise his voice, that it might the better reach Lazarus' ears lying in the cave, and all present might know it was at his call he came forth.

Besides, the calling one out of the grave into new life is a very awful work, and should strike all spectators with dread. And if an awful voice contributed any thing towards the making this impression deeper, it was fit this should concur. If the capacities of the vulgar are such, that things divine do not impress them so much, without some sensible assistance, it is no impropriety in a worker of miracles to lend them this help.

And as Jesus had openly told the Jews, that “the hour is coming when all in their graves shall hear the voice of the

Son of man, and shall come forth, they that have done well to a resurrection of life, and they that have done ill to a resurrection of damnation."* And we are elsewhere told, this great event shall be preceded with the "sound of a trumpet, and a great shout, and the voice of the archangel."† This Mr. Woolston may call, for anything I know, a foolish and incredible account; but to every mind not sickened with prejudice, must look very befitting the solemnity. It is not improbable that Jesus, on this occasion, the raising one from the grave, might by a louder voice prefigure that solemnity, and impress the minds of those present with the deeper sense of what he had told them. Mr. Woolston, it is to be hoped, will not like this reason the worse for the allegory couched in it.

But whether these or others were the reason of the loud voice here, was not Jesus a proper judge in what manner he should act? Or must he have forborne to act till he could consult with Mr. Woolston about the propriety of his conduct? Or must he pass for a juggler, and no worker of miracles, because he did not?

Thirdly, he observes, that Lazarus "came out of his cave with a napkin about his face,"‡ and he might have added, "with his grave-clothes on." How else should a man buried have come out, unless he had been thrown in naked? To see him thus come out, would have been no comely sight. But I suppose he would have had him come out habited as a living man, that he might have had demonstration that he was shut up alive.

But this circumstance of the napkin is so pretty a conceit, that we had it once before,§ and in his Rabbi's letter have it over again. This, with him, is such "an objection to the miracle, that Christian priests must own, if it were a miracle, it was ill conducted by Jesus, or foolishly related by his evangelist."|| This risible creature and his Rabbi have a wondrous lust to make Jesus, this mighty juggler, a simpleton, and all who tell or believe his story, a pack of ninnies. But why, for the sake of this circumstance, is Jesus such a

* John v. 28, 29.

‡ P. 41.

† 1 Thes. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 52.

§ P. 30.

|| P. 50.

blunderer in conduct, or his evangelist so foolish in telling the tale? Why, the "napkin being on his face, the spectators could not behold the change of countenance, from a dead to a live one, which was of the essence of the miracle."* This man has deep insight into the essences of things. I should have once thought that the essence of the miracle lay in raising the dead man to life. The sight of the countenance was not a necessary circumstance, as will presently be seen. It "was an absurdity that the napkin was not taken off," says Mr. Woolston, "that the spectators might behold the mortified look, and the miraculous change."† "Jesus, to prevent all suspicion of that," says his Rabbi, "should have first ordered this to be taken off, that his mortified countenance might have been viewed before the miraculous change. This neglect will be a lasting objection to the miracle."‡

But I can see no absurdity here, nor ground for any objection. If the spectators knew Lazarus lay in his cave dead, was it not evidence enough of the miracle to see him come forth alive? It is highly probable many of the present spectators had seen him dead, ere he was conveyed to the cave; and all the rest knew this to be the case, as well as the people in England know a man to be dead, who, after a time of sickness, is by his surviving friends publicly laid in his grave. What room would there be in such a case for suspicion? And where no suspicion, what need of satisfaction? None there doubted his death (at least neither Mr. Woolston nor his Rabbi have proved they did), nor could they doubt the miracle, when they saw him come out alive.

But "to prevent suspicion of a cheat, the napkin should have been removed," says his Rabbi. But where there was no suspicion, nor room for it, which was the case of the present spectators, what need of this precaution? For the sake of such suspicious people in future times? Would it not have been a wise speech for Jesus to have made on the occasion, "Sirs, though no one present, I dare say, doubts whether Lazarus be dead, yet to prevent all suspicion of cheat in a merry English B. D. and a Jewish Rabbi of the same name, who about seventeen hundred years hence may

* P. 30.

† P. 41.

‡ Pp. 48, 50.

suspect foul play, and think I am come to call a living man out of his cave, and give it out for a resurrection ; because, among the rest of his funeral dress, his ' face is bound about with a napkin,'—go in one of you, take this off, expose the face to public view, that every one of you here present may testify for me, so many hundred years hence, when this objection shall be started, that here was no fraud, but a real miracle." How merry would Mr. Woolston have made himself, his infidels, and his Rabbi, with this speech? How ill a conductor of his design would he have made Jesus, and how silly a tale-teller his evangelist?

Had any present suspected fraud, and signified this, no doubt they had had satisfaction, and this circumstance had been related. Yet such a suspicion had been exceedingly injurious to Jesus' known character. He was honest, open, artless, and undesigning, both in words and deeds. His worst enemies, the Pharisees, never pretended that he shammed the world with juggling tricks instead of mighty works,—though in casting out devils, they charged him with a confederacy with Beelzebub. When on his arraignment, the high priest questions him "concerning his doctrine and his disciples," he tells him, "I spake openly to the world, I ever taught in the synagogues and temple, whither the Jews resort, and in secret have I said nothing."* And had he been questioned of his deeds, he might have returned the same answer. Where he taught, there he wrought his miracles. He did them not in a corner. Nor is anything of juggling alleged against him at his trial.

Was it fit one of this character, on such an occasion, should so much as seem to clear himself of cheat and imposture?—when he had given no occasion in his conduct for any to suspect him, and none present discovered any such unworthy or unjust sentiments of him? A juggler, indeed, when he plays tricks, is wont to flourish with a show of fair-dealing, the better to impose on the unwary and credulous spectators ; but for a worker of miracles to have given himself such airs, had been quite out of character. It was more becoming such a one to leave his performances to justify themselves, and

* John xviii. 20.

defy his enemies to discredit them, whilst himself was frank and open, and proceeded whether friends or enemies were present. This was the case here. Enemies as well as friends were present, and Jesus could not be ignorant of it.

And if he were “wise enough,” as the Rabbi (much to my surprise) tells us, “to be aware of this objection, and the mighty importance of removing the napkin;”* had he been a juggler, he would certainly have had a trick for it. Had the view of the face been called for, his reputation had been ruined, without such provision. And when the crowd about him were a medley of enemies and friends, he did not know but this would be done;—so that he run a desperate risk if this were not provided for. Of this his Rabbi is well aware, and therefore says, “Christian priests must own, if this were a *miracle*, it was ill conducted by Jesus.”† “Had it been a *juggle*,” he should have said. But when Jesus appears to have made no such provision, when yet “he was wise enough to foresee the objection,” he did not act as a juggler, concerned to guard against the suspicion of his enemies, and secure his own credit. And if not as a juggler, then as a real worker of miracles, for yet we have no intermediate character. And whether this argument will best fit the Rabbi’s purpose, or that of Christians, is left to the unprejudiced sense of mankind.

Yet this “neglect in not removing the napkin,” is of such importance, that if this Rabbi is to be believed, the now Jews hereupon “deny the miracle.”‡ I much question this: for “though blindness has befallen them,” I cannot think them in general so very weak. Their ancestors did not think it so momentous a matter, nor for the sake of this circumstance disbelieve the fact. This is not only plain from other parts of the narration in the evangelist, but from this very circumstance being in it. For had this been so mighty and “lasting an objection,”§ as he tells us, “against the miracle,” and so esteemed by the Jews of that time, though John had “outlived all the witnesses who could detect the fraud,” he had not so far outlived all his senses as to forget this objection, and the mischief it did; and must reasonably

* P. 50.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

§ Ibid.

think, what had been might be again,—and therefore, sure would have left this circumstance of the napkin out of his story; unless the whole were mere invention, which the Rabbi cannot say, whatever Mr. Woolston may, because he makes the juggling conduct of Jesus in this miracle one article of his indictment. However, unless John were past dotage, he could not leave this circumstance in, had the Jews of that time laid such a stress on it. I have read his gospel, and cannot believe him so far gone; and must hence conclude, that either the Jews of that time were less sagacious than the present Jews, or that the now Jews (if this Rabbi believeth them not) lay mighty stress on what their ancestors, full as wise as they, never thought would bear it.

Fourthly, he observes, “that St. John says, many of the Jews, who had seen the things that Jesus did, here believed on him, and some of them, who did not believe, went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what Jesus had done; that is, in this pretended miracle, and how the business was transacted.”*—“After what manner the intrigue was managed, and complained of the fraud,”† says his Rabbi: “Whereupon,” says Mr. Woolston (upon what but this report and complaint,) “the chief priests and Pharisees were so incensed, that from that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death,”‡ referring us to ver. 53. His Rabbi chimes in with him. “Jesus counterfeited a miracle, and was detected in the operation; whereupon”—(viz. this counterfeiting and detection)—“the chief priests from that day took counsel to put the impostor and this confederate to death.”§ For though it is not said of Jesus and Lazarus, it is said of what, he tells us, is an exact parallel.¶ And elsewhere he tells us, “This piece of fraud, in all probability, was one article of the indictment against Jesus; because the chief priests and Pharisees, from the date of this pretended miracle, took counsel together to put him to death, not clandestinely, nor tumultuously, but judicially, and that on unquestionable detection of the fraud.”¶

“This circumstance,” Mr. Woolston says, “he had not mentioned for the honour of Jesus”—(of which his whole

* P. 41. † P. 49. ‡ P. 42. § P. 47. ¶ P. 48. ¶ P. 51.

piece shows he is very tender)—“but upon account of his Rabbi’s letter, who has hence formed an objection against Lazarus’ resurrection, which he has published, that Christianity might not suffer by the Rabbi’s handing it about clandestinely. But from these circumstances he dares not argue.”* Which to me is very wonderful. For I am sure he and his Rabbi too dare falsify the story in John, in the most barefaced and notorious manner.

For John’s relation is this: “Then many of the Jews who came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what Jesus had done.”† Was this report of theirs, how the intrigue was managed, how the affair in the pretended miracle was transacted, as Mr. Woolston and his Rabbi say? Did it contain any complaint of fraud? Attend to what follows in John, “Then the chief priests and Pharisees gathered a council,”‡ *συβέδριον*. This was not to be done presently. It is probably meant of the sanhedrim, their chief council, which must be summoned ere they could convene, and the members it is likely, lived dispersed over the city. It might be a day or two ere they assembled. But when they are met, what is the subject of their consultation? Is there any hint of fraud detected? Are the witnesses summoned to make it out? Is it opened by any member? No, they appear all convinced of a real miracle, and like people in despair cry out, “What do we? for this man does many miracles. If we let him alone all men will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.”§ If the fraud was detected, whether by the “napkin, the observed motion of the body before the word of command, or the fragments of the food on which” one bound hand and foot, with his face tied up in a napkin, “subsisted,” as the Rabbi suggests,|| for four days,—why are they in such a panic? Was there any danger “all men should believe on him,” whom they could unquestionably prove an impostor, and resolved to indict and condemn as such, and put both him and his confederate to death for the fraud by them unquestionably detected?

* P. 42. † John xv. 45, 46. ‡ Ver. 47. § Ver. 47, 48. || P. 49.

But to go on with John's relation.—When this danger from the Romans is suggested, Caiaphas, the high priest that year, says, “ye know nothing at all, nor consider, that it is expedient for us that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”* It is upon the expediency of taking him off, lest upon his setting up for a temporal prince, which they expected the Messiah would be, the Romans should be provoked to destroy them, that they took counsel to put him to death, and that by form of law. And it is from this date, not that of the pretended miracle, this counsel is taken. It is not because he was an impostor, and they could prove it upon him,—not because the fraud was detected and complained of; but because they knew it was a real miracle, and feared it would gain Jesus much credit and many disciples, and expose them to danger from the Romans, by his setting up his kingdom amongst them. And are not these circumstances a manifest discredit to the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection? I am sure they are no credit to Mr. Woolston and his Rabbi. Men who can by such interpolations pervert the meaning of a writer, and make him say the direct contrary to what he does say, and that so openly that a child, upon comparing them, must see it, will soon write themselves out of credit with all who have common sense or honesty.

But we have not yet all. After this *fair account* of the reason why the Jews resolved to put Jesus to death, Mr. Woolston foists into the story a passage out of the next chapter, which happened not till some time after. “They consulted,” says he, “to put Lazarus also to death;” and then adds, “Jesus therefore, and his disciples and Lazarus fled for it, for ‘THEY walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near the wilderness (a convenient hiding place) and there continued with his disciples.’”† Another gross falsification, in which Mr. Woolston tacks things so together, as to make poor dotting John tell his tale very ungrammatically, “Jesus and his disciples, and Lazarus fled, for THEY walked no more, &c., but went, &c., and continued with his disciples;” that is, Jesus and

* John xi. 49, 50.

† P. 42.

his disciples, and Lazarus walked, and went and continued with his disciples! Who now is the dotard, John or Mr. Woolston? It will be seen when we come to John's relation.

His Rabbi falsifies the text in the same manner, transposing the words, to render it a little more grammatical. "Why," says he, "did Jesus and his disciples, with Lazarus, run away and abscond? For they walked no more—but went—and there Jesus continued with his disciples,"* quoting for it, ver. 54. This indeed is not exceeding grammatical, though an amendment on Mr. Woolston.

JOHN'S plain story is much better told; for having mentioned the consultation to put him to death, he adds, "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near the wilderness, and there continued with his disciples,"† viz. the twelve, his usual attendants. Not a word is there of Lazarus in the passage, unless he be included in the disciples, which neither Mr. Woolston nor his Rabbi have right to do, both having excluded him; one expressing himself, "Jesus, and his disciples, and Lazarus;" the other, "Jesus, and his disciples, with Lazarus." It is to raise an outcry of guilt as an evidence of fraud, that both falsify the story, and make Lazarus on this occasion abscond,—whereas at this time Lazarus does not appear to have been in any danger. It was upon Jesus' coming again to Bethany, some distance of time afterward, and but "six days before the passover,"‡ and the great resort of the Jews, not only to see Jesus, but Lazarus whom he had raised, that the Jews consulted to put Lazarus to death also; because, on his score, "many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus."§ And before his death was consulted, there was no reason for his absconding, and after, there was no room for it. The very next day Jesus makes his entrance into Jerusalem,|| and is there publicly teaching every day, till he is apprehended four days afterward. Lazarus, therefore, did not abscond with Jesus, nor, as appears in the evangelists, abscond at all. This is mere invention of this double writer, without any colour from the evangelical story.

* P. 44. † John xi. 54. ‡ Ch. xii. 1. § Ver. 9, 10, 11.
|| John xii. 12.

Nor did Jesus himself abscond, though he withdrew from the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Many, both friends and enemies, knew where he was, and resorted to him, as is plain from the evangelist.* And notwithstanding the Rabbi's confidence, that "his ancestors unquestionably detected the fraud, and were thereupon in the right to prosecute with severity all concerned in it;" this very circumstance, with which he makes such ado, even according to his own account, is evidence unquestionable that he is mistaken. Jesus' disciples had, without doubt, no braver spirits than their Master. Had they therefore been privy to the fraud, and known the detection of it by the Jews, and that they "had a right to punish all concerned in it;" they knew they did not want inclination, that themselves were not unconcerned, nor is it likely they would have gone and absconded with Jesus,—but, as they did afterward at his apprehension, "had left him and fled,"† and shifted each for himself. They would not have thought themselves safe in his company, no not in "a wilderness in the country," as his Rabbi words it, "how convenient an hiding-place soever;"‡ much less have appeared with him there, and much less still have come back with him to Jerusalem, and appeared publicly there in defiance of them who had "detected the cheat," and resolved for it to put him to death, especially when the "populace, in such case, would hardly wait the leisure of justice to despatch and make terrible examples of them,"§ or, in Mr. Woolston's language, "to sacrifice them."|| These circumstances needed not have set Mr. Woolston a trembling; his Rabbi, with all his sedate reasonings, has found nothing in them to impair the credit of the miracle.

How? "Is not here a plain sign of guilt and fraud?" Where? "Men who have God's truth, and power, and cause on their sides, never want courage and resolution to stand to it. And however Christian priests may palliate the cowardly and timorous conduct of Jesus and his confederates in this case,—yet with me it is like demonstration, there was a discovered cheat in the miracle; or they would have undoubtedly faced their enemies without fears and apprehensions

* Mat. xix. 20. † Mark iv. 50. ‡ P. 48. § Ibid. || P. 42.

of danger from them.”* I doubt Mr. Woolston and this sedate reasoner know little of demonstration. To invent facts in defiance of the true relation, cited to vouch for them, and then draw conclusions from them, is as unlike demonstration as Mr. Woolston’s ludicrous rant is like sober reasoning, or a jackpudding a B.D. The confederate meant, absconded not. And if Jesus for a while withdrew from Jerusalem, courage and resolution are different things from daring temerity. And shortly after, Jesus had courage and resolution to “face his enemies,” appear publicly in the temple, preach openly, and openly rebuke the Jews, even though he knew and foretold his disciples, † they would “sacrifice him,” as this merry gentleman expresses it.

And is not the non-absconding of the confederate, and this appearance of the principal again, and his “undaunted facing of his enemies,” though he knew they would take away his life, as he had often told his disciples, nay, and yielding himself into their hands, when he had the power to save himself, ‡ much more like demonstration that he had God’s “cause, and truth, and power on his side?”

When he is brought to his trial, of which the evangelists have given us a pretty large account, nothing of fraud or imposture in this or any other miracle appears to have been alleged against him, much less proved. This Rabbi indeed tells us, that, “according to his own evangelists, he was arraigned as a deceiver and blasphemer, in pretending to the sonship and power of God by his miracles, and in all probability,” says he, “this piece of fraud was an article of his indictment.”§ This is like the rest, foul misrepresentation. His evangelists say not a word, give not a hint of his being arraigned as a “deceiver, in pretending to the sonship and power of God by his miracles,” or even a “blasphemer,” on this account. It plainly appears they would have made him a capital offender, || and it is not unlikely, might aim at proving blasphemy on him, if they could. Witnesses they suborned, but could get none who agreed in their testimony. Their proof was so deficient, that they seek matter of con-

* Pp. 44, 45. † Luke xviii. 31—34. ‡ John xviii. 6; Mat. xxvi. 53. § P. 51. || Mat. xxvi. 57—67; Mark xiv. 53—65; Luke xxii. 6, &c.; John xviii. 19—22.

demnation from his own mouth. When they cannot get him to accuse himself, the high priest puts him to his oath, "if he were the Christ, the Son of God." And on his owning it, "rends his clothes, and charges him with blasphemy." The rest concur in this sentiment, and he is condemned. No proof of imposture is made, or offered to be made on his trial; his bare acknowledgment of his being Messias, is all the crime laid to his charge. With being a deceiver he is not charged at all, any farther than is implied in his owning himself for Messias. Into the merits of the cause they enter not; nor inquire whether he pretended to make out this by miracles,—nor whether his miracles were real or feigned, instances of divine power or juggling tricks and imposture. And the charge brought against him to Pilate is, that he pretended to be the Messiah, and to set up for a king, to the prejudice of Cæsar's right.* Not a word is muttered of any juggling tricks used by him, to fix himself on the throne. And to Pilate he appears innocent. Is not this Rabbi now a very honest man as well as sedate reasoner?

But to show how little regard he has to what he says, he presently belies the evangelist again. "It is plain," says he, from the story in John, that there was a dispute among the by-standers at Lazarus' resurrection, whether it were a miracle or no."† The contrary to which, as has been shown already, is the truth. Those who went away to the Pharisees knew, and reported it be a miracle. But he then advances a senseless opinion of the present Jews, (if they are not belied by him as well as John,) into a tradition, and with this tradition would discredit a history, penned by a witness to the fact, established in credit through all ages since to the present time; and might have been to all future generations, had not he, by his unthought-of observations, "ruined its credit," as he tells us,‡ with an air so perfectly resembling the publisher of his letter, that from this single circumstance (though there are many more) I dare avér this Rabbi is that self-same Thomas Woolston, B.D.

But what is this wonder-working tradition? "That the

* Mat. xxvii. 11; Luke xxiii. 2, 3; John xviii. 33—36; xix. 12.

† P. 51.

‡ P. 53.

chief priests and civil magistrates of Bethany, for the better determining the dispute,"—What dispute, but that of the "by-standers, whether it were a miracle?" Plain, as he here tells us, from the story in John, but elsewhere certain, from Christian commentators. Though how their opinion should make that certain, which appears not in the story, no one, but such sedate reasoners as he and his close friend can tell.—And "quieting the minds of the people." What people? Those at the cave, or those of Jerusalem,—or the people's minds in general?—which do not appear to have been disturbed. But what did they for this needless purpose? * "They require that Jesus should re-act the miracle on another person, there lately dead and buried." And what followed? "He declining this test of his power, the whole multitude of the believers before, as well as unbelievers, questioned the resurrection of Lazarus, and were highly incensed against both, for the deceit in it. And this was one reason for that vehement and universal outcry and demand, at Jesus' trial, for his crucifixion." Indeed, "for the certainty of this tradition or opinion," he says, "he will not answer;" which is a piece of modesty very unusual. "But it has the face of truth and credibility." How so? "He dares appeal to Christian priests and magistrates, whether they would not require such a miracle to be acted over again, in case of a dispute about its truth. And if the juggler refused, whether there would not be a clamour, a general clamour against him?" Was there ever a reasoner so sedate? And is this all that is necessary to make this tradition have the face of credibility?

Does he not lay the dispute among the by-standers, and the disquiet in the minds of the people occasioned by it, as the foundation of this tradition?—which is plain either in John, or certain in Christian commentators. This is not plain in John, but the contrary is most plain. Has a story without a bottom the face of credibility? If there was no dispute, nor such disquiet of mind as, in John it is plain there was not,—what need the chief priests or civil magistrates of Bethany to take this or any other measures to determine the dispute or quiet people's minds?

* Pp. 51, 52.

I am at a loss, too, who these civil magistrates of Bethany were, who were joined in commission with the chief priests for this needless but important determination. It is called *κώμη*, *vicus*, 'a village.' Its distance from Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs, shows it could not be a place of any considerable largeness;—suppose such a place as Bethnal-Green. The civil magistrates, if it were a village as considerable as Highgate, Hampstead, or Newington, here in England, could be no other than the constable, headborough, and tything-man. It would sound somewhat oddly, were such officers put into a commission, with two or three of our bishops, to issue a dispute of this nature. But the chief priests of the Jews, and the civil magistrates of their villages, might be more upon a par. Nor would they take snuff, as I dare say Mr. Woolston believes our English bishops would, at making a bench, with such civil magistrates here.

But be this as it will, with himself, one would think this tradition should not have the "least face of credibility." He had told us before, "It is certain from Christian commentators, some of the by-standers did not believe the miracle, but went to the Pharisees, and told how the intrigue was managed, and complained of the fraud."* And "he can tell how they discovered it too." Has it now "the face of truth or credibility," that when the imposture was detected, and they had the proofs in their hands, that the senate of the Jews should send a deputation of chief priests to join the magistrates of Bethany, in a fresh trial of the impostor? Would any Christian priest and magistrate advise in such a case, to such deputation? For what, to determine a matter already determined,—or to quiet the people's minds? Had they not been quieted at once, by his trial and condemnation on clear evidence? I doubt, after all, the unquestionable evidence was to be questioned, or else they had never called the juggler to a fresh test of his power.

One would think too, that after such a discovery and dispute upon the spot, and such complaint of the fraud to the chief council of the Jews, a juggler, especially one so cowardly and poor-spirited as this Rabbi and his friend repre-

* P. 49.

sent Jesus, could not have the front to stay upon the place till this deputation arrived, but should have taken to his heels on the first news; much less that he should some time after, for many days together, have publicly appeared in Jerusalem and the very temple.

But should he have had such uncommon assurance, why was he not presently apprehended, and brought to justice? Why, when they had proof of fraud in the former miracle, and he refused to come to the test afresh, did they let him escape? Had not the magistrates of Bethany, with a deputation of the chief priests, authority to arrest such a criminal? This could not be wanting. Nor could they want hands, when the "whole multitude, believers and unbelievers, were so incensed against him and his confederate." Why were they not clapped up in prison, but suffered to go off from this "awful tribunal," and get away to a "convenient hiding-place, to a wilderness in the country?"

And if the "whole multitude were so incensed against him," upon this detection, how came so many to resort to Bethany to see him and Lazarus, upon his return thither some time after? * How came such multitudes to attend him in his entrance into Jerusalem, that the Pharisees cry, "the world was gone after him?" † And that, when he afterward rebuked the scribes and Pharisees in the temple, and they "sought to lay hands on him, but feared the multitude, who took him for a prophet?" ‡ And how certain is it now, that the detection of "this fraud was one reason of the general cry for his crucifixion?" And what a mighty matter has this Rabbi made of this terrible circumstance?

He should have stuck to that argument of his, "That there are no memorials of the life and miracles of Jesus extant, but what are written by his disciples." § And who else should have written these memorials? His enemies? No doubt; for had such memorials been written, he would have concluded their truth out of question, and this had destroyed the credit of Christianity. And cannot he conclude the reports of his disciples false without doubt, and ruin its credit as effectually? He could have no memorials but either from

* John xii. 9.

† Ver. 19.

‡ Mat. xxi. 45, 46.

§ P. 50.

friends or enemies. "But not only has old time devoured, but Christians when they got power into their hands, wilfully destroyed many writings of our ancestors, as well as of Celsus and Porphyry; else, I doubt not, but they would have given us clear light into the imposture of Lazarus' resurrection." It is but asserting roundly without evidence, and then concluding boldly without doubt, and the business is done. Are not this sort of Jews and infidels very wise believers? But how unlikely this is to be fact, is plain from the progress Christianity made, which not only spread over all the Lesser Asia, but in a manner the whole Roman empire, in about sixty years after our Saviour's death; which, if his ancestors had been able to disprove this, or any other miracle of Jesus, would have been next to impossible.

He needed not to have falsified the evangelical relation, but have told a story of the confederacy of Christians with the heathen Romans, in dissolving the Jewish state, and "destroying their judicial records," and the roguery of these Romans, when the empire was become Christian, in burning all writings against them, both Jewish and heathen; and then have concluded, no doubt "had these been remaining, they would have demonstrated Christianity to be imposture." And those who will take his word for facts and inferences, have what "with him is like demonstration"* against it now. Whether Christians did play such tricks, I cannot say;—but at the same time I cannot take his word for it, and he brings no vouchers. But if the writings of his ancestors were of the same sort with his, they were very weak to make such destruction of them. It was very needless labour. If advancing facts without vouchers, drawing inferences from premises on which they have no dependence, and putting off conclusions thus drawn, with assurance unparalleled, will ruin the evidence of Christianity, he will "despatch it without waiting the leisure of justice." But if these arms will not destroy it, he has no better with which to batter or overturn it.

* P. 45.

SECTION VII.

THE REST OF THE RABBI'S LETTER CONSIDERED.

All else in the Rabbi's letter that is of moment, turns on the unlikelihood that the Jews should persecute Jesus and Lazarus for such a miracle. But he gives himself such indecent liberties throughout, against Jesus and his religion, that it can never enter into my head that it has a Jew for its author. No Rabbi amongst them could be so void of prudence and decency as to fall foul on the religion of a country where they have such liberty for worship and traffic, and such protection in both, as to call this not only "the pretended miracle,"* but "wicked imposture,"† "notorious imposture,"‡ "monstrous imposture,"§ as "foolish and wicked imposture as ever was contrived or transacted in the world; so that it is no wonder the people, with unanimous voice, called for the release of Barabbas, a robber and murderer before Jesus."|| This language is bidding defiance to all laws of civility and good manners, as well as outraging Christianity. If a Rabbi had handed about such an assault on the professed religion of Britain, clandestinely, he would never have been so outrageous as to desire its publication,¶ and "claim a reasonable liberty"*** of writing in this manner for themselves. He must be somewhat worse than a Jew, who could act this part. I dare say it is the ludicrous Mr. Woolston assuming this character, that he might vent his spite against Christianity in the name of an enemy without restraint, and pour out the rancour of his heart, with a grave face, and without any grimace.

But let us hear him, "Had there been an indisputable miracle wrought, why were the chief priests and Pharisees so incensed against Jesus and Lazarus, as to put them to death for it? Where was the provocation? I can see none."†† But did he never hear a vile and wicked thing done without provocation? What injury has he, in his double capacity of

* P. 53. † P. 43. ‡ P. 42. § P. 45. || P. 53.
 ¶ P. 42. ** P. 54. †† P. 43.

B.D. and Rabbi, received from Jesus and his religion? I can see no provocation, for this outrage to it. What then? Must I not therefore believe mine eyes?—not to observe, that it was not for the miracle that they consulted to put either Jesus or Lazarus to death, as will more fully appear presently.

Though “the Jews were never so cankered with malice and hatred to Jesus before, yet such a stupendous miracle was enough to stop their mouths and turn their hearts.”* If by enough he means enough in reason, he is right. But what is enough in all reason, does not always produce the effects which might reasonably have been expected. It might reasonably have been expected that the wonders God did in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness by Moses, should have cured the unbelief and rebellion of the ancient Israelites. They “were enough to stop their mouths and turn their hearts.” Yet, if the letter of their story deserves any credit, they had no such effect. Perhaps their story, according to the letter, is with the Rabbi brimful of absurdities too. But the observation will be of some weight with all sober Jews, and all others among mankind, who are not for turning all the histories and records of past time into a jest.

“Or if their prejudices against Jesus were insuperable, and they hated him but the more for the number and greatness of his miracles, yet why is poor Lazarus, inoffensive Lazarus, the object of their hatred too? Your divines are to give a credible account of this, and such as will comport with reason and sense, or we shall conclude it was fraud detected, in this pretended miracle, that so provoked the indignation of our ancestors.”† But what need have our divines to give an account of that, which is already accounted for by the evangelist,—and that in a way “probable, credible, and comporting both with reason and sense?” The Jews’ prejudices against Jesus and his religion enraged them against Lazarus. They were maddened to see such resort to him and Jesus, and that on account of his resurrection so many believed.

“To say, which is all can be said, to be sure, that it was

* P. 43.

† Ibid.

mere inhumanity, and barbarity, and brutality in the Jews, will not do here.”* Why? “It will never go down with reasonable and unprejudiced men, who must have other conceptions of human nature in all ages and nations, than to think it possible that a man in Lazarus’ case can be persecuted for having such a good work done on him.” Admit this,—what then? “Why then was he hated and persecuted? I say for this and no other reason”—(to be sure; here Thomas Woolston appears again)—“than because he was a confederate with Jesus in this wicked imposture.” Whether the premises be true or false, right or wrong, Thomas Woolston and this sedate reasoner are sure of the conclusion. “I say for this and no other reason,” and then the conclusion is indisputable. But the evangelist has assigned another reason. It was not for the good work done on him, but the resort of the Jews to see him, and their believing on Jesus hereupon, that Lazarus was hated and persecuted.

And if human nature “cannot possibly hate a man merely on account of his having been raised from the dead;” yet human nature, under the sway of malice and spite, may be guilty of inhumanity, barbarity, and brutality, and somewhat worse. The Jews hated Jesus and his doctrine much; the good liking the people showed to hear it, and the influence his miracles had towards procuring him credit, provoked them more; and the resurrection of Lazarus contributing to the increase of his disciples, added still to their spite. Human minds, under the conduct of such passions, do not calmly weigh what is humane or just, but consider only what will remove the occasion of uneasiness, or gratify the appetite to hurt; and if power be not wanting, right or wrong this shall be done;—and he is a mere stranger to human nature in all ages and places who knows not that this is too common. And Lazarus, for the reason mentioned, becoming the object of their spite, his removal would be a natural suggestion. But he goes on.

“For all the reports of your gospel, it is unnatural to hate a miraculous healer of diseases; and there must be some-

* Pp. 43, 44.

what suppressed of the reason of the Jews' inveteracy to Jesus, or his healing power must have reconciled them to him. But that they should not only hate Jesus for raising the dead, but the person raised by him, is improbable, incredible, impossible, and therefore the whole gospel is romance."*

Q. E. D. At least, as his Rabbi words it, "it is like demonstration." But, alas! this conclusion is drawn from premises that never were, nor will be allowed. This is not the report of the gospels. It may be as "improbable, incredible, or impossible," as he pleases, "to hate one for being a miraculous healer of diseases, and raiser of the dead;" and more, "to hate one for having such a good work done on him;" but the evangelical report is not therefore improbable, &c. The account given of the hatred to Jesus and Lazarus in the gospel is very different from this.

And though it be unnatural to hate one for miraculously healing diseases, will it thence follow that a prophet may not be hated, who is sent from heaven to teach a pure and spiritual religion, directly contrary to the taste and temper of the hireling priests of that day, who deals plainly with men of all sorts and ranks, uncasing those in highest esteem for sanctity, and laying open their gross hypocrisy under a disguise of eminent devotion, and that to their very teeth, and showing how they had corrupted religion, and in a manner destroyed it; who proves his authority for what he does and says, by miraculous powers and operations; and finally, who makes disciples hereupon, and grows everywhere into esteem and reputation? Is it impossible, incredible, or at all unlikely, that he should provoke the wrath of all sorts, the pretenders to sanctity, and the hireling priests, in a particular manner? And when themselves sunk in esteem, and the religious maxims, rites, usages which they cried up and magnified, and by which they got and maintained their credit, and procured their wealth, grew into contempt, would the prophet's healing diseases miraculously, or raising the dead, reconcile them to him,—and prevail with them too, to renounce all their favourite sentiments, emoluments and interests, and embrace a religion so opposite to their own

taste, and to that which, in their conceit, came originally from God, and was handed down through a succession of many ages?

Which is most likely, according to all accounts of human nature, in all ages and nations,—that these men should embrace the doctrines or hate the teacher? And if, for his doctrine's sake, they hated the teacher, must they not hate him the more for his miraculous powers, since these must establish his credit,—yea, though they were powers of healing? The more good of this sort he did, the more mischief, in their account, would he be likely to do, that is, the more hurt to them. Though they did not hate him as a miraculous healer; yet as such a prophet they would hate him the more for his miraculous powers and operations. * And if any one person raised by him from the dead, did in a particular manner raise his credit and procure him disciples, would they not hate him too? And if nothing else offered, so likely to prevent the apprehended mischief, would they stick at taking both off,—especially if they could do it in a judicial way, or by form of law.

No, says he, “on such a miracle they would be mute as fishes, or if they did fret inwardly for the loss of their interests, they would have more prudence than to show their anger openly, and persecute for it, both agent and patient.”* Does not this Rabbi talk here like one perfectly well acquainted with human nature in all ages and nations? Does rage against one for crossing interests and inclinations, especially when armed with power, use to consult prudence,—any other, I mean, than what will direct in securing valued interests, and pursuing beloved inclinations? And is any thing more proper for this purpose than the removal of what crosses or interferes with both? Could it be prudence, in their account, to leave such a miracle-worker, to establish his reputation, and destroy both their credit and interest? Could I believe this Rabbi a Jew, I could point him to some passages in their own history, that would manifest this to be sorry sophistry; but Rabbi Woolston appears so manifestly here, that it would be lost labour. He believes as little of the letter of the Old as he does of the New Testament.

* P. 47.

But in this very sneer, which is directed to the English bishops and clergy, there is plain evidence that this is known sophistry, and that he is arguing against the sense and conviction of his own mind. These "in case of a like miracle against an hireling priesthood, would be as mute as fishes, or if they did fret inwardly, they would have more prudence (ask them else) than to show their anger." Is not this parenthesis manifest irony,—in which one thing is said, and the quite contrary meant, viz. that "they would openly show their anger?" And does not Mr. Woolston decently intimate in his dedication,* that the bishops have it in their heads and hearts to advance him highly in the world, and design him a mystical crown of glory? Can he tell the world, that the English bishops are so much enraged against him, as openly to show their anger in this manner,—and yet tell us that the miracle must have silenced all the hireling priests of that day, who had a much more formidable enemy in Jesus, sure, than the English bishops and clergy have in Mr. Woolston, how much soever he swells in his own conceit, against whom therefore they had much more reason to be enraged. To which may be added, that they were a set of much wickeder men, according to the account of their own historian Josephus, if he be to be literally interpreted.

"If historians," says he, "can parallel this story of the malignity of the Jews towards Jesus and Lazarus, upon such a real miracle, with any thing equally barbarous and inhuman in any other sect or nation, we will acknowledge the truth of it, against our sect and nation. Or if such inhumanity, abstractedly considered, be at all agreeable to the conception any can form of human nature, in the most uncivilized and brutish people, we will allow our ancestors in that case, to be that people."† All this is gross sophistry, on a known wrong state of the fact, viz. "that the miracle was the sole cause of the malignity;" the contrary to which so manifestly appears in the evangelist, that Mr. Woolston could not but see it. And though historians "cannot parallel this case," which in the whole history of the world, he knows is not to be paralleled, nor was anything ever like it

* Pp. iv, v.

† P. 46.

but in their own nation; yet he knows nothing of human nature who knows not that such malignity, growing out of such causes, is not only very possible, but too common among people civilized; and that such have practised barbarity and inhumanity, that would have been shocking to the more brutal and uncivilized, nay the most so among the nations.

One could wish nothing like it occurred in their own history. But there hardly was a prophet amongst them from Moses to Jesus, even though he wrought miracles, but provoked the rage of that people, and was hated and persecuted by them, and in danger of his life. Moses himself could not escape their resentments. Not long after he had miraculously brought them out of Egypt, and saved them at the Red Sea, he complains to God that “they were ready to stone him.”* At the report of the spies, “the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron,” and bade stone Caleb and Joshua, if not Moses and Aaron too.† At another time “they gathered themselves together against Aaron and against Moses.”‡ Does not God himself charge them with being “a stiff-necked people?”§ And Moses tells them, “They did not believe, but had been rebellious from the day he knew them.”||

Did not Elijah work miracles, and among the rest raise a dead child to life?¶ Yet he complains that the children of Israel “had forsaken God’s covenant, and slain his prophets, that he only was left, and they sought his life too, because he was jealous for the Lord God of hosts.”**

Elisha also wrought miracles, raised the Shunamite’s son, supplied the army of king Joram and his confederates with water, &c.†† Yet did not this very king, when in the siege of Samaria they suffered famine, and a woman complained to him against her neighbour for hiding her son, when she had promised he should be slain and dressed, as hers had been before, “swear, that the head of Elisha should not stand on him that day?”‡‡—and this without any provocation. Did

* Exod. xvii. 4. † Num. xiv. 2, 10. ‡ Num. xx. 3. § Deut. ix. 13. || Ver. 23, 24. ¶ 1 Kings xvii. 22. ** Ch. xix. 14. †† 2 Kings iii. 20. ‡‡ Ch. vi. 27—31.

the Jews, therefore, in Jesus' case, act otherwise than their forefathers had done, only that they now carried their rancour higher, as they were nearer "filling up the measure of their sins?" Or are all these things improbable, incredible, and impossible in the letter without the mystery? No doubt. For this same Rabbi and Thomas Woolston are the self-same person, in the two different characters of a sedate reasoner and a sportive buffoon. But he goes on.

"Such a real and indisputable miracle, were it now to be wrought, in confirmation of Christianity, I dare say, would bring all us Jews, to a man, into the belief of it."* And I dare say this is Thomas Woolston again, from the daring assurance appearing in it. "And I do not think it possible for any people to be so biassed, bigoted, and prejudiced, as not to be wrought on by it." And his "I do not think so," is demonstration. "Or if they would not part with their interests and prejudices upon it, they would have more wit and temper than to break out into a rage against all or any concerned in it." This is a good hearing concerning the Jews, might one take *his* word for it. If it be fact, they are much mended.

I would refer this Rabbi to the account given of them of old by the Psalmist, who recounts many real and indisputable miracles wrought amongst them, but yet ever and anon comes in somewhat to make out the general character given them at the beginning, "a stubborn and rebellious generation."† Thus, "he clave the rock, and gave them water as out of the great depths—and they sinned yet more against him."‡ "He gave them their desire, but whilst the meat was in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works."§ "He cast the heathen out before them, and divided them an inheritance by line—Yet they provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies, but turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers, and provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their images."|| These undoubted miracles did

* P. 46.

† Ps. lxxviii. 8.

‡ Ver. 15, 17.

§ Ver. 29—32.

|| Ver. 55—59.

not prevail with them to observe their own religion;—how well-grounded an assurance, now, has Rabbi Woolston that one such miracle would now bring them all, “to a man,” into the belief of Christianity? And after this account of them from their own sacred writings, what does his “I do not think that any people can be so bigoted, biassed,” &c., argue, but his own unparalleled assurance? But let us hear him out.

“Mankind may in some cases be so obdurate, and so hard of belief, as to stand it out against sense, reason, and demonstration; but I will not think worse of our ancestors than the rest of mankind, or that they, any more than others, would have withstood a clear and indisputable miracle in Lazarus’ resuscitation.”* We charge not this Rabbi’s ancestors with an obduracy in the case, superior to that of the rest of mankind. Others as well as they disbelieved Christianity, in spite of indisputable miracles, and hated and persecuted the preachers of it, though “they healed the sick and raised the dead,”—and that out of interest and prejudices in favour of a much worse religion than that of the Jews, viz. gross heathen idolatry, of which the Jews had been cured long before the time of Jesus. And yet if we did, the account given of them in their own sacred books might bear us out herein. For says God to Ezekiel, “Thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel: not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, which thou canst not understand. Surely had I sent thee to them they would have hearkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted. But as an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead. Fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”†

But this prophet wrought no miracles, whereas “such a manifest miracle, let it be wrought for what end and purpose we can possibly imagine, would strike men with awe and reverence. And none could hate or persecute the author of the miracle.”‡ Why? “Lest he who could raise the dead

* P. 43.

† Ezek. iii. 5—10.

‡ P. 48.

should exert his power against themselves, and either wound or smite them dead with it." And what then? "Therefore the resurrection of Lazarus, on the certain knowledge of our ancestors, was all fraud." Q. E. D. These ancestors of his, had not this been the case, "would have revered and adored Jesus' power." "To be sure," as Mr. Woolston says. And this assurance in these two authors in one is demonstration, at least with them it is like it. I agree with this letter-writer, that fear and reverence, on such a miracle were very reasonable. And did men always act as reason advises, this fear in such a case, would lay them under restraint, and make them "show more wit and temper than to rage against any concerned in it," as he elsewhere has it.* But he who knows anything of human nature, knows the bulk of mankind, both in higher and lower life, are more led by interest, appetite, and passion than by reason; and that reason, with the aid of miracles, does not always get the better of these propensions.

I suppose this Rabbi has read in their own sacred story,† that Aaron and Miriam once spake against Moses, as if he took too much upon him, since they also "were prophets;" and making an handle of his marrying the Ethiopian woman, sought to depreciate him in the people's esteem, and raise a spirit of sedition against him. God hereupon interposes, shows the superiority of Moses to them and other prophets; and Miriam is hereupon struck with a leprosy. Here was an unquestionable miracle, and just reflections would have possessed all with a fear of doing the like.

Yet in a little while "Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with two hundred and fifty princes more, men of renown in the congregation," are engaged in a fresh sedition against Moses and Aaron.‡ And when God had shown his displeasure against them, "by causing the earth to open and swallow them up alive:"§ the very next day, instead of being impressed with fear by this awful instance of miraculous power, "the congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron,"|| and charged them with "slaying the Lord's people;" and seem disposed, in Mr. Woolston's language, to "sacrifice

* P. 46.

† Num. xii.

‡ Ch. xvi.

§ Ver. 32, 34.

|| Num. xvi. 41, 42.

them." If such miraculous punishments awakened none of these reasonable fears in the ancestors of these Jews, what room is there to suppose that those in the time of Jesus should, by the fear of his "wounding or smiting them dead," be kept in temper, when he had exerted no miraculous powers in punishing or destroying any? Were they more reasonable, more fearful, or had they more command of their temper than their forefathers?

Elijah wrought a miracle in "calling for fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice:"* and this at a convention of the people of Israel on a royal summons, together with all the prophets of Baal and the groves; and that after a challenge that he should be owned for God, whose prophet should fetch down fire for this purpose. This, it is to be hoped, was an indisputable miracle done in presence of king Ahab and all Israel. It wrought conviction, for the present, on all, that Jehovah was God, and Elijah's the true religion; and they assist in seizing Baal's prophets, whom Elijah slew,—and immediately after brings rain from heaven, after three years drought. But was every one impressed with fear hereupon, that he who could by his prayers bring down fire from heaven, and procure either rain or drought, could avenge himself on those who hated him? Were they "to a man," reconciled to him and his religion? Jezebel, it is certain, was not thus impressed; for upon the news, she immediately sends him a message, "swearing by her gods, that by tomorrow she would have his life."† He had exasperated her, indeed, by showing the falsehood of her religion, and slaying the prophets of Baal. But he had before raised the widow's son of Zarephath;‡ he had that very day in king Ahab her husband's sight fetched fire from heaven; and was not a fear in her case reasonable, that "his power should be exerted against her, and either wound her or smite her dead?" Nay, the Israelites, though they own themselves convinced on the spot, that his religion was the true, after this miracle yet "sought his life."§

And being now on this passage, I would remind this Rabbi,

* 1 Kings xviii.

† 1 Kings xix. 1, 2.

‡ Ch. xvii. 22.

§ 1 Kings xix. 14.

that upon Jezebel's threats, Elijah absconds, and gets into the wilderness as well as Jesus, even after an undoubted miracle, wherein could be no fraud, and that done before king Ahab and all Israel. How like to demonstration now is his argument? Jesus and his disciples abscond after raising Lazarus. "Is not here a plain sign of guilt and fraud? Men who have God's cause, and truth and power, on their side, never want resolution to stand to it."* Alas for poor absconding Elijah! so famous for his zeal and resolution in God's cause. His reputation is gone at once. Had there not been a cheat detected, he had not been so timorous and cowardly, but would have undauntedly faced his enemies, without fear or apprehensions of danger. "Ahab unquestionably had discovered the fraud to Jezebel, and complained of it"—(as the Jews in Lazarus' case to the Pharisees)—for he brings her the news "of what Elijah had done,† and how the intrigue was managed, and she was in the right to prosecute him with severity."

Dares a Rabbi talk thus in Elijah's case? And yet *nec ovum ovo similis*. It is an exact parallel to that of Jesus here, only that Elijah is the greater absconder. But indeed Elijah discovered neither fraud nor guilt. There was, there could be, no imposture. The same is to be said in Jesus' case, with respect to Lazarus. But Jezebel threatens Elijah's life, and he wisely gets out of her reach. The Jews consult to put Jesus to death, and he as prudently gets out of theirs. But when God has a message for him to king Ahab, Elijah fearlessly goes, meets him and delivers it. And when it was proper for him, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, makes a public entry into it, appears daily in the temple, undauntedly faces his enemies, deals plainly with them, denounces God's judgments against them, and at length meekly yields himself into their hands, that they might have their wills on him, and "put him to death," a main end of his coming into the world. Is here any appearance of cowardice, guilt, or fraud?

These circumstances in the story of Lazarus' resurrection needed not, therefore, have given Mr. Woolston any pain

* P. 44.

† Ch. xix. 1.

for Christianity. His Rabbi has been fully heard, and all he has to say, as fully proved, it is to be hoped, not to affect the credit of the evangelical story, nor of the religion of Jesus.

CONCLUSION.

Every thing in Mr. Woolston's discourse, in which Christians have any concern, has been now considered, and the weakness of it made out. As to the mystery which he believes, he says, on the authority of the fathers, he may make as merry with it as he pleases. If Christians may, on the authority of the evangelists, believe that Jesus wrought miracles, in confirmation of this heavenly doctrine, delivered by himself and apostles, he may believe what he will of their mystical meaning, on the authority of Bede, Theophanes Cerameus, &c., or even Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, &c., though his belief can be of little importance to himself or others,—no one alive knowing when he is in jest or in earnest, if ever he be in earnest in any thing, besides turning every thing into jest.

Such a way of talking may make mirth for infidels of gay humour and little thought, with whom a low, lewd, or profane jest may pass for wit, and grimace for argument, but can never please the sober or well-bred part of mankind. Such can never take banter for argument, a jackpudding for a man of wit and sense, nor a bully and blusterer for a hero. Such can never be pleased to see things sacred treated not only with irreverence and contempt, but with downright scurrility; or a B. D. on the most awful subject in the world turn merry-andrew, even in his graduate's gown, and after pouring out his froth, give himself the airs of a judge, decide against Christianity, pronounce Jesus an impostor, his evangelists dotards and blunderers, and all Christians of all ages past and present, such a generation of blockheads, as to swallow without chewing things improbable, incredible, impossible, and what all who understand human nature as well as he, must admit for such.

Can one who makes such a figure, such a jester, such a swaggerer, with so ludicrous an air and so brazen a forehead,

with so little reason, such sportive speech, and yet with such an excess of assurance, one always in jest, and yet so peremptory, definitive and assuming, make any impression on one serious inquirer after truth in the world? Could I think at all,* I should say, methinks he should not.

Or can such rudeness and indecency against Jesus and his religion, evangelists, disciples in general, and particular persons even his superiors, ever recommend him or his discourses to any above the rank of carmen and porters? Must not every one who has the least regard to good manners, sicken at the nauseous recurring of such stuff, in almost every page, unless his spite to Christianity can reconcile him to such outrageous trespasses on all the rules of civility and decency? Or can any who have the least regard for honour or honesty, bear with such plain, barefaced and undisguised falsifications and misrepresentations of the evangelical story, and other authors cited by him?

If he has any serious doubts concerning any circumstances of the gospel story, let him have liberty to propose them, in their utmost strength, and defend them in fair becoming debate, if he thinks they are not answered. His prosecution, even for his seurrility, I cannot approve, and have in the preface offered my reasons. But if he ever writes again I would entreat him, for his own sake, to temper his facetious humour, and write like a man, a scholar, with a seriousness, majesty and strength becoming the solemnity of the subject. In his present way he must write himself out of credit with all the sober world. He can make no proselytes but among the lowest of mankind, nor give any entertainment, but to rakes and witlings; and such as can give no proof of their being rational, but their being risible, and by laughing at every thing, make themselves the scorn and contempt of all men of sense and sobriety.

* A very touching reference to the Author's strange malady. ED. Vide Pref. Not.



OF
THE EMINENT HEATHEN WRITERS,
FROM
SENECA TO MARCUS ANTONINUS,
WHO ARE SAID TO HAVE
DISREGARDED OR CONTEMNED CHRISTIANITY.
BY
SIR DAVID DALRYMPLE, LORD HAILES.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

THIS tract forms Chap. IV. of SIR DAVID DALRYMPLE'S "Disquisitions concerning the Antiquities of the Christian Church."—The author was descended from one of the most illustrious of Scottish families. He was born October 28th, 1726. He was educated at Eton, and then went to Utrecht for the prosecution of the study of civil law. He entered the faculty of advocates in the court of session, February 23d, 1748, and after eighteen years of practice was raised to the bench by the title of LORD HAILES, and closed a laborious, honourable and useful life on the 29th of November, 1792. His principal work was "Annals of Scotland from the Accession of Malcolm III., surnamed Canmore to the Accession of Robert I.,"—a work of transcendant historical merit. Inferior in size, but perhaps even superior in importance, is his "Inquiry into the Secondary Causes which Mr. Gibbon has assigned for the rapid growth of Christianity." Gibbon replied to a number of his opponents, but he left Lord Hailes unanswered.—His other works are numerous—A Sermon which might have been preached in East Lothian upon the 25th day of October 1761, on Acts xxviii. 2. Edin. 1761.—An Examination of some of the arguments for the high antiquity of *Regiam Majestatem*. Edin. 1769.—Historical Memoirs concerning the provincial councils of the Scottish Clergy. Edin. 1769.—The Case of Elizabeth, claiming the dignity of Countess of Sutherland.—Remarks on the History of Scotland. Edin. 1773.—Disquisitions concerning the Antiquities of the Christian Church. Glasgow, 1783.—Sketches of the life of John Barclay, John Hamilton, Sir James Ramsay, George Leslie and Mark Boyd. In separate 4to *brochures*.—He edited Sacred Poems, a Collection of translations and paraphrases from the Holy Scriptures. Edin. 1751.—Smith's (of Cam-

bridge) *Select Discourses*. Edin. 1746.—A Discourse on the Gowrie Conspiracy.—Memorials and Letters relating to the History of Britain in the reigns of James I. and Charles I. Glasgow, 1762–1766.—Hales' (of Eaton) Works. 3 vols. Glasgow 1762.—Specimen of "Ane Compendious booke of godly and spiritual songs." Edinburgh, 1765.—An Account of the preservation of Charles II. after the battle of Worcester, drawn up by himself. Glasgow, 1766.—Secret Correspondence between Sir Robert Cecil and James VI. Glasgow 1766.—A Catalogue of the Lords of Session from the institution of the College of Justice. Edin. 1767.—Private Correspondence of Bishop Atterbury. 1768.—Canons of the church of Scotland, drawn up in Provincial Councils held at Perth A. D. 1242 and 1269. Edin. 1769.—Ancient Scottish Poems from the Bannatyne MS. Edin. 1770.—Huberti Langueti Epistolæ ad Philippum Sydenyum. Edin. 1776.—Remains of Christian Antiquity, with Notes. 3 vols. Edin. 1776, 1778, 1780.—Sermons by Archbishop Jacobus a Voragine. Edin. 1779.—Octavius by Minuerus Felix, with Notes. Edin. 1781.—Lactantius. Of the manner in which the persecutors died, with Notes. Edin. 1782.—Lactantius. De Justitia cum notis Latine. Edin. 1777.—Opinions of Sarah Dutchess of Marlborough, with Notes. Edin. 1788.—Tertullian's Address to Scapula Tertullus, with Notes. Edin. 1790.—He published also a 'Jeu d'esprit' On a certain public work in the City of Edinburgh, about 1753; and is the author of No. 140, No. 147, and No. 204 of the fashionable periodical 'The World.'

Dr. Charles Stuart's remarks in his short Memoir of Lord Hailes are justly merited:—"Labour directed by sound judgment, acuteness, fidelity, accuracy, candour rarely equalled;—these, united with just and delicate taste, unaffected simplicity, and great purity and correctness of style, characterise Lord Hailes as an author. Truth was his object, and he was superior to envy, prejudice and the ignorant contempt of those who undervalued many of his researches and publications. Possessing considerable talents for ironical writing, and a strong propensity to observe and remark the ridiculous, noticeable even in his gravest works, he never exercised these to distress an individual. His wit was genuine, delicate, inoffensive and courteous, both in conversation and in his writings; and he employed satire and irony only to chastise and discredit folly and vice."—The still higher eulogium of Sir Henry Moncrieff, in his life of Dr.

Erskine, will not be considered as extravagant by those acquainted with Lord Hailes' writings. "Eminent as a man of letters, and far more eminent as a man of principle, Lord Hailes will, as long as the substance of either learning or religion shall have an existence in this country, be transmitted to posterity not only as a man of profound research and ability on the most important subjects of history and antiquity, and as a classical scholar of the first order; but as a learned and successful defender of Christianity in opposition to its ablest and most insidious opponents."

OF THE
EMINENT HEATHEN WRITERS, ETC.

MR. GIBBON observes, that “The names of Seneca, of the Elder and the Younger Pliny, of Tacitus, of Plutarch, of Galen, of the slave Epictetus, and of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus, adorn the age in which they flourished, and exalt the dignity of human nature. They filled with glory their respective stations, either in active or contemplative life. Their excellent understandings were improved by study; philosophy had purified their minds from the prejudices of popular superstition, and their days were spent in the pursuit of truth, and the practice of virtue. Yet all these sages (it is no less an object of surprise than of concern) overlooked or rejected the perfection of the Christian system. Their language or their silence equally discover their contempt for the growing sect, which in their time had diffused itself over the Roman empire. Those among them who condescend to mention the Christians, consider them only as obstinate and perverse enthusiasts, who expected an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines, without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning.”*

Mr. Gibbon is surprised that those eminent persons “overlooked or rejected the perfection of the Christian system;”

* *Decline and Fall*, vol. i. pp. 616, 617. At first view, one might be apt to imagine, that all those eminent persons had lived in the same age, but this cannot be the meaning of the author.

the phrase is not so perspicuous as might have been wished, but it must import one of two things, either "that it is matter of surprise that those persons did not become converts to Christianity," or, "that it is matter of surprise that they either spake contemptuously of Christianity, or disregarded it altogether."

As to the former sense of the phrase,—it supposes Christianity to be true; for, if it be false, there is no cause to wonder that men, whose characters "exalted the dignity of human nature," did not degrade that dignity by becoming converts to falsehood.

Mr. Gibbon, when he speaks of "the *perfection* of the Christian system," must be supposed to admit the truth of Christianity; for it would be highly indecent to suspect him of the mean art of ridiculing in *sense*, what he asserts in *words*.

And therefore, holding, as Mr. Gibbon does, that Christianity is true, I judge it an inquiry rather curious than useful, why any man overlooked or rejected the truth.

No less convinced of the truth of Christianity than Mr. Gibbon is, who calls it "the perfect system of religion,"* I am not surprised at the phenomenon that surprises him.

Perhaps those eminent persons of whom he speaks had not overcome the prejudices of education and custom, or disentangled themselves from every politic attachment to national rites, or eradicated from their minds the pride of dogmatizing or doubting. It may be, that they never examined, with fit attention, the origin of the Jewish faith, and the nature and end of the Jewish prophecies; that they never perused the Christian scriptures, and weighed impartially the evidence which thence arose of "the perfection of the Christian system."

Neither is it certain that all those eminent persons were men who preferred the profession of hazardous truth, to the acquiescing in errors safe and luerative.

"The law" of Moses, it is said, "was our schoolmaster to

* His words are, "the perfection of the Christian system," this must mean "the perfect system of religion," it cannot mean "the *whole* of the Christian system." for then one might say, with equal propriety, "the *perfection* of polytheism, materialism, or atheism."

bring us to Christ;”* but that Epicurus and Zeno were fit guides for instructing men in the elements of the Christian discipline, has never been said on good authority, and will not be easily proved.

It rather seems matter of surprise, that heathen politicians and philosophers should ever have become Christians at all, than that they should have obstinately adhered to their national rites and the institutions of their schools.

But the words of Mr. Gibbon may be understood in another sense, which, leaving the truth of Christianity ambiguous, imports “that it is matter of surprise that Seneca and others have spoken contemptuously of Christianity, or have disregarded it altogether.”†

This meaning of the phrase is more extensive than the other, and, therefore, I shall take it in that sense, and inquire as well into the fact, as into the inferences that are fairly deducible from it.

SECTION I.

SENECA.

There are, no doubt, many who wonder at the profound silence of Seneca with relation to Christianity, and who wish that he had given a testimony favourable to the manners, at least, if not to the doctrine of the Christians.

Let us inquire, first, whether there be any reason for believing that Seneca, when he composed his works, was acquainted with the history of Christ, and the doctrine of the Christians; and secondly, supposing that he was, whether there may not be plausible reasons discovered for his silence as to both?

1. There seems no reason for believing that Seneca, when

* Gal. iii. 24.

† Mr. Gibbon says, “that it is no less an object of *surprise* than of *concern*.” Dubious words ought never to be used, unless in rhetorical discourses, where the real sense is of little moment. Is the thing here meant concern for the honour and credit of Christianity, or is it concern for the future state of those excellent persons who “overlooked the perfection of the Christian system?”

he composed his works, was acquainted with the history of Christ, and the doctrine of the Christians.

Such treatises of Seneca as are extant, appear to have been written before the *fifth* year of Nero.* But in this general

* With the aid of Lipsius, I have drawn up a chronological account of the writings of Seneca, which will not only serve to illustrate the present subject, but may be useful to any one who shall hereafter undertake an edition of the works of that philosopher.

DE IRA. This treatise was written in the lifetime of Caligula, but it was not published till after his death.

That it was written in the lifetime of Caligula, may be collected from the following passages:—"Modo C. Cæsar Sextum Papinium, cui pater erat consularis—flagellis cecidit, torsit, non quæstionis, sed animi causâ." l. iii. c. 18.—"Et hoc loco respondebitur mihi, quod tantopere admiraris, isti belluæ quotidianum est, ad hoc vivit, ad hoc vigilat, ad hoc lucubrat." *ib.* c. 19.

These passages, and others equally virulent, show, that part at least of the treatise *De Ira* was written, but not published, in the lifetime of Caligula.

DE BREVITATE VITÆ. Seneca says, "Modo *intra paucos illos dies* quibus C. Cæsar periit." c. 18. This fixes the publication of the work to the early part of the reign of Claudius, although most part of it might have been written long before.

CONSOLATIO AD MATREM HELVIAM. Seneca was banished to Corsica in the first year of Claudius. We learn from the preface to this consolatory discourse, that Seneca composed it some short time after his banishment.

DE CONSOLATIONE AD POLYBIUM. This was written in the reign of Claudius, and previous to the fourth year of that emperor. The date is ascertained by the extravagant panegyric which Seneca, while a banished man, bestowed on the Emperor Claudius: "Sidus hoc, quod precipitato in profundum ac demerso in tenebras orbi refulsit, semper luceat; hic Germaniam pacet, *Britanniam* aperiat." c. 32. This alludes to a period in the reign of Claudius, preceding the victory over Cynebelin, won about the latter end of the *third* year of Claudius. *Dion Cassius*, l. lx. p. 679.

AD MARCIAM DE CONSOLATIONE. Probably about the *fourth* year of Claudius, and, at least, before the *ninth*.

Lipsius treats of this subject at large. "Marcia," says he, "to whom this discourse is addressed, was the daughter of A. Cremutius Cordus, who died of voluntary abstinence, while under trial for his life, in the year A. U. C. 778. *Tacit. annal.* iv. 35. *Dion Cassius*, l. lvii. p. 619. Metilius, the son of Marcia, was promoted to the priesthood at a very early time of life. *Consol.* c. 19. It is not probable that Tiberius would have bestowed such distinguishing marks of honour on the grandson of Cremutius Cordus, and *therefore*, it must have been Caligula who promoted Metilius to the priesthood. This

proposition I do not include his physics and his epistles; neither do I include the fragment *De otio sapientis*, of which the date cannot be ascertained.

Now, we have seen that the "Christian religion was not

consolatory discourse was written three years after the death of Metilius, and consequently about the beginning of the reign of Claudius."

What Lipsius says concerning Tiberius seems not only probable but certain. That emperor was not of a disposition to confer honours on the family of Cremutius Cordus, whose free republican principles he detested, whose life he had sought after, and whose writings he had ordered to be burnt; and indeed Seneca himself, *Consol.* c. 1. gives authority to this opinion, for he thus describes the state of Marcia, after the death of Cremutius, and while Tiberius reigned: "Fudisti lacrimas clam, et gemitus devorasti quidem, non tamen hilari fronte textisti: et hoc, illo sæculo, quo magna pietas erat, nihil impiè facere; ut verò aliquam occasionem mutatio temporum dedit," &c. By *mutatio temporum*, the accession of Caligula is meant.

But Lipsius errs in his conclusion, "that, if Tiberius bestowed not the priesthood on Metilius, Caligula did;" for the truth of that conclusion depends on the time at which Metilius died, and *that* is the very subject of inquiry.

There are circumstances in this discourse of Seneca, which may enable us to investigate and discover its true date.

When Seneca addressed this discourse to Marcia, she was a woman not far advanced in years; for he thus speaks, c. 3. "Voluptates honestas [et] permissas, tanquam parùm decoras fortunæ tuæ, rejiciens, invisam habebis lucem: et ætati tuæ, quòd non præcipitet te quamprimum et finiat, infestissima eris;" and at c. 4. he says that Marcia was intimately acquainted with the Empress Livia, ["quam familiariter coluisti."]

Livia died in the year A. U. C. 782, aged 86. *Dion. Cassius*, l. lviii. p. 621. It is not credible that, in the jealous reign of Tiberius, a familiar intercourse between the empress and Marcia could have begun, after the death of Cremutius Cordus, who was accused as an enemy of the imperial government; and, consequently, the intercourse of which Seneca speaks, must be referred to an earlier period than that of the death of Cremutius Cordus, in the year A. U. C. 778.

We can hardly suppose Marcia to have been under *twenty* when she was admitted to an acquaintance with the aged empress; so, if that acquaintance began before the year A. U. C. 778, Marcia must have been born, at the latest, in the year A. U. C. 758, and in the year A. U. C. 808, the *first* of Nero, she must have been *fifty*.

Now, a Stoic philosopher would not have addressed a Roman matron, of that time of life, in the strain of the passage already quoted. Hence it may be concluded, that this consolatory discourse was written before the accession of Nero.

publicly known at Rome until the *sixth* year of Nero;” [*Disquis.* c. ii.] and therefore we may conclude that the works of Seneca, with the exceptions just spoken of, were written before he could have had an opportunity of knowing aught of

But, there is an expression at c. 24. which, when accurately examined, will go nigh to fix the precise date of this work. The words are these, relating to Metilius: “Hac sanctitate morum effecit, ut puer admodum dignus sacerdotio videretur, maternâ, sine dubio, suffragatione, *sed ne mater quidem nisi pro bono candidato valuisset.*” This passage implies, “that not even the solicitations of a mother, who had interest at court, could have prevailed in favour of an unworthy candidate.” It may be doubted whether this was ever literally true at any court, since courts first existed, and certainly it was not the case under the imperial government in the days of Seneca. *Here* then is the language of servile adulation, and *that* to a *living* emperor; for Seneca was not wont to flatter the worthless dead.

Who then was that flattered emperor? Not Tiberius or Nero, for reasons already assigned: not Caligula, of whom Seneca spake with abhorrence at all times. Hence we may conclude, that it was Claudius who bestowed the priesthood on Metilius, and, from the fulsome flattery of the expression, we may reasonably conjecture, that it was used by Seneca during his banishment. If Metilius obtained the priesthood from Claudius, this discourse was, probably, written between the *fourth* and the *ninth* of Claudius; for, Seneca was banished in the *first* of Claudius, the discourse was written *three* years after the death of Metilius, and Seneca was recalled from banishment in the *ninth* of Claudius.

DE PROVIDENTIA. This treatise was written after the death of Caligula; for, at c. 4. Seneca speaks of that emperor as dead: “Mirmillonem ego *sub Caio Cesare* audivi de raritate munerum querentem.”

By c. 1. it appears to have been detached from a greater work of his, probably his *Morals*, which is now lost: and his epistles, 106 and 109, give us reason to believe that that work remained for a long time unfinished.

At c. 3. speaking of Rutilius, who was unjustly banished, he says, “qui illum damnaverunt, caussam dicent omnibus sæculis.” The warmth of this expression seems to imply that Seneca was thinking on his own banishment; and therefore we may conjecture it to have been uttered while the memory of his wrongs was recent; that is, under the reign of Claudius. Lipsius supposes it to have been written, partly during the years of his exile, and partly on his return to Rome, in the *ninth* of Claudius.

DE TRANQUILLITATE ANIMI. Seneca composed this discourse on his entering again into public business, after his recall from banishment, in the *ninth* year of Claudius. This date is ascertained by a passage in c. 1. “Circumfudit me ex longo frugalitatis situ venientem

the history of Christ, or of the doctrine of his disciples; and, granting that, when he wrote his physics and his epistles, he had attained to some knowledge of Christianity, we ought not to be surprised at his silence with respect to it, for in

multo splendore luxuria et undique circumtonuit—placet honores fascisque non purpurâ aut aureis virgis adductum capessere, sed ut amicis propinquisque et omnibus civibus, omnibus deinde mortalibus paratior utiliorque sim propiùs positus.” This is invariably the language of statesmen new in office.

DE CONSTANTIA SAPIENTIS. Lipsius conjectures, that the treatises *De tranquillitate animi* and *De constantia sapientis* were written nearly about the same time. It is probable that Seneca composed many of his moral discourses out of materials which he had collected in the earlier part of his life. For example, after having finished his treatise *De constantia sapientis*, he appears to have inserted the circumstances concerning Caligula, at c. 18.; of this the reader will be satisfied, when he joins the words “deinde non deerit illi [injurioso] aliquando par, qui te quoque vindicet,” with the words that occur afterwards at a considerable distance, “ergò hoc ipsum solatio erit, etiam si nostra facilitas ultionem omiserit, futurum aliquem qui pœnas exigat a propace et superbo et injurioso.” This is a continued discourse; whereas the intervening narrative, which treats of the person, satirical sayings, and violent death of Caligula, is, in a great measure, foreign to Seneca’s purpose, and seems to be the effusion of resentment, on account of injuries fresh in the memory of the philosopher.

Hence it might be concluded, that the treatise *De constantia sapientis*, although revised soon after the death of Caligula, was written at some earlier period.

DE BENEFICIIS. In the treatise *De beneficiis*, the Emperor Claudius is contemptuously mentioned, thus: “Crispus Passienus solebat dicere, quorundam se judicium malle quàm beneficium, quorundam beneficium malle quàm judicium, et subjiçiebat exempla. *Malo, aiebat, Divi Augusti judicium, malo Claudii beneficium. Ego verò nullius puto expetendum esse beneficium, cujus vile judicium est. Quid ergò? non erat accipiendum a Claudio quod dabatur? erat; sed sicut a fortuna, quam scires statim posse malam fieri.*” l. i. *ad fin.* And hence it has been inferred, that the treatise *De beneficiis* was not published before the accession of Nero.

But, such was the absence of mind, or such the constitutional forgetfulness of Claudius, that, even in his lifetime, things more to his disparagement than aught that occurs in the treatise *De beneficiis*, might have been published with impunity.

A better argument for proving that the treatise was set forth after the accession of Nero, may be drawn from the past tense being used in the passage just quoted, *erat, quod dabatur.*

Lipsius, notwithstanding his partiality for Seneca, admits, that the treatise *De beneficiis* is a rambling incoherent work. [“*Libri boni*

his epistles he is equally silent with respect to the Jews, of whose rites he was not ignorant; and, although he had been actually a Christian, he might have composed a system of *physics* without ever mentioning Christianity at all.

sunt, sed mehercule, in ordine et tractatu confusi: quem vix est vel adnitentem expedire." p. 260.] Indeed, its materials seem to have been collected at various times, and even under the reigns of different emperors.

Thus, for example, it is said, l. xi. c. 12. "*Cæsar* dedit vitam Pompeio Penno, si dat qui non aufert, deinde absoluto et agenti gratias, porrexit osculandum sinistrum pedem; *qui excusant, et negant id insolentiæ causâ factum, aiunt socculum auratum, imò aureum, margaritis distinctum ostendere eum voluisse.*" This passage seems to have been written, although not published, in the reign of Caligula, and to allude to an incident that had recently occurred.

The emperor, who put forth his *left* foot to be embraced by the pardoned criminal, is called *Cæsar*, without the distinction of *Caius*. This naturally imports, that Caligula was then alive: be that as it will, it is not presumable that, after the death of Caligula, any one would have taken the pains of apologizing for the insolence of that emperor.

Again, in l. iv. c. 29. Seneca says, "*Cinnam nuper quæ res ad consulatum recepit ex hostium castris?*" The person here meant is *Cornelius Cinna Magnus*, one of the ordinary consuls in the year A. U. C. 758. Had Seneca written this passage in the reign of Nero, he would not have said that Cinna, who held the office of consul fifty years before, was "*nuper* ad consulatum evectus."

And, to add but one example more, at l. i. c. 10. he thus describes the profligate and shameless venality of the Roman courts of judicature: "*Nummarium tribunal, auditâ utrinque licitatione, alteri addici, non mirum: quando, quæ emeris, vendere, gentium jus est.*"

In the ninth year of Claudius, Seneca came into power, and he continued to be in favour during the rest of that reign, and for many years of the reign of Nero. Hence we may reasonably suppose, that this picture of judicial profligacy was drawn at some earlier period.

DE CLEMENTIA AD NERONEM. This treatise was written at the commencement of the reign of Nero. The date is exactly ascertained by a passage in c. 9. "*Cum [Augustus] hoc ætatis esset, quod tu nunc es, duodevicesimum egressus annum.*"

DE VITA BEATA. Suilius brought a charge in the senate against Seneca, and demanded "*quâ tandem philosophiâ, quibus philosophorum præceptis intra quadriennium regis amicitie ter millies sestertiûm paravisset?*" and he added, "*Romæ testamenta et orbos velut indagine capi: Italiam et provincias immenso fœnore exhauriri.*" *Tacit.* annal. xiii. 42. The treatise *De vita beata*, contains the apology that Seneca made for himself, in answer to the charge brought by Suilius: hence its date may be placed about the *fourth* of Nero.

2. But let us grant, although without evidence, and contrary to probability, that Seneca was acquainted with the history of Christ, and the doctrines of his disciples, and then let us inquire whether there may not be plausible reasons discovered for his silence as to both.

There is a singular passage in Dion Cassius, l. lxii. p. 701. respecting this subject. The historian says that Seneca compelled the Britons to borrow very large sums of money from him, at exorbitant interest; and that his sudden calling in of his debts was one cause of the great insurrection of that people. This circumstance throws much light on the accusation brought by Suilius; and it proves that, from age to age, the same scenes are represented on the theatre of the world, although by different actors.

DE OTIO SAPIENTIS. Of this tract, a fragment only remains, which contains no circumstances sufficient for ascertaining its date.

CLAUDII CÆSARIS APOCOLOCYNTOSIS. This satire on the Emperor Claudius was written immediately after the accession of Nero. It is generally ascribed to Seneca, particularly by Dion. Cassius, l. lx. *in fin.*; this, however, may have been one of Xiphilon's interpolations, and there are reasons which might make us hesitate in assenting to the received opinion.

At the commencement of the reign of Nero, it was not the courtly mode to represent Claudius in the light of a man worthless and ridiculous: on the contrary, Nero pronounced the funeral oration of his predecessor in such extravagant strains of panegyric, that the whole audience laughed. According to Tacitus, it was Seneca who composed that oration. "Postquam ad providentiam sapientiamque flexit, nemo risui temperare, quamquam oratio, a Seneca composita, multum cultus præferret." *Annal.* xiii. 3. The admirers of Seneca, if they ascribe this satire to him, will find it difficult to distinguish his character from that of De Foe, who is reported to have written a political pamphlet and its answer, page and page alternately.

In the satire, Claudius is censured for having put Messalina to death, and for having married his niece. But Seneca was not so forgetful of injuries as to mention the death of Messalina, either with regret or blame, and he was too consummate a courtier to inveigh against the marriage of Agrippina with her uncle Claudius.

Besides, the satirist exposes to derision some of the tenets of the Stoics, than which nothing can be more inconsistent with the character of Seneca.

One might be apt to ascribe the work to some wicked wit, and literary impostor of those days, who wished to make it pass under the name of Seneca.

It is impossible to ascertain the date of Seneca's epistles. Many of them appear to be rather miscellaneous essays and occasional thoughts on various subjects, than letters really addressed to his friend Lucilius.

We are dazzled with the splendour of many of the moral sentiments in Seneca, but when we examine more narrowly into his works, we find that he maintained opinions respecting the supreme Being, which are inconsistent not only with Christianity, but even with pure Theism.

“There is friendship,” says he, “between good men and the Divinity, moral excellency uniting them. Do I say friendship? nay, there is relation and resemblance; since, in truth, the good man and the Divinity differ only from each other in length of duration.”*

And elsewhere he thus attempts to illustrate a proposition so singular: “Sextius was wont to say, ‘that Jupiter can do no more than a good man can.’ Jupiter indeed has more to bestow on humankind; but, of two good men, *he* is not the best who is the most opulent: you might as well say of two men who are equally skilled in steering, that *he*

Treating of that passion for the combats of gladiators which prevailed amongst the Romans, he says, “Agite Diis immortalibus gratias quod eum docetis esse crudelem, qui non potest discere.” *Epist.* 7. This may allude to the clemency of Nero in the beginning of his reign.

In *Epist.* 49. he speaks as if he had not yet attained to old age; but in *Epist.* 61. he calls himself an old man, and in *Epist.* 70. he talks as if he had spent several years of his old age. “In hoc cursu rapidissimi temporis, primùm pueritiam abscondimus, deinde adolescentiam, deinde quicquid est illud inter juvenem et senem medium, in utriusque confinio positum, deinde *ipsius senectutis optimos annos*; novissimè incipit ostendi publicus finis generis humani.” Hence it should seem, that if those epistles expressed his real situation, several years must have passed between the writing of the forty-ninth and the seventieth; and this is confirmed by another circumstance; for in the former epistle, he speaks of seeing Pompeii, [“ad Pompeiorum tuorum aspectum.”] And in the latter he says that he saw Pompeii after a long interval of time, [“*post longum intervallum Pompeios tuos vidi.*”]

There is a passage in *Questiones naturales*, l. vi. c. 1. which mentions the great earthquake that was felt throughout Campania under the consulship of Regulus and Virginius, [A. U. C. 816.] that is, about two years before the death of Seneca. This shows, that in the *ninth* year of Nero, Seneca was engaged in the writing of his system of physics. But of the time at which he began to write it we have no knowledge.

* “Inter bonos viros ac Deum amicitia est, conciliante virtute. Amicitiam dico? imò etiam necessitudo est et similitudo: quoniam quidem bonus ipse tempore tantum a Dea differt.” *De Providentia*, c. 1.

is the best steersman who has the largest and goodliest ship. How is it that Jupiter excels the good man? Because he is good longer. The wise man, however, does not value himself the less on account of his virtue being circumscribed within a narrower space."* There follows much blasphemous declamation, to the like purpose, but I spare my readers.

Man, having been thus placed on a level with his Creator, might look for some farther exaltation; and, accordingly, Seneca says, "Suffer resolutely: herein ye may surpass God; *He is without* the feeling of evil, *ye are above* it."† And, as if this were not enough for human vanity and arrogance, he observes in another place, that "there is something in which the wise man may surpass God: God is wise from nature, and not from his own choice."‡

So thoroughly was the mind of Seneca purified by *his* philosophy, from the prejudices of popular superstition, that he scrupled not to deride the notions of future punishments, and even to deny the immortality of the soul.§

That Jesus may be termed *a wise man*, is admitted by some who, with better means of knowledge, understand little more of Christianity than Seneca did. Jesus, however, was not *a wise man* after the manner of the Stoics, for "Jesus wept;" neither was St. Paul; for he inculcated this precept on his scholars, "Weep with them that weep."

But let us hear Seneca: "All good men will perform the offices of clemency and gentleness, but they will shun pity, for *that* is a fault inherent to a little mind, which sinks at

* "Solebat Sextius dicere, *Jovem plus non posse quàm bonum virum*. Plura Jupiter habet, quæ præstet hominibus; sed inter duos bonos non est melior, qui locupletior, non magis, quam inter duos, quibus scientia regendi gubernaculum est, meliorum dixeris, cui majus speciosiusque navigium est; Jupiter quò antecedit bonum? diutius bonus est; sapiens nihilo se minoris æstimat, quod virtutes ejus spatio brevior clauduntur." *Epist. lxxiii.* I hope that none of my readers need be told that, with the Stoics, *the good man* and *the wise man* are synonymous.

† "Ferte fortiter: hoc est quo Deum anteceditis; ille *extra* patientiam malorum est, vos *supra* patientiam." *De Providentia*, c. 6. Seneca represents the Divinity as so speaking.

‡ "Est aliquid quo sapiens antecedit Deum: ille naturæ beneficio non suo sapiens est." *Epist. liii.*

§ *Consol. ad Marciam*, c. 19, 26.

the view of the ills that befall other men. The wise man does not pity, because pity must needs be attended with pain to the mind.”*

There is a remarkable passage, in which Seneca puts a case that actually occurs in the history of the Founder of our religion. “The wise man,” says he, “will restore a son to a weeping mother; but he will do this with a serene mind, and unchanged countenance.” †

On the contrary, St. Luke says, “And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, *he had compassion on her*, and said unto her, Weep not,” ‡ &c.

I now suppose that we have seen reason enough not to be any longer *surprised* at the silence of Seneca with respect to Christianity.

SECTION II.

THE ELDER PLINY.

The elder Pliny is silent as to Christianity. This must be admitted; and whether his silence ought to afford matter of surprise, may be learned from the following passage in his great work on natural history: “The divinity itself cannot do all things: it can neither confer immortality on mortals, nor recall the dead.” §

* — “Clementiam mansuetudinemque omnes boni præstabunt, misericordiam autem vitabunt; est enim *vitium pusilli animi*, ad speciem alienorum malorum succidentis.—Sapiens non miseretur, quia id sine *miseria animi* non fit.” *De Clementia*, l. ii. c. 5.

† “Donabit lacrimis maternis filium,—at faciet ista tranquillâ mente, vultu suo.” *De Clementia*, l. ii. c. 6.

‡ Luke vii. 11—13. What the translation renders “he had compassion on her,” is in the original *ἔσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ’ αὐτῆς*: in scriptural language it imports that *miseriordia*, which Seneca calls *vitium pusilli animi*.

§ “Ne Deus quidè̄m potest omnia; nam neque potest—mortales aternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos.” *Hist. nat.* ii. 7.

This mighty genius, “whose excellent understanding was improved by study, and whose mind philosophy had purified from the prejudices of popular superstition,” saw clearly, that *God neither can raise the dead, nor make this mortal put on immortality.*

Let us grant that the Elder Pliny was acquainted with Christianity.—To what purpose should he have mentioned it? To have showed that it was inconsistent with his philosophy, would have been superfluous; and to have disproved it by arguments drawn from his philosophy, would have been no easy enterprise.

An atheist may sit down and peruse the scriptures, and yet rise up, as he sat down, an atheist. The fact cannot be disputed; and of its causes I have no occasion at present to treat.*

SECTION III.

TACITUS.

It must be admitted that Tacitus speaks contemptuously of the Christians, and that he had no knowledge of their fundamental tenet,—benevolence.

Of the Christians, when charged with having set Rome on fire, he says, “haut perinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis convicti sunt.”† The sense of the words *odio humani generis convicti* is dubious; but it matters little whether they mean that “mankind hated the Christians,” or, “that the Christians hated mankind;”‡ and they

* The line in Horace is well known,

“Sincerum est nisi vas, quodcunque infundis, *acescit.*”

† *Annal.* xv. 44.

‡ Mr. Gibbon says, “I have preferred the latter sense, as the most agreeable to the style of Tacitus, and to the popular error, of which a precept of the gospel [see Luke xiv. 26.], had been *perhaps* the innocent occasion.” Vol. i. p. 618, n. 32. Strange, that the heathens at Rome, in the tenth of Nero, should have been so well acquainted with the gospel according to Luke! But since *that* was the case, I suppose that they read Luke vi. 27, 35, before they read Luke xiv.

may comprehend both the one proposition and the other; for the heathens seem to have concluded, from the *unsociable* nature of the Christian religion, that the temper of its professors was *unsociable*, and therefore, that the Christians were fit objects of hatred; and indeed we learn, from the highest authority, that the disciples of our Lord were to be misrepresented and hated.*

Before we are surprised that Tacitus should have treated Christianity with contempt, we ought to make ourselves acquainted with his own religion.

He has favoured us with a specimen of his creed, in the following words: "As for me, I cannot certainly determine, whether the affairs of humankind be rolled on by fate and invariable necessity, or by chance."† Such was the comfortless result of his observations, after a long life spent in public business and philosophical inquiries!

In another place, when the subject might have inflamed even the cold breast of a sceptic, he thus addresses the *manes* of his benefactor Agricola: "*If* there be any place allotted for the pious dead, and *if*, as the sages hold, great spirits are not extinguished with the body, peacefully mayest thou rest."‡

Hesitating between the notions of *necessity* and *chance*, believing that *one* of them might be *the great cause*, but uncertain which of them was; doubting, and more than doubt-

26. and *there* they must have seen, that "love your enemies" was an evangelical precept. Indeed, if the passage in Luke xiv. was the innocent occasion of their error; and if they understood *hate* in an absolute, and not in a comparative sense, they might have concluded that the religion, which enjoined its votaries to love enemies, and to hate father and mother and children, was a system of absurdities.

* Luke vi. 26.

† "Mihi—in incerto iudicium est, fatonè res mortalium et necessitate immutabili, aut forte volvantur." *Annal.* vi. 21.

‡ "Si quis piorum Manibus locus, si, ut sapientibus placet, non cum corpore extinguntur magnæ animæ placidè quièscas." *De Agricolæ vita*, c. 46. "*Ut sapientibus placet*" means, "according to the doctrine of the Stoics." I know not whether the metrical numbers of Tacitus have been remarked; for example, "*fatonè res mortalium*," and "*si quis piorum manibus*." This passage may remind us of the sceptic's prayer: "O God, *if* there is a God, have mercy upon my soul, *if* I have a soul."

ing, whether it was possible for the most virtuous man in Rome to be any thing after death, how could Tacitus have judged well of Christianity?

SECTION IV.

THE YOUNGER PLINY.

When the Younger Pliny was appointed to the government of Bithynia, he knew nothing of the mode of judicial procedure against the Christians; he knew neither what inquiries ought to be made concerning them, nor on what grounds they were to be pronounced guilty, nor what punishment ought to follow on condemnation. This is singular; but it is what he himself expressly acknowledges.* Few judges have so candidly avowed their incapacity to discharge the duties of office.†

Pliny, "that he might fill with glory his high station in active life," resolved to consult the emperor, and to learn from him what course was to be followed with regard to the Christians. But *in the meantime*, and, as I suppose, that there might be no unnecessary stay in judicial proceedings, he adopted what the French would call a *provisional system*, and a singular one it was!

It is fit that the President of Bithynia should be heard. "*Meanwhile*," says he, "with regard to persons brought before my tribunal as Christians, I have followed this course: I demanded of themselves whether they were Christians? To those who confessed that they were, I put the same

* "*Cognitionibus Christianorum interfui nunquam; ideo nescio quid et quatenus aut puniri soleat, aut quaeri.*" *Epist.* x. 97. This, probably, alludes to the former persecution in the days of Domitian.

† In Acts xxv. 14—21, there is an instance of equal ignorance in a judge, but not acknowledged with equal candour. Festus in that passage endeavours to report a cause that had come before his own tribunal, but without any understanding of the fact; and it seems probable, that his strange and incoherent story made king Agrippa curious to learn from the *prisoner* what the *judge* could not relate intelligibly. [ἔβουλόμην καὶ αὐτὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀκοῦσαι.] Ch. xxv. 22. Were we fully acquainted with the interior detail of the Roman history, it is probable, that many sad examples of like incapacity, in the governors of provinces, would appear.

question again and again, threatening capital punishment withal. If they persisted in their confession, I ordered them to execution; for *I had no doubt that, be the thing confessed what it would, their frowardness and inflexible obstinacy merited death.* Others there were of like frantic dispositions; but, by reason of their being Roman citizens, I appointed them to be sent to Rome.”*

The famous *Lex Valeria*, and other laws also, made some provision for the personal security of *Roman citizens*; but, in the judgment of Pliny, there seemed no great harm that *men of inferior degree* should be ordered to instant execution, until the emperor’s farther pleasure might be known.

It seems that Pliny did not know what inquiries ought to have been made, and therefore he limited *his* to two words, “*Christianus es?*” It required but other two, such as “*ego quidem,*” or “*ita sanè,*” and the cause was judged, and the culprit despatched to execution. Blessed era! in which, without any captious question as to flaws in the indictment, exceptions to the verdict, or motion for arrest of judgment, a trial for life might be begun, carried on, and brought to a comfortable issue, by the pronouncing of about twenty letters! and what mighty obligations did not the primitive Christians owe to their equitable and intelligent judges, who, by a single and simple interrogatory, relieved them from the delays and suspense of a long trial?

And here I am led to put a question to the admirers of the state of Paganism under mild princes and learned governors. “Supposing that the tenth book of the *Epistles* of Pliny had been lost, and that Tertullian or Cyprian, or any other ecclesiastical author, had quoted this passage as from Pliny, would the quotation have been admitted to be fair, and expressive of the sense of the original?”

But to return. New informations having been lodged,

* “*Interim in iis qui ad me tanquam Christiani deferebantur, hunc sum secutus modum. Interrogavi ipsos, an essent Christiani? Confitentes iterum ac tertio interrogavi, supplicium minatus. Perseverantes duci jussi; neque enim dubitabam, quaecumque esset quod faterentur, pervicaciam certè et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerant alii similis amentiae, quos, quòd cives Romani essent, annotavi in urbem remittendos.*” *Ibid.*

there were brought before Pliny men who denied that they had ever been Christians. On them Pliny imposed three several tests. 1. To revile Christ. 2. To invoke the gods. 3. The governor himself setting the example, they were required to sacrifice with wine and incense to the images of the emperor. Pliny himself assigns a reason for this complicated test; because "it is *said* that those who are indeed Christians can by no means be compelled to *any* of those things."* It may be remarked in passing, that if no Christian would take any of those tests, it was superfluous to tender them all.

The third test was rather too extensive in its nature; for it went to prove, that those who took it were not only not Christians, but that they were not Theists, or even conscientious Polytheists; for what must *his* religion be who sacrifices with wine and incense to the statue of a living man? and Pliny, by setting the example in this preposterous adulation, discovered himself to be void of religious sentiments. It was his duty as a governor to "clear the province of evil-doers;"† but, in imposing this test of divine worship paid to the statues of the emperor, he seems to have thought it his duty to lose no time in clearing the province of all upright and religious persons. If this *emperor-worship* had been strictly required throughout Bithynia, either universal atheism would have taken place, or all conscientious men in that province would have suffered death. For it is plain, from Pliny's narrative, that if any person had refused to offer sacrifice before the images of the emperor, he would have been sent to immediate execution, on account of his "frowardness and inflexible obstinaey."

After so many trials and executions, it seemed reasonable to inquire a little what were indeed the tenets and practice of the Christians, of men whose very name carried guilt and punishment along with it.

Pliny discovered some apostates from Christianity, and by their means he obtained the necessary information. It

* "Quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur, qui sunt revera Christiani." *Ibid.*

† "In mandatis principum est, ut curet is qui provincie praest, malis hominibus provinciam purgare." 1. 3. *D. de officio Praesidis.*

might, perhaps, have been more for the honour of his understanding, had he, at the same time, examined those who professed themselves Christians, and, from the joint testimony of apostates and believers, collected an account of the principles and manners of that execrated sect.

But although Pliny adopted not, at first, the most candid and judicious methods of obtaining knowledge of the truth, yet what he did learn affords a glorious testimony in favour of the Christians, the testimony of apostates related by a heathen judge and persecutor. "Those men [the apostates] affirmed this to have been the whole of their fault or error, that they were wont, at stated seasons, to assemble before daybreak, to repeat alternately a hymn to Christ, as to God, and to bind themselves by an oath, [sacramento,]* not as an engagement to perpetuate any kind of wickedness, but as an engagement to abstain from theft, robberies, and adulteries, never to violate promises, or to refuse restitution of goods committed to their custody; that these things having been done, they were wont to separate themselves, and then to meet again, and partake of a meal common to all, and harmless."†

* "Ad confœderandam disciplinam," says Tertullian, in his account of Pliny's letter, *Apol.* c. 2. I need not inform intelligent readers, that the word *sacramentum*, in this passage, has no reference to the sacrament of the Lord's supper: but it may be fit to remark, that we are not to suppose that, at such stated seasons of religious worship, the Christians took any formal oath. The phrase means no more, than that they professed the obligations that they were under to live *soberly* and *righteously*.

† "Affirmabant autem, hanc fuisse summam vel culpæ suæ, vel erroris, quod essent soliti, stato die, ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem; seque sacramento, non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent; quibus peractis, morem sibi discedendi fuisse, rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innocuum." *Ibid.* The expression *quasi Deo* has been rendered variously by different translators: "as God,"—"as to a God,"—"as to some God." I have given its literal interpretation.

Mosheim, *De reb. Christ. ante Const. M.* p. 151. imagines, that *promiscuus cibus* means a plain and moderate meal, in opposition to one nice and luxurious. [delicatus et exquisitus.] But I have preferred the more obvious interpretation, "common to all;" for there is no

Here there is a beautiful delineation in miniature of plain and simple worship, strict morals, and inoffensive sociability.

Pliny concluded his inquiries by putting two Christian *deaconesses* to the torture; and he admits, that by this last inquiry he discovered nothing in the Christians but “a sort of perverse and excessive superstition.”*

He does not explain what that “sort of superstition” was, which he describes to be “perverse and excessive:” of this, however, we may be assured, that it was not any thing inconsistent with the report made by the apostates; for had that been the case, Pliny would not have omitted to make mention of the contradictory evidence given by the apostates, and extorted from the *deaconesses*.

The word *superstitio* has various significations. Opposed to *religio*, it is said to be something that contains in it an *inanis timor deorum*. This is not a definition, but an imperfect description of a quality,—and even that quality is ambiguous; for we know not exactly what was meant by *inanis timor deorum*.

At other times, *superstitio* implies any sacred ceremony or form of worship whatever, without regard to propriety or impropriety in the thing itself.

And examples are not wanting, in which the word seems to be taken in a good and laudable sense.

By its etymology, if known, the primitive meaning of the word might have been discovered, and from thence we might have proceeded to trace its various uses. Cicero is unfortunate in his conjectures with respect to its etymology, and so is Lactantius, although he has successfully exploded the conjecture of Cicero.†

The epithets bestowed by Pliny on the *superstitio* of the Christians, show that he did not understand the word in a good or laudable sense; but it is uncertain whether he meant to say that “the superstition,” or that “the sacred

likelihood that the whole society of Christians was suspected of assembling at stated seasons, to feast on delicacies.

* “Quo magis necessarium credidi, ex duabus ancillis, quæ *ministrae* dicebantur, quid esset veri et per tormenta querere; sed nihil aliud inveni, quam superstitionem *pravam et immodicam*.” *Ibid*.

† *D. N. D.*; *Lactant.* Inst. iv. 28.

worship of the Christians, was perverse and excessive." And perhaps he was not very accurate in distinguishing between the one and the other.

What do *perverse* and *excessive* mean? They seem opposed to a *well regulated* religion, which is kept within due bounds.* But what that was, and what notion Pliny had formed of it, we do not learn from his writings.†

We might conjecture that the deaconesses confessed something of the primitive rites; of baptism, and the Lord's supper, of Christian penitence, and of anointing the sick with oil; and perhaps they spake of the resurrection of the body and of a future life, things which the learned uncle of Pliny had already pronounced to be *impossible with God*.

The mention of such things would have sufficed to convince Pliny that "the superstition of the Christians was perverse and excessive."

In the detail that Pliny gives of the manners of the

* "Religio recta, et quæ modum servat."

† Mosheim *de reb. Christ. ante Const. M.* p. 146, &c., says that Pliny had two standards for judging of what was *right* and *kept within due bounds* in matters of religion, namely, what the established institutions of the Romans required, or what, in his own opinion, reason and philosophy suggested, and therefore, that he held the religion of the Christians to be *wrong* or *perverse*, because it deviated from the established institutions of the Romans. Thus, since it was *right* in the Romans to offer sacrifices to their gods, it was *wrong* in the Christians to abstain from offering sacrifices to their God. In like manner, that Pliny held the religion of the Christians to be *excessive*, because it did not keep within the bounds set by reason, philosophy, and the established institutions of the Romans: and Mosheim adds, that, no doubt, Pliny meant to insinuate that Christianity required duties more numerous and more difficult from its votaries than philosophy, or the religion of the state required.

This deduction is ingenious, but not convincing; for, although philosophy and reason were to be held as synonyms, still there are *two standards here*, by which Pliny is supposed to have judged, and they are inconsistent and irreconcilable. If Pliny judged according to philosophy, the established religion of the Romans was wrong, perverse and excessive; a thing despised or denied by philosophers, and only admitted as true from motives of expediency; and if he judged according to the established religion of the Romans, the religion approved by philosophy was mere speculation. Thus one of his standards must have reprobated the religion of the state, and the other, the religion of philosophers.

Christians, there is much said to their commendation; neither does he, while censuring their superstition, say aught to the prejudice of any individual amongst them. *He*, therefore, is not one of those who overlooked the Christian system; and that he spake contemptuously of it, may be ascribed to his prejudices, and to his very unsettled notions of divine things.

SECTION V.

GALEN.

I presume that Mr. Gibbon's knowledge of the sentiments of Galen is chiefly derived, as most of mine is, from the passages quoted by Lardner.*

No contempt of the Christian religion is to be discovered in those passages: on the contrary, it were to be wished that some men, who have not openly abjured Christianity, had imitated the example of Galen. His observations are so dispassionately worded, that it would be no difficult task to produce sentiments of an import not dissimilar from writers of whose orthodoxy there is no question.

In the first passage quoted by Lardner, Galen says, that "he who becomes the scholar of Moses, or of Christ, must obey ordinances, without their having been demonstrated to be right or fitting."†

This is not altogether the case; for the scriptures themselves point out the reasonableness of many things, as well in the law as in the gospel; and there are other things in them of which the reasonableness may be demonstrated: yet there are intelligent and learned Christians who, after searching the scriptures, admit that much remains unexplained and inexplicable; and who assert that, in those particulars, the authority of the lawgiver must be the measure of the belief and obedience of his subjects.

The other passage quoted from Galen by Lardner, imports, "that physicians and philosophers are more attached

* *Lardner*, Testimonies, vol. ii. p. 386.

† *ὡς* — νόμων ἀναποδείκτων ἀκούη. *De differ. Puls.* l. ii.

to the opinions of their respective sects, than even Jews and Christians are to theirs."

Here, if any thing is said to the disparagement of Jews and Christians, more is said to the disparagement of *all* philosophers; and the slave Epictetus, and M. Antoninus the Emperor, as being followers of Zeno, will have a larger portion of the censure than the followers of Moses or Christ.

Galen meant to describe, in general, the attachment of men to opinions once entertained, and his expression seems merely proverbial.

It is not extraordinary that Galen, while treating of subjects unconnected with any system of faith or morals, should have abstained from saying aught either to the praise of the Christians, or to their disadvantage.

There is another passage in Galen, to which Lardner refers, and if Mr. Gibbon had consulted it, he would have ceased to wonder that Galen saw not the perfection of the Christian system. The passage is this:

"It is enough in his opinion [in the opinion of Moses] for God to will that matter should be arranged in any form whatever, and straightway it is: for he supposes, that all things are possible to God, even if he should will to make a horse or a bull out of a piece of charcoal. We, however, do not judge so; on the contrary, we say, that there are certain things *impossible in nature*, and that God does, in no sort, attempt them, but that he chooses what is best of things possible."*

* τῶ μὲν γὰρ ἀρκεῖ, τὸ βουλευθῆναι τὸν Θεὸν κοσμηῆσαι τὴν ὕλην, ἢ δ' εὐθύς κεκόσμηται. πάντα γὰρ εἶναι τῶ Θεῷ δύνάτα νομίζει, κἄν εἴ τὴν τέφραν ἴππον ἢ βοῦν ἐθέλει ποιεῖν. ἡμεῖς δ' οὐχ οὕτω γινώσκομεν, ἀλλ' εἶναι γὰρ τινὰ λέγομενα [i. λέγομεν] ἀδύνατα φύσει, καὶ τούτοις μηδ' ἐπιχειρεῖν ὅλως τὸν Θεόν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν δύνάτων γενέσθαι, τὸ βέλτιον αἰρεῖσθαι. *De usu partium*, l. xi. c. 14. The phrase, "all things are possible to [or, with] God," occurs more than once in the discourses of Jesus Christ, see Matt. xix. 26; Mark x. 27; xiv. 36; Luke xviii. 27. In the writings of Moses, the like sentiment often occurs, but never, so far as I can recollect, the same phrase. This might lead us to conjecture that Galen had more acquaintance with the gospels than he chose to acknowledge. If so, we may learn from his *philosophy* the cause of his *unbelief*.

SECTION VI.

EPICTETUS.

As Epictetus wrote nothing, he must be distinguished from the class of authors who are said, either to have overlooked Christianity, or to have spoken of it with contempt.

The regular discourses and the occasional sayings of Epictetus, were noted down, and published by his disciple Arrian.*

We may assure ourselves that, although Epictetus had at any time spoken favourably of the Christians, Arrian would not have admitted expressions of that nature into his work, for he was a heathen priest.

He was born and educated at Nicomedia, in Bithynia, and he became a priest of Ceres and Proserpine, the supposed tutelary divinities of that city.†

There is nothing in the chronology of his life inconsistent with the supposition of his having been one of those who complained to Pliny, the proconsul of Bithynia, of the alarming growth of the Christian religion;‡ and, in all likelihood, he not only was acquainted with Christianity, but also hated it as being fatal to his *craft*.

But I admit, that it is not probable that Epictetus would have spoken favourably of the Christian religion, although he had known the doctrines of *Him* who, as we affirm, “brought life and immortality to light.”

Epictetus thus treats of death: “The Deity has opened the gate, and he says to you, come—whither? not to aught terrible, but to that from which you sprung, to your kindred elements.”§

* Arrian, in his dedication to Lucius Gellius, calls his collections, *ὑπομνήματα*, [*memoirs, or commentaries,*] and under that name they seem to have been originally known. *M. Antonin.* l. i. § 7.

† So he himself says, in his *Bithynia*, quoted by Photius: *Biblioth.* c. xciii.

‡ “Desolata templa—sacra solemnia diu intermissa.” *Plin.* epist. x. 97.

§ τὴν θυρὰν ἤνοιξε, καὶ λέγει σοι, Ἐρχοῦ. ποῦ; εἰς οὐδὲν δεινόν. ἀλλ’ ὅθεν ἐγένου, εἰς τὰ φίλα καὶ συγγενῆ, εἰς τὰ στοιχεῖα. *Arrian.* l. iii. c. 13. p. 412. *edit. Upton.* φίλα καὶ συγγενῆ are rendered by the single word, “kindred.”

And again, "But [you say] the time arrives at which I must *die*—do not magnify the business by tragical declamation; say rather, as is truly the case, that the time arrives when matter shall be resolved into those principles of which it was originally composed."* With such pomp of words does this comforter lead us to the grave, and *there*, miserable comforter, he leaves us; for, in the ample volume of Arrian, no prospects of an *hereafter* are discovered.

"Dust to dust,"† which we consider as originally a denunciation of the divine displeasure, was in the Stoical system, a chief topic of consolation!

The only passage in Arrian that can be supposed to have any reference to the Christians, is in b. iv. c. 7. ‡

There Epictetus is represented as treating of fearlessness, when one is in the presence of a tyrant or absolute prince with his guards around him, and the philosopher puts this case: "Suppose that a man, indifferent whether to live or die, but prepared for either event, should be brought into the presence of a tyrant, would *he* be afraid?" To this grave question it is judiciously answered in the negative.

But then a second case is put: "suppose that a man, careless of his wife, children, and fortune, and possessed with frenzy, or deprived of judgment, should be brought into the presence of a tyrant, would *he* be afraid?" This question also is answered in the negative.

There follows some illustration from the game that is termed *Duck and Drake*, which, however well sounding in Greek, is hardly intelligible to mere English understandings; and then, the philosopher adds, "so, from frenzy one may be able to be thus disposed as to those things, *and from*

* ἀλλ' ἤδη καιρὸς ἀποθανεῖν. μὴ τραγῶδει τὸ πρῶγμα, ἀλλ' εἰπέ, ὡς ἔχει. ἤδη καιρὸς τὴν ὑλὴν, ἐξ ᾧ ὦν συνηλθὲν, εἰς ἐκεῖνα πάλιν ἀναλυθῆναι. *Arrian*. l. iv. c. 7. p. 624. The expression μὴ τραγῶδει τὸ πρῶγμα, is rendered, "do not magnify the business by tragical declamation;" but the propriety of that translation may be questioned. The vulgar English phrase, "make not too much ado about it," seems to approach nearer to the sense of the original.

† Gen. iii. 19.

‡ Another passage, l. ii. c. 9. p. 214. has sometimes been supposed to allude to the Christians; but critics seem now agreed that it does not.

habit the Galileans, and yet no one, from reason and demonstration, is able to learn that God made whatever exists in the universe, &c.*

The transition is sudden, and the argument is somewhat obscure; but our inquiry is principally directed to the former part of the sentence: "so, from frenzy one may be able to be thus disposed as to those things, *and from habit the Galileans.*"

This version is literal, and from it some judgment may be formed, even by an unlearned reader, how far the following paraphrase accords with the original. "Is it possible that a man may arrive at this temper, and become indifferent to those things, from madness or from habit, as *the Galileans?*"† The paraphrase seems to imply, that frenzy and habit might concur in producing such fearlessness, and that the intrepid demeanour of the Galileans was to be ascribed to both causes. This interpretation, however, is not without its difficulties; for, to say that intrepidity was owing to "frenzy *and* habit," is to unite contrarieties, aberration of mind with practice and discipline.

The words, "and from habit the *Galileans,*" may be read as a separate sentence: "the *Galileans* too, from habit, attained to this fearlessness."

It still remains to inquire *who* those *Galileans* were. I once adopted the vulgar opinion, that by *Galileans*, Epictetus meant the *Christians*;‡ but, after a more careful examination of the subject, I am led to conclude, that the word *Galileans* is here used for *the followers of Judas of Galilee*.

* Εἴτα ὑπὸ μανίας μὲν δύναται τις οὕτω διατεθῆναι πρὸς ταῦτα, καὶ ὑπὸ ἔθους οἱ Γαλιλαῖοι. ὑπὸ λόγου δὲ καὶ ἀποδείξεως αὐδεὶς δύναται μαθεῖν, ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς πάντα πεποιήκε τὰ ἐν τῷ κοσμῷ. κ. τ. ε. *Arrian*. l. iv. c. 7. p. 621. Upton has amended this passage: he leaves out ἔθους, and substitutes ἀπονοίας in its room; he prefixes ὡς to οἱ Γαλιλαῖοι, and he makes the sense to be, "as the Galileans do, through frenzy and aberration of mind." The addition of ὡς might be allowed, but the changing of ἔθους into ἀπονοίας, is an intolerable license. The caprices of Bentley are the caprices of genius, and *they* may be excused: but commentators of an inferior *cast* ought to satisfy themselves with the collating of manuscripts, and the compiling of notes.

† See *Lardner*, Testimonies, vol. ii. p. 102.

‡ *Remains of Christian antiquity*, vol. ii. p. 172.

Lardner says, "the followers of Judas of Galilee were *extinct* before this time;"* and hence, he supposes, that Epictetus meant to speak of the followers of Jesus, invidiously or contemptuously called *Galileans*.

But, it matters not *when* the Galileans were *extinct*, as Lardner expresses it; the question is, *When* did they cease to be generally remembered? For, as long as the memory of their fanaticism was recent, it might have afforded an apt topic for moral disquisitions.

This leads us to inquire, first, At what time it was that Epictetus spake of the fearlessness which the *Galileans* had acquired through habit? and secondly, Whether, at that time, the memory of the followers of Judas of Galilee was recent?

1. Arrian noted down those discourses which he heard from the mouth of Epictetus.†

It is highly improbable, that Arrian should have bestowed years in his attendance on that philosopher; for he was educated to the businesses of public life, and his literary studies were not confined to the philosophy of the Stoics.

Hence we might conclude, that all the sayings, recorded by Arrian of his master Epictetus, were uttered in the course of a year or two. And this is not merely conjecture, for it is supported by every chronological notice that can be found in the work of Arrian.

It appears, that when Epictetus delivered the discourse, b. ii. c. 22. the Romans were at war with the Getæ or Dacians.‡ And, therefore, this discourse was delivered between the year A. U. C. 853. [A. D. 100.] when the first Dacian war began, and the year A. U. C. 856, by which time the second Dacian war was ended.

In b. iii. c. 13. Epictetus speaks as if peace had been newly restored to the empire. His words are, "You see that the Emperor bestows much tranquillity on us, that there are no longer wars or battles, or mighty robberies or piracies."§

* Lardner, Testimonies, vol. ii. p. 102.

† ὅσα δὲ ἤκουον αὐτοῦ λέγοντος. *Dedic.*

‡ καὶ νῦν Ῥωμαῖοι [διαφέροντο] πρὸς Γέτας. l. ii. c. 22.

§ ὁρᾶτε γὰρ ὅτι εἰρήνην μεγάλην ὁ Καίσαρ ἡμῖν δοκεῖ παρέχειν, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν οὐκέτι πόλεμοι, οὐδὲ μάχαι, οὐδὲ ληστήρια μεγάλα οὐδὲ πειρατικά. l. iii. c. 13. p. 411.

This must either relate to the peaceable interval, between the first and the second Dacian war, that is, to the year A. U. C. 854, or to the year A. U. C. 857; for in the following year A. U. C. 858, Trajan began to wage war against the Armenians and the Parthians, and during the remainder of his reign there was no season of universal tranquillity.

Hence we see, that the discourses of Epictetus were delivered between the year A. U. C. 854, and the year A. U. C. 858, and that they must, at the latest, have been delivered about the year A. U. C. 856 or 857.

This point of chronology being fixed, let us inquire, 2. Whether in the year A. U. C. 856 or 857 the memory of the followers of Judas of Galilee was recent?

Josephus finished his *Jewish Antiquities* in the 13th year of the Emperor Domitian, [A. U. C. 847.]* that is, much about *ten* years before the time in which Epictetus delivered his discourses.

In that work he makes mention of the various sects amongst the Jews, of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes; and then he adds, "Judas, the Galilean, was the leader of a fourth sect of *philosophers*. In general, his followers profess the same tenets as the Pharisees; but such is their love of freedom, that hardly can any thing shake it. They hold that God alone is their Ruler and Lord, and they make small account of enduring death in its various forms, and of beholding their kindred and friends exposed to every sort of punishment, rather than address any mortal under the title of *sovereign*. I have omitted to enter into a farther detail, because there are many who have been eye-witnesses of the immutable constancy of their demeanour in that respect: and, indeed, I was not afraid that aught related of them should have been held incredible, but on the contrary, I was afraid lest my narrative should have fallen short of describing the contempt which they entertained of the severest tortures." †

* μέχρι τῆς νῦν ἐνεστῶσης ἡμέρας, ἢ τις ἐστὶ τρισκαίδεκατα μὲν ἔτους τῆς Δομετιανοῦ Καίσαρος ἀρχῆς. *Antiq. Jud.* l. xx. in fin.

† τῇ δὲ τετάρτῃ τῶν φιλόσοφων ὁ Γαλιλαῖος Ἰουδᾶς ἡγεμὸν κατέστη. τὰ μὲν λοιπὰ πάντα γνώμη τῶν Φαρισαίων ὁμολογοῦσι, δυσκίνητος δὲ τοῦ ἰλευθέρου ἔρωσ ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς, μόνον ἡγεμόνα καὶ δεσπότην τὸν Θεὸν ὑπειλήφασιν.

Thus in the year A. U. C. 847, Josephus appeals to the personal observation of many then alive, for proving, "that the Galileans refused, with inflexible constancy, to acknowledge the Roman government, and that they were fearless in the presence of a tyrant or absolute prince."

There is no rhetorical exaggeration in this passage of Josephus. For had the Galileans been overwhelmed in the ruins of their holy city, that which the historian asserts would have been literally true. Jerusalem was destroyed in the year A. U. C. 824, and Josephus wrote this account of the Galileans in the year A. U. C. 847. So that between the destruction of Jerusalem and the time of his writing, there was an interval of no more than twenty-three years.

But it was not till after the final overthrow of the Jewish nation, that the exploits of the Galileans became eminently conspicuous.

In the fourth year of Vespasian, [A. U. C. 826,] or, perhaps, in the following year, Eleazar, a descendant of Judas of Galilee, defended the castle of Massada against the Romans. The catastrophe of that siege is well known; Eleazar and his associates first slew their wives and their children, and then themselves, rather than submit to the conquerors of the world.*

And, after Eleazar's death, the fanaticism of the Galileans in Egypt was no less remarkable. "Who is there," says Josephus, "that would not have been struck with their fortitude, whatever its cause was, whether a disordered judgment or strength of mind! for, although all kinds of bodily torture were devised against them, with the single purpose of constraining them to acknowledge the sovereign authority

θανατῶν τε ἰδέας ὑπομένειν παρηλλογόμενας ἐν ὀλίγῳ τίθενται καὶ συγγένων τιμωρίας, καὶ φίλων ὑπὲρ τοῦ μηδένα ἀνθρώπον προσαγορεύειν δεσπότην. ἔωρακῶσι δὲ τοῖς πολλοῖς τὸ ἀμεταλλάκτον αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τοιούτοις ὑποστάσεις, περαιτέρω διελθεῖν παρέλιπον. οὐ γὰρ δέδοικα μὴ εἰς ἀπιστίαν ὑποληφθῆ τι τῶν λεγομένων ὑπ' αὐτοῖς, τουνάντιον δὲ μὴ ἐλάσσονος τοῦ ἐκείνων καταφρονήματος δεχομένου τὴν ταλαιπορίαν τῆς ἀλγηδόνος ὁ λόγος ἀφίγηται. *Antiq. Jud.* l. xviii. c. 2. Never was the appellation of *philosophers* more egregiously misapplied than when given to those sanguinary fanatics, the *Sicarii* or *Galileans*.

* *Josephus*, de bell. Jud. l. vii. c. 28.

of the Emperor, no one of them either submitted or seemed willing to submit, to make that acknowledgment.*

It was about the year A. U. C. 857, as we have already seen, that Epictetus discoursed of "the fearlessness of the Galileans," that is, within thirty-one years from the great suicide at Massada, and of the execution of the *Sicarii* in Egypt.

These events must have been fresh in the memory of Epictetus, who had not only attained to manhood, but probably had become a proficient in philosophy, before the Galileans displayed such examples of a constancy, worse than Stoical.

The narrative of Josephus may serve as a commentary on what Epictetus says of the Galileans, and it is left with every candid inquirer to determine, whether by the word *Galileans*, the one author meant the *Sicarii*, while the other meant the Christians.†

* Ἐφ' ὧν οὐκ ἔστιν ὅς οὐ τὴν καρτερίαν καὶ τὴν εἴτε ἀπόνοιαν, εἴτε τῆς γνώμης τὴν ἰσχὺν χρὴ λέγειν, οὐ κατεπλάγη. πάσης γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς βασιάνου καὶ λύμης τῶν σωμάτων ἐπινοηθείσης, ἐφ' ἐν τούτῳ μόνον, ὅπως αὐτῶν Καίσαρα δεσπότην ὁμολογήσωσιν, οὐδεὶς ἐνέδωκεν, οὐδ' ἐμέλλησεν εἰπεῖν. *De bell. Jud.* l. vii. c. 29.

† It appears no unreasonable supposition, that Epictetus was personally acquainted with the Jewish historian. Epaphroditus, the freedman and favourite of the Emperor Nero, was the patron of Josephus, and to him Josephus inscribed *The Jewish Antiquities*, and *The Discourses against Apion*. Suidas expressly says, that Epictetus was the slave of Epaphroditus, v. Ἐπίκτητος. Lardner, however, observes, "That Epictetus tells a story very disadvantageous to the character of Epaphroditus, exposing him to contempt and ridicule;" and he asks, "Would Epictetus treat Epaphroditus in that manner, if he had been his master, and had made him free?" *Testimonies*, vol. ii. p. 90. Epictetus tells two stories concerning Epaphroditus. The one is in b. i. c. 19. p. 107. "Epaphroditus had a slave, by profession a shoemaker; he sold him as being good for nothing; this man, through some lucky accident, having been purchased by an imperial agent, became shoemaker to the Emperor. Then you might have seen how much Epaphroditus respected him. Pray, how does Felicio do, that worthy man? So when any of us asked what Epaphroditus was engaged about, it was answered, He is consulting on some business with Felicio." It is plain that this ludicrous incident happened during the reign of Vespasian, or of one of his sons, for Epaphroditus could not have had any inducement to pay his court to the shoemaker of Nero. The other passage is in b. i. c. 26. "I knew a man

It is true, that, after an interval of 250 years, the Emperor Julian was pleased to bestow the appellation of Galileans on the followers of Jesus Christ, and we may leave Julian in possession of the honour of that little sleight of controversy which consists in giving a bad name to an antagonist.*

If then by *Galileans*, Epictetus meant, not the Christians, but the *Sicarii*, it follows, that he says nothing in contempt of the Christians, or to their prejudice.

And, although he had spoken favourably of the Christians, in any of his discourses, it is plain that the remembrance of such commendations would never have been preserved by Arrian, who was a heathen priest.

But still it may be said, that it affords matter of surprise that Epictetus did not see the perfection of the Christian system. Is it not matter of more surprise that he did not see the truth of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul?

And is not our wonder increased when we hear him exclaim with feigned indignation, “Those persons are endowed at least with much gratitude and modesty indeed, who, while eating their daily bread, venture to say, we know not whether there exists a Ceres, a Proserpine, or a Pluto.”†

who, weeping and embracing the knees of Epaphroditus, as a suppliant, said that he was miserable, for that nought remained of all his fortune but 1,500,000 pieces. What then did Epaphroditus do? Did he laugh at him as *we* did? No—but he said, with astonishment, Poor man, how could you be silent, how could you endure it?”

These are the stories from which Lardner concludes that Epictetus was never the slave of Epaphroditus, although they prove that that philosopher was of his household, and lived in his family, which he would not have done, as we may well imagine, had his person been as independent as his mind.

Since then Epictetus was of the household of Epaphroditus after the accession of the Flavian family, it is natural to suppose that Josephus knew him, and one might even assert, that it is hardly possible to believe that he did not.

* It is said, but upon very doubtful evidence, that the Heresiarch Manes, towards the end of the third century, gave the name of *Galileans* to the followers of Jesus Christ. *Fabric. Bibl. Græc. T. v. p. 285.* So the honour of that invention may lie between Manes and Julian.

† Εὐχάριστοι γ' ἀνθρώποι καὶ αἰδῆμονες, εἰ μηδὲν ἄλλο, καθ' ἡμέραν ἄρτους σθιόντες, πολμῶσι λίγειν, ὅτε οὐκ οἶδαμεν, εἴ ἐστι τις Δημήτηρ, ἢ Κόρη, ἢ

And to add no more, What fellowship could there be between the patron of suicide and the preachers of patience?

SECTION VII.

PLUTARCH.

Tillemont, alluding to what St. Augustine conjectures as to Seneca,* observes of Plutarch, "That he never mentions the Christian religion: perhaps because he was fearful of saying aught in its praise, and unwilling to say aught to its disadvantage."†

This turn is lively, but it does not account in a satisfactory manner, for the silence either of Seneca or of Plutarch, with respect to Christianity: more plausible reasons might be assigned for the silence of Seneca;‡ and as to Plutarch, the following circumstances should be remembered.

There once existed upwards of *one hundred and fifty* treatises written by Plutarch, of which there does not exist a single page at this day.§ And, therefore, "that Plutarch never mentions Christianity," is a fallacious proposition: to one not acquainted with the catalogue of the lost works of Plutarch, it might convey this notion, that Plutarch chose to be altogether silent as to Christianity, whereas the whole amounts to this, Because Plutarch did not mention Christianity in *some* of his treatises, we conclude that he did not mention it in *any* of them. A conclusion most illogical and untenable!

Πλούτων. Upton, like a dutiful commentator, makes this to be the language of a religious Theist, but it seems rather the language of a philosopher, who was willing that the vulgar should continue to believe what he himself disbelieved.

* "Christianos tamen, jam tunc Judæis inimicissimos, in neutram partem commemorare ausus est; ne vel laudaret contra suæ patriæ veterem consuetudinem, vel reprehenderet contra propriam forsitan, voluntatem." *De Civitate Dei*, l. vi. c. 11.

† "Il ne parle jamais de la religion Chrétienne, n'osant, peut être, en dire du bien et ne voulant pas en dire du mal." *Histoire des Empereurs*. T. ii. p. 477.

‡ See pp. 206—208.

§ See Rualdus, *vita Plutarchi*, c. 19.

Suppose that the whole chapter of the *Symposium* of Plutarch, l. iv. qu. 5. had been lost, instead of a part of it, and that the treatises of *Stoical contradictions* and of *superstition* had shared the same fate with *one hundred and fifty* other treatises of the same author, then might Tillemont, in the like mode of reasoning, have said, "Plutarch never mentions the Jewish religion, perhaps because he was fearful of saying aught in its praise, and unwilling to say aught to its disadvantage."

Had the *fifteenth* annal of Tacitus been lost, as part of the *sixteenth* is, some precipitate reasoner might have inferred, with equal plausibility, that Tacitus never mentioned Christ or his followers; and yet that *fifteenth* annal has furnished such a testimony concerning Christianity and the name of *Christian*, that there may probably be some who wish that it had perished together with the conclusion of the *sixteenth*.

One work, in which Plutarch might with propriety have treated of the Christian religion, is lost; its title was *Αἰτίαι βαρβαρῶν*; *Origines barbaricæ*, or, *exteræ*.*

Plutarch wrote "The life of the Emperor Nero." In it, if written fairly and copiously, some mention *must* have been made of the Christians, but that work also is lost.

Whether Plutarch did speak of the Christians, and what he said of them, it is impossible to know.

He was a man of much reading,† but notwithstanding the

* *Lamprias*, de scriptis patris, sui Plutarchi. edit. *Fabric.* Biblioth. Græc. T. iii. p. 340.

† His reading was at least equal to his judgment. His works are treated with a sort of traditionary respect by persons who possibly know him merely as a biographical compiler, so that one can hardly venture, even in this free age, to speak freely of him. But if a father of the church, or a modern antiquary, had written professed dissertations on the following subjects, what should we have said of his genius, or of the manner in which he chose to employ himself, and edify the public?

1. "Why do the Roman women salute their relations with a kiss?" T. ii. p. 265.

2. "Why does a man, returning from the country, or from a journey, send before to advertise his wife of his return?" T. ii. p. 266. It has been suggested to me, that it is to tell her to get dinner ready; but Plutarch assigns *four* reasons for the custom, and *that* is none of them.

variety of his studies, he seems to have had no acquaintance with the principles and tenets of the Jewish religion.* And there is no reason for supposing that he took any pains to be better acquainted with Christianity.

In his days Christianity was not an object worthy the re-

3. “Διὰ τί τῇ νυμφῇ τοπρῶτον οὐκ ἐντυγχάνει μετὰ φωτὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ, ἀλλὰ διὰ σκότους;” *T.* ii. p. 279. I have reserved the sense of this query for such of my readers as are conversant in the Greek language.

4. “Whether ought he who gives an entertainment to place his guests at table or to suffer them to place themselves?” *Sympos.* i. 2.

5. “Which was first, a hen or an egg.” *Sympos.* ii. 3.

6. “Why are women very long of getting drunk?” *Sympos.* iii. 3.

7. “Why are men, when half drunk, more restless and disorderly than when they become quite intoxicated?” *Sympos.* iii. 8.

8. “Why are there many guests invited to a wedding dinner?” *Sympos.* iv. 3.

9. “Why is no faith to be given to dreams in autumn?” *Sympos.* viii. 10.

Here is a specimen of questions proposed by one, “whose excellent understanding was improved by study, whose mind philosophy had purged from the prejudices of popular superstition, and whose days were spent in the pursuit of truth;” and the answers are as curious as the questions are interesting.

There is a *tenth* question, not put by Plutarch, but to which a *probable* answer might be found, and his friends the Academics pretend not to make any other.

“Is it consistent with the good manners that ought to be observed at a *Symposium*, for a man to fall asleep before he gets drunk?”

It has been observed that “there is scarcely in all antiquity, a philosopher less superstitious than Plutarch, excepting Cicero and Lucian.” *Political discourses*, p. 260. 8vo. Edinburgh 1752. “Cicero and Lucian!” But Lucian, notwithstanding his testimony against the person whom he terms ΤΟΝ ΑΝΕΣΚΟΛΟΗΣΜΕΝΟΝ ΣΟΦΙΣΤΗΝ, can hardly be called a *philosopher*.

* Of this there is a well-known example in *Symposium*, l. iv. qu. 5. where the *Beaux Esprits* of Plutarch gravely discuss the question, “Whether the Jews abstained from swine’s flesh, because they abominated, or because they worshipped that animal?” and, in another place, he says, “indeed, it is not an universal opinion that the Gods are beneficent: for observe what the Jews and the Syrians think of them.” [καίτοι χρηστοὺς οὐ πάντας εἶναι τοὺς θεοὺς προλαμβανείν. ὅρα γὰρ οἷα Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ Σύροι περὶ Θεῶν φρονούσιν.] *Περὶ Στωικῶν ἐναντιωμάτων.* *T.* ii. p. 1051. To say that the Jews did not look on the gods of the heathen, as beneficent beings, would have been foreign to his argument, and therefore he must have supposed that the Jews did not look on *Jehovah* as a beneficent being. This betrays his excessive ignorance of the Jewish religion.

gard of contemplative philosophers, who *sought wisdom* amidst the labyrinth of inextricable disputation.

“What was the religion of Plutarch?” is a question which has often been agitated, and which probably will remain without a satisfactory answer.

He never arrived at that perfection of Pyrrhonism, in which a man doubts “whether there exists anything, and consequently, whether he can employ the doubting faculty, if such a faculty there be.” But he was of a sect, less ridiculous indeed, although not apt to make greater proficiency in knowledge; he was one of those who amused themselves so well in hunting after truth, that they had little inclination to attain the original object of their pursuit.

The treatise of Plutarch, *concerning superstition*, has induced some critics to brand him with the character of atheism. Indeed there are expressions in that treatise which seem to imply that superstition is worse than atheism; and, in an age like that of Plutarch, when real religion was little understood, and less attended to, an ordinary reader might draw inferences from the author’s argument, unfavourable to the belief of a Deity: but perhaps the author had no farther view than to state the *Academical verisimilitudes* on each side of the controversy.

Every one knows what use was made of this dissertation in the days of our fathers, and how the argument in favour of atheism was enforced by a writer,* who, with infinitely more genius than Plutarch possessed, appears to have had intentions less equivocal.

Since the publication of Bishop Warburton’s strictures on this subject, the controversy either is or ought to be at rest. In truth, it was an idle question from the beginning. The question, “Which is worst, Superstition or Atheism?” reminds us of the title of one of the treatises of Plutarch now lost, “*Which is the most excellent number, odd or even?*” †

But, whatever were the real sentiments of Plutarch as to religion, it is certain that he either affected to give credit to the worst of the superstitious practices of the

* Bayle.

† πότερον, ὁ περισσὸς ἀριθμὸς ἢ ὁ ἄρτιος ἀμείνων.

Pagans,* or that he suffered himself to be carried down the stream of popular opinions. He himself tells us, that, for many years, he officiated at the ceremonies instituted in honour of *Apollo Pythius*.†

We might as well have expected a testimony in favour of the Christian religion from Arrian, a priest of Ceres and Proserpine, as from Plutarch, a priest of Apollo; and if we must needs be *surprised*, let us be *surprised*, that a man should be said to have spent his days in the pursuit of truth, who supported the sinking reputation of fictitious oracles.‡

SECTION VIII.

MARCUS ANTONINUS.

Marcus Antoninus says, “What a soul is *that*, which is in readiness, if need be, forthwith to depart from the body, and then either to be extinguished, or to be dispersed, or still to subsist! I speak of a readiness proceeding from one’s own judgment, *not from mere obstinacy as the Christians act*, and which is considerate and decent, and without bustle, and such as may persuade others to imitation.”§

* To be satisfied of this, one has but to read the conclusion of the treatise, Περὶ τοῦ μὴ χαρᾶν ἔμμετρα τὴν πύθίαν. T. ii. p. 409.

† καὶ μὲν οἰσθᾶμε τῷ Πυθίῳ λειτουργοῦντα πολλὰς πυθιάδας. ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἂν εἴπης, ἱκανά σοι, ὦ Πλούταρχε, τίθεται καὶ πεπόμενται, καὶ κεχόρευται, νῦν δὲ ἄρα πρῶτον ὄντα τὸν στέφανον ἀποθέσθαι, καὶ τὸ χρηστήριον ἀπολιπεῖν διὰ τὸ γῆρας. κ. τ. ε. Εἰ πρῶτον πολυτετέον. T. ii. p. 792.

‡ A late author,* indeed, says that “Plutarch, in his dialogue concerning oracles, seems to intend the ridiculing of those very opinions which Fontenelle would ridicule him for maintaining.” *Political discourses*, p. 260; at the same place there are some other assertions singular enough, and which do not seem to imply much acquaintance with the works of Plutarch.

§ οἷα ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ ἢ ἔτοιμος, ἐὰν ᾗδῃ ἀπολυθῆναι δέη τοῦ σώματος, καὶ ἦτοι σθεσθῆναι, ἢ σκεδασθῆναι, ἢ συμμείναι; τὸ δὲ ἔτοιμον τοῦτο, ἵνα ἀπὸ ἰδικῆς κρίσεως ἐρχεται, μὴ κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν, ὡς οἱ Χριστιανοὶ, ἀλλὰ λελογισμένως, καὶ σεμνῶς, καὶ ὥστε καὶ ἄλλον πείσαι, ἀτραγῶδως. l. xi. § 3. One translation renders ἀτραγῶδως thus, “without tragical exclamation;” and another thus, “without noise or ostentation.” But I have preferred the phrase, “without bustle,” because it seems to

* Hume.

The observations that have been made on this famous passage are well known, and it would be superfluous to recapitulate them:* something, however, may be added to those observations.

Marcus Antoninus thought that “to be or not to be,” was a question not important enough to disturb the tranquillity of *a wise man*; but the question, even by being put, tends to enervate the efforts of the well-disposed and unphilosophical vulgar, and to make the bad worse.

The more ancient philosophers perceived this, for they were sagacious politicians, and they shaped their avowed doctrines accordingly. But their successors became more unguarded, and they admitted the vulgar into their mysteries of disputing, and doubting about every circumstance beyond the grave. From the matters disputed, it is possible that they themselves drew the right conclusion; but it is more than probable that the herd of their disciples relished better the doctrine of the extinction or dispersion of the soul, than that of its subsisting after death, and that their manners kept pace with their opinions—“How to muzzle an irreligious populace,” may perhaps, be a desideratum in the politics of *future* legislators.

Indifference as to an *hereafter*, however extolled by Marcus Antoninus, is no fixed principle; it will either rise in mystical fumes, or subside into atheism.

It is no *object of surprise* that *he*, who thought so highly of the perfection of Stoical indifference, *should have rejected the perfection of the Christian system*: there is more cause for surprise, that a virtuous philosopher should have extolled that indifference, and have committed his encomiums to writing.

The prejudices of Marcus Antoninus against Christianity were not merely the prejudices of a Stoic; they might be traced, in part, to a different source.

I do not say that he was a slave to the opinions of other

approach nearest to the sense of ἀπραγμάδως in l. i. § 16. *μαὶ τῶν ἐλαχίστων προδιοικητικὸν ἀπραγμάδως.*

* Some of them are mentioned by Lardner, *Heathen Testimonies*, vol. ii. pp. 167—176. See also Gataker, in *Marc. Antonin.* p. 386.

men, but certain it is that he revered his preceptors even to a degree of idolatry.*

“From Diognetus he learnt not to busy himself about trifles, and to disbelieve whatever is reported of wonder-workers and magicians, concerning incantations and the expulsion of *dæmons*, and *things of that nature*.”†

Here there was a good stock of opinions laid in for a young and docible philosopher. If wonders *and things of that nature* were not only to be questioned, but to be disbelieved, it was right in Marcus Antoninus to observe what he had been taught by Diognetus, and to impute to mere obstinacy the behaviour of the primitive Christians, who chose rather to suffer death than to revile that wonder-worker, their Lord Jesus Christ.

Before I conclude this chapter, I must take the liberty of pointing out an inaccurate expression used by Mr. Gibbon; he says, that “Those among them [the heathen sages] who condescend to mention the Christians, consider them only as enthusiasts, who expected an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning.”‡

Where did Mr Gibbon learn this? Not in Tacitus or M. Antoninus, who enter into no detail, but condemn Christianity without a hearing; and as little in the younger Pliny, who *did* make some imperfect inquiries, but discovered nothing of “implicit submission, mysterious doctrines, and arguments unworthy the attention of men of sense and learning.” All then that we have left, is a free paraphrase of a solitary expression in Galen.

* *Tantum autem honoris magistris suis detulit, ut imaginis eorum aureas in larario haberet, ac sepulchra eorum aditus hostiis, floribus, semper [l. sertis] honoraret.* *Jul. Capit. M. Anton. c. 3.*

† *παρὰ Διογνήτου, τὸ ἀκενόσπουδον. καὶ τὸ ἀπιστητικὸν τοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν τερατευομένων, καὶ γοήτων περὶ ἐπαδῶν, καὶ περὶ δαιμόνων ἀποσορμπῆς καὶ τῶν τοιούτων λεγομένοις.* l. i. § 6. Diognetus was one of his earliest teachers, for, in the same passage, we learn that Diognetus dissuaded him from quail-fighting, [a diversion like our cock-fighting,] and prevailed on him to apply his mind to philosophy.

‡ *Decline and Fall*, vol. i. p. 617.

ON THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.

BY THE

REV. JOHN BALLANTYNE.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

JOHN BALLANTYNE was born at South Piteddie, parish of Kinghorn, May 8, 1788. He received his earliest education at a school in the village of Lochgelly, parish of Auchterderran, which was taught successively, while he attended it, by Mr. Andrew Lothian, afterwards minister of Portsburgh church, Edinburgh, and the late Mr. David Inglis, minister of the United Presbyterian church, Port Glasgow. He went to the university of Edinburgh in 1795, and during his studies there taught the elements of classical literature to WILLIAM ORME, afterwards Congregational minister, first at Perth, then at Camberwell—the biographer of Owen and Baxter, and the author of a variety of tracts on theological subjects. His parents were of the communion of the Established church; but, deliberately and conscientiously, as he often declared, he himself joined that of the Burgher branch of the Secession, at whose Theological Hall, then presided over by the venerable Dr. Lawson, he became a student for the ministry. Previous to his receiving license as a preacher, he was employed for some time in teaching, first in the school at Lochgelly, which he had himself formerly attended as a scholar, and afterwards in one at Colinsburgh. Soon after that event he was called by two congregations to be their minister, and was ordained over the one at Stonehaven, Kincardineshire, in 1805. He was its first minister. His well-set frame, and seemingly good constitution, appeared to promise long life. But his health was seriously and permanently injured by an attack of illness soon after his ordination; and no doubt his life of hard and almost literally uninterrupted mental labour contributed to wear him out at an earlier age than, speaking after the manner of men, he might have otherwise reached. He died at Stonehaven on the 5th day of November, 1830, in the fifty-second year of his age, and twenty-fifth

of his ministry. His body lies buried within the walls of the old parish church at Fetteresso; and there a marble mural monument commemorates the affection of his congregation, and the respect and gratitude of the general population of the place where he lived and laboured.

Mr. Ballantyne made his first appearance as an author in "A Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, by a Dissenter." That work was published in its original form in 1824, and afterwards in a considerably enlarged one, bearing the author's name on the title-page, in 1830. No doubt it had a principal share in preparing the public mind for the highly exciting controversy on the subject of ecclesiastical establishments which was then just in its birth; and it will not soon cease to be regarded as a standard work on that subject. Had it pleased God to spare for a longer period the author's valuable life the "Comparison" would in all probability have been followed up by other treatises on subjects connected with the government and discipline of the Christian church. But metaphysics had been by far the favourite study of Mr. Ballantyne,—his nearly all-engrossing one in so far as his pastoral faithfulness, at all times exemplary, allowed,—from an early period after his settlement at Stonehaven. Only those who had the high advantage of friendly intercourse with him could form any idea of the amount of the fascination which was exercised by his investigations in that department of human knowledge or speculation over his powerful mind. His "Examination of the Human Mind" was published in 1828. It deserves to be recorded that a gentleman of high family, large fortune, original and cultivated mind, and decided piety, after having perused that work in manuscript put £200 at the disposal of the author to secure him from loss in its publication, or to be otherwise employed by him in Christianly benevolent objects. This was the more remarkable as Mr. Ballantyne's views on some points of the Philosophy of the Mind were different from those of his generous friend. It is but justice to Mr. Ballantyne to add that the whole £200 were devoted by him to defraying the expense of preaching the gospel in the counties of Kincardine, Aberdeen and Banff. The originality and ingenuity of this work, at least, will scarcely be questioned by any one who is qualified to form an intelligent opinion of its merits. Those parts of it which bear more directly on moral or theological questions

are peculiarly valuable, and deserving of the studious perusal of those, especially, who are in the Christian ministry, or are preparing for it. The late Bishop Gleig of Stirling, of high and just repute as a metaphysician, in a letter to Mr. Ballantyne, which is still extant,* pronounced the section which relates to Human Freedom to be by far the best thing he had seen on the subject. Since the author's death the work has been referred to in the most laudatory terms by distinguished metaphysical writers;—for instance, Mr. Morell, in his *History of Philosophy*, and the late Dr. Payne of Exeter. The volume published, as stated in an advertisement prefixed to it, “though complete in itself,” was intended to be succeeded by others having for their object “the application of the doctrines stated in it to the explanation of the more interesting intellectual, active, and moral phenomena of human nature.” MS. sufficient, it is supposed, for another volume, of equal size, was left by the author at his death; and it is much to be desired that measures could be adopted for giving it to the public through the press.

The following tract appears in the form of a long note to the “*Examination of the Human Mind*.”

Mr. Ballantyne was a man of unaffected piety, much self-denial, remarkable integrity, fastidious honour, and great warmth of heart,—a man whom to have known on earth is to have known one now among “the spirits of the perfected just.”

H. A.

COPY OF A LETTER FROM BISHOP GLEIG TO THE AUTHOR OF THE
FOLLOWING TRACT.

STIRLING, *December 8th*, 1828.

DEAR SIR,—I should long ago have thanked you for the highly valued present of your work both to myself, my son, and my most speculative friends; but I wished in the first place to read with attention discussions which, without attention, cannot be understood, before I should give you my opinion of them. At the time the parcel came to my hand, I was engaged in official discussions of a very different nature; and of late I have not been very well. I have, however, now read, with all the attention that I could give to any thing, 287 pages of the book, and have no hesitation to say that your third

* This letter, equally honourable to the Bishop and the Presbyter, is appended to this notice.

chapter is by much the most satisfactory account of the voluntary principle that I have anywhere met with, not even excepting Bishop Law's edition of Archbishop King's essay on the *Origin of Evil*, which has long been a favourite work with me. I wish to say this before I read the 9th and 10th sections of that chapter, because I think it possible that both you and I may have theological prejudices, which may prevent us from being perfectly agreed as to the doctrine of the 9th section. This, however, may not be the case; for I give you my word of honour that I have not read one paragraph of the section, because I wish to tell you how much I am pleased with your discussion of very delicate and important questions, without having to say that there is a single idea or even expression on them that I could wish changed.

This is more than I can say of the language of the two preceding chapters, though I have no doubt but that you and I agree as to the doctrine taught in them. I object to the use which you make of the word *idea*, representing *ideas* as having *power*, which they cannot have without being *substances*, somewhat like Plato's *ideas*. I consider, as Bishop Berkeley considered, *ideas* as secondary perceptions, which, when the origin of the word is considered—*εἶδω*—must I think have been their original meaning; and hence too the indisputable fact, that of all our ideas or secondary perceptions, those which were derived from visible objects are the most vivid. Taking the word in this sense, we can have no idea of *solidity* though we know perfectly what it means; and therefore, I would use the word *notion*, from *γινώσκω*, instead of *idea*, on many occasions in which *idea* is used by you and Locke. I think too that you might perhaps have given a more perspicuous and satisfactory account of the associating principle or law, if you had paid more attention to the work of Hartley. I am aware that Hartley's doctrine of *vibrations* in the brain producing *sensation*, and *vibratiuncles* producing *ideas*, is deservedly laughed at by all our Scottish metaphysicians; for nothing can be more absurd than to attempt to show how the mind and brain mutually affect each other, or to pitch on *vibration* as the most likely motion to occur in such a pulpy substance as the brain. But though this theory of *vibrations* and *vibratiuncles* is presumptuous nonsense, there can be no doubt but that some kind of impression is communicated to the brain and through the brain to the mind in every act (if I may so say) of perception, or that the brain

is somehow affected at every distinct recollection of what we had formerly seen or felt; and this mutual affection, without taking upon us presumptuously to say what it is, throws I think considerable light on the associating principle. A lady of my congregation—a woman of very superior understanding as well as education—had a fit of apoplexy several years before her death, so violent that blood gushed from her nostrils while under it. She recovered, however, so far as to see company, to speak distinctly, and I think to be once or twice at church; and she lived three or four years in that state, during which time she used to give the name of one thing to another, and, which was still more extraordinary, to be sensible that she was *blundering*. Once, after asking about my own health with her usual affectionate kindness, she proceeded to inquire about my family, with all of whom she was intimately acquainted; but, naming them one by one, she called one of them, after some hesitation, *the chair*, and smiled, conscious of her own blunder.

On the whole I consider your book as one of the most valuable that I have ever seen on the philosophy of the human mind—very superior indeed, in every thing but elegant language, to the works of him for whom all ranks seem now to be united for raising a splendid monument!* If my memory does not deceive me, you are married, and if so, believe me to be, with best compliments to Mrs. Ballantyne,

Yours faithfully,

GEO. GLEIG.

* Dugald Stewart, who was no favourite of the Bishops. Ed.

ON

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.



Πόθεν τὸ κακόν; Whence comes evil? is a question that has been proposed from time immemorial; and though the most powerful understandings have been directed to its solution, it still remains in almost all its original obscurity.

Evil is of two kinds—*natural* and *moral*—and it will be convenient to attend to the former, in the first place, and to begin with examining it in so far as it involves considerations of *justice*. In every question, indeed, that respects the Divine procedure, it is of importance to begin with such considerations; for, unless we know what the Almighty may do consistently with *justice*, we must necessarily have very imperfect ideas of what is to be ascribed to his *goodness*; and, indeed, very imperfect ideas on the subject of his procedure generally.

It is evident, at first sight, that the Almighty may, consistently with justice, act towards his creatures—I mean perfectly innocent creatures—in any way he sees meet, provided he do not expose them to more *suffering* upon the whole than *enjoyment*—to more *pain* than *pleasure*. Whether he may not go farther than this, and inflict an additional degree of suffering, I shall not venture to determine; but to this length, beyond all question, he may justly go. To mention a few instances for illustration:

1. Were the Almighty to form an *insensitive creature*, and of course expose it to neither suffering nor enjoyment, no person would suppose that he was acting unjustly to-

wards it. Such a creature, indeed, would enjoy no pleasure, but neither would it suffer pain, and every just ground of complaint would be entirely precluded.

2. Were the Almighty to form a *sensitive creature*, and expose it to an equal degree of suffering and enjoyment, neither in this case would there be any injustice. Such a creature in the exercise of its sensitive functions would experience both suffering and enjoyment; but as suffering and enjoyment are exactly opposite, and when equal balance one another, there would be as little room for complaint as if there had been neither suffering nor enjoyment at all.

3. Were the Almighty to form a *sensitive and active creature*, and expose it to an equal degree of suffering and enjoyment, neither would there here be any violation of justice. Such a creature in the exercise of its sensitive and active functions, would experience, like the former, both suffering and enjoyment, and in its intercourse with other creatures, it might receive and communicate both suffering and enjoyment; but while suffering did not predominate, there would be no just ground of complaint.

4. Were the Almighty to form a *sensitive, active, and moral creature*, and expose it to an equal degree of suffering and enjoyment, there would, in this case, be in every respect as little violation of justice as in any of the former cases. The creature, in the exercise of its sensitive, active, and moral functions, would experience both suffering and enjoyment; and, in its intercourse with other creatures, it might receive and communicate both suffering and enjoyment; but still, while the suffering did not predominate, there would be no just ground of complaint.*

* Perhaps it may be objected to this doctrine, that it implies that God may first inflict a degree of suffering and then make compensation by future enjoyments; in other words, that he may first do something, which, taken by itself, is a serious *injury*, and then make up for the *injury* by future kindness—conduct which it would be almost blasphemy to impute to the Almighty. But such an objection is a mere sophism, and entirely overlooks the relation between God and his creatures. Were a master, for example, to expose a servant to a degree of toilsome labour—that is, to a degree of suffering—and then give him adequate wages—that is, adequate enjoyment—would any person allege that he had first done him a serious injury, and then

It thus appears, that without violating justice, the Almighty may expose his creatures—even perfectly innocent creatures—to an indefinite amount of *natural evil*,*—may subject them to labour, may doom them to disease, may consign them to death, may give them wants and tendencies that lead to labour, disease, and death; for there is obviously as little injustice in giving them wants and tendencies that lead to these evils, as in directly inflicting the evils themselves. In short, he may act towards them, as already remarked, in any way he sees meet, provided he does not expose them to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment.

The chief difficulty, however, still remains; for, as every one knows, the question respecting the origin of evil does not so much relate to the *justice* of the Almighty as to his *power* and *goodness*, and is simply this—If the Almighty be *able* to prevent evil but not *willing*, where is his *goodness*? If he be *willing* but not *able*, where is his *power*? If he be both *able* and *willing*, why does evil exist? Before proceeding to examine the difficulty involved in these questions, let the two following observations be attended to.

1. If the Almighty may, without violating justice, act towards his creatures in any way he sees meet, provided he do not expose them to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment, it follows, that in so far as their enjoyments surpass their sufferings, the entire *overplus* is to be ascribed to his *goodness*, and of course that the amount of what they owe to his *goodness*—the amount of *clear gain*—consists in this *overplus*. In other words, the amount of good which creatures obtain is not the *absolute* enjoyment which they possess, but the *superiority* of enjoyment over suffering.

2. If the amount of good which creatures obtain be the superiority of enjoyment over suffering, it follows, that equal

made up for the injury by acts of kindness? As little injury would there be in analogous conduct on the part of God: or rather, as God has an incomparably higher right in his creatures than any earthly master has in a servant, the absence of injury on the part of God would be incomparably more manifest.

* Suffering is not the only species of natural evil, but it is certainly the chief; and if we can answer the question, Πόθεν τὸ κακόν; with regard to it, there can be little difficulty with regard to the others.

and similar variations in the degree of both must leave the real amount of *good* exactly as before. An increase of enjoyment, for example, with an increase of suffering equal to it, would neither increase nor diminish the good, nor would a diminution of enjoyment with a diminution of suffering equal to it either increase or diminish the good, nor would the removal of suffering altogether with the removal of a degree of enjoyment equal to it either increase or diminish the good. In short, while the variations are similar and equal, the amount of good must necessarily remain unaltered. No arithmetical proposition can be more indubitable than this. Keeping these observations in our eye, let us now attend to the principles on which an explanation of the above difficulty may be attempted, or at least into which it may be resolved.

Every person allows that the object of God in his works, is *the manifestation of his attributes, and the communication of good to his creatures*. Some, indeed, contend, that the manifestation of his attributes is the *primary* object, and the communication of good only the *secondary*; others, that the communication of good is the primary object, and the manifestation of his attributes the secondary; and others, that these objects are so closely connected that they are not to be regarded as different objects at all, but merely one and the same under different aspects; but, if we except the advocates of atheism, who deny the Divine Being altogether, every one admits that the Almighty in his works has both objects in view.

In manifesting his attributes and communicating good, it seems obviously to be desirable that the Almighty should not only perform works of *high excellence*, but also of *indefinite variety*. The performance of the former without the latter, would indeed show him to be inconceivably exalted above all other beings; but the performance of both is requisite to show that he is not only exalted above all other beings, but that in the exercise of his attributes he is altogether *unrestricted*. It may require, for example, as much wisdom to make a man, as to make a man, and a beast, and a bird, and a fish, and a stock, and a stone; but I appeal to every one, if the wisdom of God be not manifested with far

more *effect*—as being far more *unrestricted* in its exercise—by making all these objects than by making a man only. No human being, indeed, can doubt for a moment, that the inconceivable variety of objects and forms of objects, the inconceivable variety of operations and forms of operations, which the works of nature display, are, in the highest degree, conducive to the manifestation of the *unrestricted* wisdom of their Divine Author: and the very same remark is applicable to all his other attributes without a single exception. *Variety* of operation is as useful for manifesting the attributes of God as *excellence* of operation. The same, too, is true in regard to the communication of good.

Another thing to be attended to, in the manifestation of the Divine attributes and the communication of good, is the relation of things to *Sovereign Will*. Whether the sovereignty of God is to be denominated an attribute, or rather a principle by which his attributes are controlled in their exercise, is a matter of mere nomenclature: but no person can doubt that the Divine attributes, are, in point of fact, greatly controlled in their exercise by the influence of sovereignty, and that a very numerous and important class of phenomena is to be referred to this influence. Why, for example, did God create man at the time he created him, and not fifty years sooner? as the amount of good had thus been increased. Or why did he create the world at large at the time he created it, and not fifty years sooner? as the amount of good had thus been increased. Or why did he bestow on his creatures their present means of enjoyment, and not higher ones? as the amount of good had thus been increased. Or why did he not make stones animals, and animals men, and men angels, and angels a still higher order of beings? as the amount of good had thus been increased.

Such questions, it is evident, are not to be answered by referring to any supposed deficiency of *power* or *goodness* on the part of God, and for this very obvious reason: Admitting these attributes to be altogether infinite, and that in their exercise he had bestowed *any assignable amount of good whatsoever*, it might still have been asked, Why not a greater? Admitting, for example, that God, in the exercise of infinite power and goodness, had actually created the

world fifty years sooner than he did, it might still have been asked, and with as much force as at present, Why not fifty years sooner? Or, admitting that, in the exercise of infinite power and goodness, he had afforded all his creatures higher means of enjoyment, it might still have been asked, and with as much force as at present, Why not higher means? Or, admitting that, in the exercise of infinite power and goodness, he had made stones animals, and animals men, and men angels, and angels an higher order of creatures, it might still have been asked, and with as much force as at present, Why not higher? From the very nature of the case, there is no end to such questions. They may be asked to infinity; and in looking for an answer, we must not look merely to infinite power and goodness, but to infinite power and goodness as controlled by infinite sovereignty. In other words, if God meant to bestow on his creatures any amount of good whatever, he behoved to bestow it at some time or other, and in some degree or other; and the determination of the particular time, and the particular degree, behoved to be as his sovereign will saw meet to direct.

A third thing to be attended to, in the manifestation of the Divine attributes, and the communication of good, is the *nature of the impression* to be made on the minds of creatures. So far as we have the means of knowing, there is not such a creature in the whole universe as a mere abstract intelligence—a mere intellectual being. Every intelligent creature with which we are acquainted, is susceptible of various emotions or *affections*—such as affections of esteem, of love, of hope, of fear, of reverence, &c.,—and in manifesting himself to such creatures, it would be unreasonable to suppose that the Almighty should address himself only to their *understandings*, and not also to their *hearts*. On the contrary, both reason and revelation would lead us to conclude that he should address himself to *both*; and particularly that he should present to them such scenes as are calculated to impress them with those feelings of veneration for the sublime glories of his character, with which, as the Great Sovereign Ruler of Nature, they ought ever to regard him.

The manifestation of the divine attributes and the communication of good, in works indefinitely and impressively

varied, according to the Sovereignty of the Divine will, is the true ground, I imagine, on which we are to rest our answer to the question, Πόθεν τὸ κακόν; Whence comes evil?

Suppose, for example, that when the Almighty created the world, he meant to bestow on innocent creatures a certain amount of good, and there was evidently one of two courses which he might have adopted. He might have bestowed a degree of enjoyment equal to the good without any *suffering at all*, or he might have bestowed an *additional* amount of enjoyment with a degree of suffering equal to the *addition*. In the latter case, the real amount of good would have been precisely as in the former; but the difference, in other respects, might be immense, for the sufferings might be varied in kind, might be varied in degree, might be varied in their manner of infliction, in fact, might be varied indefinitely; and not only so, but might vary indefinitely every thing else with which they come into connexion. So that, without diminishing the amount of good in the smallest degree, a principle of variety would have been introduced that is altogether unlimited.*

This principle, too, is in every respect well calculated to produce and sustain those feelings of veneration for the Divine Being, with which, as already remarked, every intelligent creature ought to regard him. The communication of *unmixed enjoyment* is no doubt fitted to convey to the understanding the belief of the benevolence of God, and also to convey to the heart certain feelings of love and of gratitude, on account of his benevolence; but it is in witnessing scenes where, though enjoyment predominates, yet suffering exists in large proportions, where misery and happiness, where evil and good, are both to be met with, that the soul is most powerfully impressed with the awful glories of the Omnipotent Jehovah, and made to fall prostrate before his throne. No kind or degree of unmingled enjoyment, according to the present constitution of intelligent creatures, can ever be accompanied with such impressive results.

If such be the consequences of suffering; if without being

* Suffering, too, it must be observed, though an evil in itself, is often the source of much enjoyment.

of any *real disservice* to creatures, it be the source of effects of a character the most interesting; if it give an indefinitely varied and sublime colouring to the whole of nature's operations, and make us look up with emotions of indefinitely varied and sublime reverence to nature's God, no marvel that he, "who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," should be the author of its being.

It is the greatest error imaginable to suppose, that because God is good, he should communicate nothing to his creatures but *unmixed pleasure*. This is to entertain the most low and unintellectual ideas of his goodness—incomparably lower than of the goodness of an enlightened fellow mortal. What we should expect of Divine goodness is, that while it bestows pleasure in indefinitely greater measure than pain, it should nevertheless avail itself of the advantages of both, and multiply, and diversify, and intermingle them in every variety of form—the very phenomena which we actually witness.

Perhaps, indeed, it may be asked, could not the Almighty, who is every way infinite, have resorted to some other principle than suffering for accomplishing his purposes?—a principle which, from its very nature, is evil. But the answer is obvious. In so far as suffering and enjoyment are equal, they are neither good nor evil. They exactly balance each other; and in reference to good and evil, are on the same footing as any thing perfectly indifferent.

It may also be asked, Would not the amount of good have been greater if the enjoyments had been continued as they are, but all suffering withdrawn? The answer to this question is likewise obvious. The amount of good would undoubtedly have been greater; but the question is the same, in effect, with asking, Why has not God bestowed on his creatures a greater degree of good than he has bestowed? A question which, as formerly remarked, may be asked to infinity; for let the degree of good be what it may, it might still be asked, Why not greater?

Besides, even although God had designed to bestow a greater degree of good, there was no necessity for withdrawing a single atom of suffering. He had merely to increase the enjoyments, and leave suffering as it is. By this ex-

pedient, he had as effectually accomplished his purpose, as by abolishing suffering altogether; and at the same time, maintained that interesting principle of variety in all its force.

In short we may turn or twist the matter as we please; but to this conclusion we must inevitably come in the end—that if God meant to bestow on his creatures any particular amount of good, whether great or small, he might accomplish his purpose in one of two ways, either by bestowing a certain degree of enjoyment *alone* or by bestowing an *increased* degree of enjoyment, and a degree of suffering equal to the *increase*; while, by this latter expedient, he would introduce a principle of impressive variety that is altogether indefinite.

I may here remark, that in examining the question respecting the origin of evil, we should ever be attentive to argue from *reason*, and not from mere feeling. Had a higher degree of suffering been allotted to creatures than at present, and an equally higher degree of enjoyment, the amount of good had been exactly as it is; but in all probability, in consequence of our feelings, we had regarded the scene with much more astonishment, and been ready to ask, with much more amazement, *Πόθεν τὸ κακόν*; Whence comes evil?

On the other hand, had suffering been altogether withdrawn, and an equal degree of enjoyment also withdrawn, the amount of good had likewise been exactly as it is; but in all probability, we had regarded the scene with much less astonishment, and asked, with much less amazement, Whence so low a degree of good? In reality, we witness innumerable scenes in the mineral and vegetable worlds, where there is neither suffering nor enjoyment of any kind, and it scarcely ever occurs to us to ask, Whence so low a degree of good? We should reckon him a very singular person who should gravely request to be informed, why the stones of the ground, or the trees of the forest, enjoy so low a degree of good; or who should gravely urge their insensitive condition as an argument against the goodness or power of their author. The sufferings of creatures, even although their sufferings were fully equal to their enjoyments, afford to *the eye of reason* an argument equally futile against the goodness or power of their Author.

Let us now attend to the case of *Moral Evil*. Moral evil is considerably different from *natural*; but the question respecting its origin may be resolved, I imagine, into the same general principle, viz.: *The manifestation of the Divine attributes, and the communication of good, in operations indefinitely and impressively varied, according to the sovereignty of the Divine will.* Let us begin, as in the former case, with examining the question, in so far as it involves considerations of *justice*.

If the Almighty may, consistently with justice, act towards his creatures in any way he sees meet, provided he do not expose them to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment, it necessarily follows, that if he do not expose moral creatures—I mean innocent moral creatures—to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment, he may require them to perform any duty, however *difficult*, or any number of duties, however *difficult*, provided the *difficulty* do not surpass their *ability*.

Were the Almighty, for example, to create an innocent moral creature with ability to labour, he might, in perfect consistency with justice, if he did not expose it to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment, require it to labour. Were he to create an innocent moral creature with ability to control certain internal dispositions, affections, and passions, he might, in perfect consistency with justice, if he did not expose it to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment, require it to control these dispositions, affections, and passions.* Or were he to create an innocent moral creature with ability to resist the influence of certain outward temptations, he might, in equal consistency with justice, if he did not expose it to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment, require it to resist the influence of these temptations. In short, if the Almighty do not expose an innocent moral creature to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment, he may, consistently with justice, as already remarked, require it to perform any duty, however difficult, or any

* Their various dispositions, affections, and passions, form the chief source of the difficulties which mankind experience in the performance of duty.

number of duties, however difficult, provided the difficulty do not exceed its ability.

This doctrine is so evidently true, that no person of the smallest pretensions to candour can venture to deny it; and it completely acquits the Almighty from all injustice in reference to every duty which he requires innocent moral creatures to discharge; for no person imagines that he requires them to discharge any duty so difficult as to exceed their ability, or that he exposes them to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment.

The chief source of perplexity, however—as in the case of *natural evil*—does not relate to *justice*, but to *power* and *goodness*, and is involved in the questions already mentioned—If God be *able* to prevent evil, but not *willing*, where is his *goodness*? If he be *willing*, but not *able*, where is his *power*? If he be both able and willing, why does evil exist? To prepare the way for answering these questions, in reference to moral evil, let the two following observations be attended to:—

1. If the Almighty may, consistently with justice, require innocent moral creatures to perform any duty, however difficult, which does not exceed their ability, provided he do not expose them to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment, it follows, that, in so far as their ability exceeds the difficulty, the whole *overplus* is to be ascribed to his *goodness*; and, of course, that the amount of this species of good is the amount of this *overplus*. In other words, the amount of this species of good is not the *absolute* ability which moral creatures possess, but the *superiority* of their abilities over their difficulties.

2. If the amount of this species of good be the superiority of ability over difficulty, it follows, that equal and similar variations in the degree of both must leave the amount of the good exactly as it was. An increase of ability, for example, with an increase of difficulty equal to it, would neither increase nor diminish the good; nor would a diminution of difficulty, with a diminution of ability equal to it, either increase or diminish the good; nor would the removal of difficulty altogether, with the removal of a degree of ability equal to it, either increase or diminish the good. In short,

as was remarked in the case of suffering and enjoyment, while the variations are equal and similar, the amount of good must necessarily remain unaltered. No arithmetical proposition can be more indubitable than this.

If these observations be duly attended to, we shall find, I am persuaded, that the existence of moral evil is completely resolvable into the principle already mentioned—the manifestation of the divine attributes and the communication of good, in operations indefinitely and impressively varied, according to the sovereignty of the Divine will.

Suppose, for example, that when the Almighty created the world, he meant to bestow on innocent moral creatures a certain amount of that species of good, which consists of *power* or *ability*; and there was evidently one of two courses which he might have adopted. He might have bestowed the exact amount of ability *without any difficulty at all*; or he might have bestowed an *additional* amount of ability with a degree of difficulty equal to the *addition*. In the latter case, the real amount of good had been precisely as in the former; but the difference in other respects might be immense; for the difficulties might be varied in kind, in degree, in their manner of operation; in fact, might be varied indefinitely; and not only so, but might vary indefinitely every thing else with which they come into connexion. So that, exactly as in the former case, without diminishing the amount of good in the smallest degree, a principle of variety had been introduced that is altogether unlimited.*

This principle, too, like that of suffering, is calculated to produce a deep impression on the mind in regard to the divine character; and that, too, whether creatures make a right use of their abilities or a wrong. If they use their abilities aright, the difficulties they encounter must have a direct tendency to make them look up with feelings of devout and humble reverence to him, on whom all their abilities, and all their difficulties, continually depend, to entreat his beneficent assistance to support them, and, relying on his

* Difficulty, too, it must be observed, is often the source of ability. By struggling with difficulties, we almost always increase our ability to surmount them.

aid, to bring into the most resolute and vigorous exercise every talent they possess. The performance of duty, when perfectly easy, can have no such tendency. The conduct of the agent is too placid to occasion much feeling of any kind. It is when obstacles are to be surmounted—it is when virtue has to contend with vice—it is when holiness has to strive for the mastery with sin, that the movements of the heart are most powerfully excited, and the soul made to acknowledge, with adoring wonder, the dependence of every thing on Him who is omnipotent.

Suppose, however, that creatures make a wrong use of their abilities; and in this case, I admit that the impression on the minds of these creatures themselves may involve no reverential feelings whatever, in regard to the Divine character. On the contrary, the effect of their misconduct may be entirely to annihilate such feelings, and produce those of contempt and aversion. But what must be the impression on the minds of *observers*? Beyond all controversy, there is something in God's permitting that to be done which is contrary to his very nature, in his giving creatures such constitutions, and placing them in such circumstances, that *that* indubitably ensues which he regards with abhorrence, in his warning, and exhorting, and beseeching them to avoid that which he himself could prevent by a single act of his will; and in his doing all this, in perfect consistency with the infinite power, and infinite goodness, and infinite rectitude of his own character, that is calculated to overwhelm the soul with amazement, and make it approach the throne of Jehovah, if with confidence and love, at the same time with fear and trembling. Even delinquents themselves, if they be not thoroughly brutalized, must feel the effects which such a view of things is fitted to produce.

If these be the impressions which the permission of moral evil be fitted to occasion,—if even when creatures are placed in such circumstances as will indubitably be attended with its commission, the rectitude of the Divine Being can in no degree be impeached; if, on the contrary, a sublime and awful glory be thrown around his whole nature, and his creatures taught to adore and obey him, we need hardly be surprised that the permission should exist.

I may here remark, in regard to moral evil, that God only *permits* it, and is not its author. When we hear of his giving creatures such constitutions, and placing them in such circumstances, as will be indubitably followed by the commission of sin, we are in no small danger of supposing that he himself is somehow or other implicated in the sin. But, according to the doctrine I have stated, and unquestionably, according to the reality of things, no supposition can be more thoroughly erroneous. In every case of sin, without a single exception, God only *permits* it, but never *causes* it. His creatures have sufficient ability to avoid its seductions;* and if they do not avoid them, it is not *he* but *they* who are to blame. Its indubitably taking place, is not because *he makes* it indubitably take place, but because *they themselves make* it indubitably take place. In other words, it is because they themselves indubitably commit it.

It may be asked, indeed, could not the Almighty, who is every way infinite, have resorted to some other expedient for accomplishing his purposes, than the placing difficulties in the way of duty, and thus occasioning so much evil? But the answer is almost self-evident. In as far as ability has the *superiority* over difficulty, it is all one as to the power of performing duty, as if there were *no difficulty at all*, but merely a degree of ability equal to this *superiority*. If the degree of ability, for example, be *ten*, and the degree of difficulty *eight*, it is the very same thing as to the power of performing duty, as if there were no difficulty whatever, but merely a degree of ability equal to *two*. So that by conjoining difficulty with ability, while many advantages are gained, there is no advantage whatever lost.

Perhaps it may be further asked, Would not the power to perform duty have been greater, if ability had been continued as it is, but all difficulty withdrawn? The answer is likewise almost self-evident. The degree of power had certainly been greater, but the question is the same, in effect, with asking, Why has not God bestowed on his moral creatures a greater degree of power than he has bestowed?

* Let it be observed, that I mean *natural ability* in contradistinction to what is called *moral ability*.

a question which may be asked to infinity, for let the degree of power be what it may, it might still be asked, Why not a greater?

Besides, even although the Almighty had meant to bestow a greater degree of power, there was no necessity for withdrawing a single atom of difficulty. He had merely to increase ability, and leave difficulty as it is. By this expedient, he had as effectually accomplished his purpose, as by abolishing difficulty altogether.*

The truth is, though moral evil is exceedingly different from natural, yet the questions concerning their origin are almost exact counterparts of each other, and, *mutatis mutandis*, may be explained in nearly the same way. Both questions come really to this, not Why is there any evil? but Why is there not *more good*? And the questions formerly mentioned—If God be *able* to prevent evil but not *willing*, where is his goodness? If he be *willing* but not *able*, where is his power? If he be both *able* and *willing*, why does evil exist? are the same in effect with these—If God be able to bestow *a greater amount of good*, but not *willing*, where is his *goodness*? If he be willing, but not able, where is his *power*? If he be both able and willing, why does not a *greater amount of good exist*?—Questions which may be asked to infinity; for let the amount of good be what it may, it might still be asked, Why not greater? The infinite

* Though *harmony* is usually said to be the great principle that presides over the universe, yet it should never be forgotten, that to whatever quarter we look we see things completely *opposed* to one another. The projectile motion of the planets, for example, is opposed by the law of gravitation; the tendency of smoke to fall to the ground, is opposed by the pressure of the atmosphere; the tendency of the ocean to remain at rest, is opposed by the influence of the winds, of the moon, and of many other causes. Predilections are often opposed by antipathies, evidence for a doctrine by evidence against it, and motives to perform an action by motives to avoid the action altogether. *Harmony* is undoubtedly the great principle that presides over the universe, but it is *harmony* controlling the elements of *discord*—the elements of *opposition*; and the superiority of good over evil—of enjoyment over suffering—of ability over difficulty—is merely an example of this species of harmony. The existence of evil, therefore, opposed as it is by the existence of good, is quite in accordance with the analogy of all the leading phenomena of nature.

power and goodness of God have never been thought to render it necessary that he should bestow on every creature, —or indeed on any creature,—an infinite amount of good. The degree of good, therefore, must have its limits somewhere or other, and the fixing these limits can be imputed to nothing but his design to manifest his own attributes and communicate good to his creatures, in operations indefinitely and impressively varied according to his sovereign will.

All the facts in the procedure of God with which we are acquainted, either by the light of nature, or the light of revelation, are agreeable to this doctrine; and, indeed, are mere exemplifications of it. When God created matter, he created it inanimate, though he could easily have given it the principle of life. He is not, however, exposing it to more suffering, upon the whole, than enjoyment; for he is not exposing it to suffering or enjoyment at all, and his object with regard to it seems plainly to be, as already stated, to manifest his attributes, and communicate good, in operations indefinitely and impressively varied according to his sovereign will. When God created the lower animals, he created them irrational, though he could easily have given them the principle of reason. There is no ground, however, to believe, that he exposes them to more suffering, upon the whole, than enjoyment; and his object with regard to them likewise, seems plainly to be, to manifest his attributes, and communicate good, in operations indefinitely and impressively varied according to his sovereign will.

So in the case of moral evil. When God created our first parents, he bestowed on them certain privileges, and exposed them to certain temptations; but no person has ever ventured to allege, that he exposed them to greater suffering than enjoyment, or to greater temptations than they were able to resist. His conduct towards them, therefore, was not only justifiable, but perfectly accordant with the great object of all his works,—the manifestation of his attributes, and the communication of good, in operations indefinitely and impressively varied according to his sovereign will. There cannot, indeed, be a doubt, that he might have given them higher privileges, and exposed them to lower temptations. He might have given them more knowledge, more prudence,

more firmness, or he might have placed them in a different situation, and freed them from the seductions of their great deceiver. He might, in short, in perfect consistency with their free agency, and all the principles that characterized them as human beings, have rendered their stability in innocence *indubitably certain*.* But to ask why he did not, is merely to repeat the question already so often mentioned—Why did he not bestow on them more good? a question which may be asked to infinity. The true principle into which his procedure is to be resolved, is the sovereignty of his own will manifesting his attributes, and communicating good, in operations indefinitely and impressively varied.

It may be said, indeed, that to reduce the question, Why is there evil? into the more general question, Why is there not more good? is not to remove the difficulties of the subject, but merely to exchange one set of difficulties for another. This is so far true; but let it be remembered,

* The *indubitable stability* of mankind in innocence, has been supposed by some to be incompatible with their *freedom of agency*; but no supposition can be more thoroughly without foundation. Has not God given to the children of English parents such constitutions, and placed them in such circumstances, as are indubitably attended with their *speaking English*, and done so—though speaking is a voluntary action—without destroying or even impairing their freedom of agency? Has not God given to mankind at large such constitutions, and placed them in such circumstances, as are often indubitably attended with their *eating and drinking*, and done so—though eating and drinking are voluntary actions—without destroying, or even impairing, their freedom of agency? And why could he not, with just as much ease, have given to the first of our race such a constitution, and placed them in such circumstances, as would have been attended with perfect rectitude of demeanour, and done so, without destroying or impairing their freedom of agency? In no case whatever do *motives* impair the freedom of the will; and yet let motives be presented to it in a certain way, and it will as indubitably act according to them.—whether for good or for evil,—as any physical object will act according to physical impulse.

This doctrine, I may add, is perfectly agreeable to that of inspiration. Good men in a future world are represented in scripture as perfect in holiness, and *confirmed* in holiness; but surely their free agency is not annihilated? Were they ceasing to be free agents they would not be men at all. The angels in heaven are represented in scripture as perfect in holiness, and *confirmed* in holiness; but surely they too are free agents? Were they not free agents, they could neither be holy nor unholy, for they would not be moral beings of any kind.

that all the explanations that philosophy can give are merely such reductions as I have attempted—the reducing less general principles into those that are more general. When Newton accounted for the motions of the heavenly bodies by the principle of gravitation, he left gravitation itself unaccounted for; and though he had accounted for it, he behoved to have left some other principle unaccounted for.

I may also observe, that although I have referred the question, Why is there not more good? to the Divine Sovereignty, yet I have not laid more stress on this attribute than the subject seems fairly to authorize. The good which creatures enjoy must have its limit somewhere or other,—for no person believes it to be infinite—and what other principle than sovereignty can we ultimately refer to for determining those limits.

The attribute of sovereignty, too, it should never be forgotten, is as important as any in the Divine Nature, and everywhere is as strikingly manifested. Why, for example, hath God given light to the sun? Why hath he given grass to the fields? Why hath he given heat to the fire? Why hath he given coldness to ice? Why, in short, hath he done any of those things which we see he hath done, when he could easily have done things otherwise? Does any person expect a different answer, or is any other answer requisite than that already mentioned—the manifestation of the Divine attributes, and the communication of good, in operations indefinitely and impressively varied according to the *sovereignty of the Divine will*? We may guess, perhaps, at some subordinate reasons, but the *sovereignty* of the Divine character, varying indefinitely the manifestation of the Divine attributes, and the communication of good, is our only resource at the last.

In the intelligent world, we witness innumerable phenomena, of which we must give precisely the same account. Why hath God placed the inhabitants of Christian countries in more eligible circumstances than those of heathen countries, when he could easily have made all alike? Why hath he placed some Christian countries in more eligible circumstances than others? Why hath he given some men more enlarged understandings than others? Why hath he given

some men stronger passions than others? Why hath he given some men more faithful and affectionate parents than others? Why hath he placed some men under a better political government than others? Why hath he given men the faculties of human beings, and not the faculties of angels? Why, in short, hath he established those innumerable distinctions among his intelligent creatures, which we everywhere see he hath established? The same answer as above must ultimately be given—the *sovereignty* of the Divine character.

The whole economy of Providence shows, that neither in the natural nor moral world does the Almighty set any limits, except those prescribed by justice and wisdom, to the exercise of his sovereignty—that in some cases he bestows an indefinitely small amount of good, in others a larger amount, in others an amount still larger. In fact, that though *justice* is never violated, yet he will not be restrained in the exercise of his sovereignty, though events should take place which he himself hates with a perfect hatred, and which he cannot look upon but with entire detestation.

To a reflecting mind, nothing can appear more becoming, than that the Almighty should act thus. Sovereignty is one of the most godlike attributes of the Divine nature. It is that on which the awful supremacy of Jehovah seems chiefly to depend; and while he is ever attentive to do justice to others, is it not reasonable that he do justice to himself; and if he manifest his sovereignty at all, manifest it in all its glory? Is it like a being invested with the attributes of *Divinity*, to set any other limits to the manifestation of his sovereign prerogatives, than the undeviating rectitude of his own character? Would our ideas of “the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity,” be raised by finding him hampered in the manifestation of his perfections, by a fear of doing *less good*, than some of his creatures, to whom he is doing *no injustice*, may wish? Is it not a far more godlike procedure—a procedure far more conformable to the inconceivable sublimity of his nature—to do *injury* to none, but, at the same time, to act *according to the counsels of his own will*?*

* Even in manifesting his sovereignty, the Almighty may bestow much good. Would a legislature be thought deficient in goodness

It ought never to be forgotten, that the Almighty has to promote his own glory as well as the good of his creatures. Many, in examining the question of evil, seem to make no account of the Divine glory at all; but proceed in their theories as if the good of creation were the *exclusive* object of the Most High. This, beyond all controversy, is a mistaken view of the subject. It is impossible to look either to the works of creation or of providence, without being satisfied, that the manifestation of his glory, as well as the good of his creatures, is what God has in view; or, as I have already mentioned—that the object of God in his works is the manifestation of his attributes, and likewise the good of his creatures. This doctrine, when stated generally, will be assented to by every one, and it seems fairly to warrant the conclusions I have drawn from it.*

Archbishop King, in his Treatise on the Origin of Evil, has formed a theory founded on the supposition, that the highest class or grade of creatures may be so full, that it cannot conveniently admit of additions; that there may be an indefinite number of descending grades, each of which is full in its order, and that from the very nature of the case,

which should resort to measures, the object of which was, to impress all with a sense of its sovereign jurisdiction? Are not such measures often resorted to even by the best and wisest legislatures, and with the best and wisest designs? And may not the Great Legislator of the universe, for wise and gracious designs, resort to similar measures? Is it not, in reality, of the last importance that such an impression be not only produced but constantly preserved? that unto the Author and Governor of all, “every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue should confess that he is Lord.” Or, would it be proper to renounce this line of policy, because some of his creatures to whom he has done much *good*, and has done no *injury*, will perversely take occasion from it to do what is evil?

* Would there be any impropriety in supposing that the Almighty regards himself, in his moral government, as merely *one of the beings* in the universe, and that he treats himself precisely as he treats others—making due allowance for difference of rank and character? If this supposition be admitted, it will follow, that the whole universe of moral being is under the same grand system of equal laws, and the Divine glory the *chief end* of all. Due allowance is not made for difference of rank and character unless the Divine glory be the chief end of every thing.

therefore, some of the lower grades must be liable to evil. But this is a mere system of fanciful conjectures, unsupported by a shadow of evidence, and explains nothing after all.

Another theory which some seem vaguely to adopt, is founded on the supposition, that the economy of *nature* is intimately connected with the economy of *grace*; and that as the faults of the former are compensated by the excellencies of the latter, there is no room, upon the whole, to complain. This theory proceeds on the assumption, that the economy of nature is *unduly rigorous*, and needs to be mitigated by a dispensation of a more merciful character. But such an assumption is altogether inadmissible. The sacred writings everywhere represent the economy of grace—and it is only from them we know any thing of it at all—not as a *compensation for undue rigour* in a different one, but as a system of *sovereign and unmerited kindness*. A compensation, indeed, for *undue rigour* would be no *grace* at all, but merely a remuneration to the claims of *justice*.

Perhaps I should also advert to another theory which some seem willing to adopt, at least in reference to moral evil—that *free agency* being founded on *contingence*, must imply liability to sin in its very nature; and that sin, therefore, must either be permitted, or *free agency* destroyed. Stewart decidedly adopts this theory, but it leads directly to the rejection of revelation, and, in fact, to complete atheism. All who believe the sacred writings, believe that there are angels in heaven who are *free agents*, but not liable to sin: and that good men in heaven will be *free agents*, but not liable to sin; and all who believe in the being of a God, believe that he is a free agent, but not liable to sin.

The truth is, that the prevailing sentiments of philosophers, not only on the subject of evil, but on many other subjects, involve the most defective ideas of the Divine character. *The god of philosophers* is hardly any thing but a being of indefinite *power*, and *wisdom*, and *goodness*. Such a being, however, nowhere exists. He is a mere *fiction of the understanding*. He is neither the God of creation, of providence, nor of redemption, but a bare *philosophical abstraction*. The God whom good men are accustomed to

adore, is as superior to the god of philosophers, as *theirs* to the gods of the lowest of the heathen.

Having now endeavoured to dispose of the general question, Πόθεν τὸ κακόν; it may not be improper to advert to one or two subordinate particulars connected with it.

1. It is an evident dictate of reason, that guilt deserves punishment, and if the punishment which the Almighty inflicts on the guilty be equal to what they deserve, there is obviously neither *injury* nor *goodness*, but mere *justice*. If the means of obtaining remission of punishment be afforded to the guilty, these means are entirely of *goodness*. If, besides the means of remission, there likewise be afforded the means of obtaining happiness, these means are also of *goodness*. If, in any case, the means of obtaining remission and happiness be withheld, or, if in some cases they be withheld, and in others afforded; or, if in some, they be afforded in a greater degree, and in others in a less, to ask, why all the guilty are not favoured, and favoured equally, is merely to repeat the question so often already mentioned, Why has not God bestowed *more good*? a question which can only be answered by referring to his *sovereign will*.

2. In consequence of the transgressions of the guilty, it may happen that perfectly innocent creatures *connected with them*, will be exposed to sufferings they would have otherwise escaped; and to what extent, it may be asked, may they be thus exposed to suffering? The answer is obvious. Perfectly innocent creatures may be exposed to any degree of suffering that does not exceed their enjoyments, *although unconnected with the guilty altogether*; and consequently there can be no injustice in exposing them to the same degree of suffering *in consequence of that connexion*.

On this principle, we can easily account for the justice of the Divine procedure, in exposing the lower animals to much suffering in consequence of their connexion with man. The Almighty, without injustice, might have exposed them to the same degree of suffering though they had not been connected with man at all. Their suffering, however, as they do at present, accomplishes an object of the very highest importance. Had they suffered *unconnected* with man, their sufferings would have shown nothing of the evil of sin what-

ever; whereas, by suffering *in consequence of the sins of man*, while justice is not violated, the tendency of sin is most fearfully displayed, as we behold its malignant influence even on those that are altogether guiltless.

3. In consequence of the transgressions of the guilty, it may happen that perfectly innocent moral creatures *connected with them*, may be exposed to difficulties in the performance of duty they would otherwise have escaped; and to what extent, it may be asked, may they be thus exposed to difficulties? The answer to this question is just as obvious as that to the preceding. Perfectly innocent moral creatures may be exposed to any degree of difficulty whatever that does not exceed their ability, *although unconnected with the guilty altogether*; and, of course, there can be no injustice in exposing them to the same degree of difficulty *in consequence of that connexion*.

On this principle, we can easily account for the justice of the Divine procedure in allotting to children, *even although they were supposed to be perfectly innocent*, such parents as will expose them by their sinful conduct and example to very powerful inducements to commit iniquity—even to inducements so powerful as will indubitably be complied with. No person supposes that any inducement to sin, although, in point of fact, it be indubitably complied with, ever exceeds the ability of the agent to resist it—his *natural ability*, to wit, in contradistinction to what is called *moral ability*. On the contrary, the most stern expounders of morals are unanimous in maintaining, that inability to perform duty is altogether of a moral kind; and from the very nature of the case, indeed, it cannot be otherwise.*

On the same principle we can see, that in consequence of the fall of Adam, the Almighty, without injustice, might appoint all his descendants—*even although they were sup-*

* Let it be observed, that moral inability is not inability commonly so called. Want of moral ability, for instance, to perform duty, is merely want of *willingness* to perform it. Hence some have asserted that want of moral ability to perform duty is a *sin*. Such an assertion has, no doubt, rather a paradoxical aspect; but it really comes to nothing but this, that want of *willingness* to perform duty is a *sin*, an assertion, the truth of which every one will allow.

posed to be perfectly innocent—to receive such dispositions, affections, and passions, &c.; and to be placed in such circumstances, as would expose them to very powerful inducements to iniquity—even to inducements so powerful as would indubitably be complied with. As already remarked, no person supposes that any inducement to sin, though, in point of fact, it be indubitably complied with, ever exceeds the ability of the agent to resist it. His natural ability, to wit, in contradistinction to what is called moral ability.

In short, if the doctrine I have proposed be admitted,—that the Almighty may consistently with justice act towards perfectly innocent moral creatures, in any way he sees meet, provided he do not expose them to more suffering upon the whole than enjoyment, nor to greater difficulties than exceed their abilities—it will necessarily follow, that, *in consequence of the fall of Adam*, he might, without violating justice, have doomed the whole human race to labour, to disease, to death; and also have doomed them to receive such constitutions, and to be placed in such circumstances, as would expose them to very powerful inducements to sin—to inducements so powerful as would indubitably be complied with. The reason is manifest; he might, without violating justice, have done all this, and more than this, though there had never been an Adam at all.

His inflicting such evils, however, *in consequence* of the fall of Adam, is calculated to serve purposes of the very highest magnitude. What event in the whole universe, if we except the death of the Redeemer alone, is more calculated to display the Almighty's hatred of sin, than his inflicting for *one sin of one man*, calamities so tremendous? And what event in the whole universe, if we again except the death of the Redeemer, is more calculated to display the glories of his character, than his doing this in perfect consistency with the strictest rules of moral equity?*

I am perfectly aware of the paradoxical, and even startling aspect of some of the sentiments I have now expressed;

* I must again remark, that I am far from pretending to be capable of explaining, on the principles of reason, all the particulars involved in the question of *Original sin*. If my remarks be received as correct so far as they go, it is all that I aim at

but they not only flow directly from very evident principles, they completely accord with *facts* which Providence most distinctly presents, and with *doctrines* which inspiration most explicitly inculcates; and no man, I am persuaded, can faithfully interpret either the one or the other, if he do not admit them.

The Scriptures declare that God “visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him.” This declaration, I know, has been sometimes explained to mean,—the third and fourth generation of such children as approve the iniquities of their fathers—but such an explanation annihilates the meaning altogether: and when we look to facts, we everywhere see children suffering for the iniquities of their fathers, though, instead of approving, they bitterly lament and sincerely condemn them.

The Scriptures also declare, that God shows mercy unto thousands of generations of the children of those parents who love him and keep his commandments. And when we look to facts, we everywhere see children benefited by the virtues of their parents, even though they ridicule and despise them. What is more; when we look to facts, we see the two declarations most completely exemplified, even in the case of the very same individuals, and at the very same time. For how frequently does it happen that children suffer much harm in consequence of the iniquities of some of their ancestors, while at the very same time they are enjoying much good in consequence of the virtues of certain others?—So entirely do Scripture and experience agree with the conclusions of a sound philosophy.

I may here remark, that philosophers often account for a variety of physical paradoxes, by merely resolving things into their elements, and then reasoning synthetically from these elements to the explanation of the actual phenomena; and would they only resort to the same very simple expedient in the case of morals, they might no less successfully explain a variety of moral paradoxes.

I shall add in conclusion, that every principle in the divine administration seems to be carried to an extent that is altogether indefinite. If we look to the world of matter,

we find creatures so minute, that no human eye can discern them, and systems so immense that no human thought can comprehend them; we find movements so slow that no human eye can trace them, and others so rapid that no human imagination can follow them. In the world of mind the features are similar. There are creatures possessed of such constitutions, and placed in such circumstances, that, free and intelligent though they are, it is indubitably certain that they will *not* commit sin—as the angels in heaven; and others possessed of such constitutions, and placed in such circumstances, that, free and intelligent though they are, it is indubitably certain that they *will* commit sin—as human beings upon earth. The obedience, too, which God requires of his free and intelligent creatures, is so strict as not to admit of a single deviation; and the disobedience he forbids so peremptory, as not to allow of a single transgression. The rewards which he promises to the good are so transcendently blissful, as utterly to surpass their most exalted expectations; and the punishment which he threatens to the bad so entirely afflictive, as utterly to exceed their most gloomy apprehensions. “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and to him, and through him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen.”

THE INABILITY OF THE SINNER TO COMPLY
WITH THE GOSPEL,
HIS INEXCUSABLE GUILT IN NOT COMPLYING
WITH IT,
AND THE CONSISTENCY OF THESE WITH
EACH OTHER, ILLUSTRATED.

BY JOHN SMALLEY, D.D.



PREFATORY NOTICE.

OF the incidents in the life of the author of the following tract, I have been unable to obtain any information. Dr. Emmons, who studied theology under him, says that "he was a man of a strong and clear mind, who had thoroughly digested Mr. Edwards' writings, and who was well-qualified for an instructor. His great excellence consisted in representing divine truths in a clear light and in reconciling them with each other." The Reverend John Marsh in his "Ecclesiastical History" says that "Dr. Smalley was a man of astonishing logical powers, who contributed more than any one of his age to the progress of theological science." From Professor Park's "Reflections of a visitor upon the character of Dr. Emmons," we learn "that Dr. Smalley died at eighty-six." Full information respecting him will soon be obtained from a biographical work in which the accomplished Dr. Sprague of Albany has been for some years engaged, and which is understood to be nearly ready for the press.—The valuable tract which is included in this collection appeared in the form of two sermons on John vi. 44. It is substantially a dissertation on an important and difficult subject, and it required only the leaving out a few words to give it its appropriate form.—The only other works of Dr. Smalley I have met with are—Occasional sermons with the following titles, "On the perfection of the divine law and its usefulness for conversion;" "Full redemption consistent with free grace;" "None but believers saved through the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ;" "On the evils of a weak government." They all bear the marks of independent thinking, and a rather uncommon union of metaphysical acuteness and strong common sense.—Mr. Sutcliff of Olney, Fuller's friend, published an edition of the tract here reprinted in 1793.

THE SINNER'S INABILITY

TO COMPLY WITH THE GOSPEL, &c.

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It is, no doubt, of the last importance, that people should be convinced and made thoroughly sensible of their impotence and helplessness in themselves, and their entire dependence on divine grace for salvation. So long as sinners think they can recommend themselves to the favour of God by their own righteousness, they will never "come unto" Christ "that they may have life." For "the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." And so long as persons imagine they labour under no insuperable inability to comply with the gospel, they will never feel their dependence on Him who alone is able to work in them "the whole good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." Nor will they feel disposed, or see the occasion they have, to "give unto God the glory," which is indeed "due unto his name," in their salvation. Accordingly, the depravity, blindness and deadness of mankind, in things of a spiritual nature, and their utter inability to comply with the gospel, as well as to obtain salvation by the deeds of the law, are much inculcated and insisted on in the sacred Scriptures.

But then, there is a difficulty in the minds of many, how to reconcile this total helplessness of sinners with the sincerity of the gospel call, or with the justice of men's being condemned and punished for their impenitence and unbelief. And indeed it does seem as if men could not be to blame, for not doing impossibilities: nor should we, in other cases, think there was much kindness or sincerity in offering a favour on conditions that were known to be impracticable.

There is scarce any one, I believe, that has ever thought much about religion, but what has, at one time or other, felt himself pinched with this difficulty. And it is wont to have a most pernicious influence upon the minds of sinners in general; but more especially when they come to be under awakenings, and begin to inquire, "what they shall do to be saved." According to what they hear in sermons, yea, and according to what they read in their bibles, they are at a loss to see how the ways of the Lord can be equal. "The carnal mind," they are told, "is—not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be." And that, "they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." They are therefore under a *necessity* of sinning, yea, of doing nothing else but sin. And yet, "every transgression and disobedience," is to receive a most dreadful "recompence of reward," the wrath of God being "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." And no relief, no deliverance from wrath, is to be hoped for through the gospel, but upon impossible conditions: such conditions as no natural man, no one who is dead in trespasses and sins, ever did, ever will, or can comply with. And yet a non-compliance with these conditions exposes to an amazingly aggravated, additional condemnation; insomuch that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for those who enjoy the light of the gospel, and do not embrace the salvation it offers.

But how these things are consistent with reason; how they can ever be reconciled with the goodness or the justice of God, they are greatly at a loss. Such a view of the matter seems to them to make the MOST HIGH indeed, what the slothful servant said, a hard master, "reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed." Or, like the cruel Egyptian task-masters, requiring the full tale of brick without allowing the necessary straw; requiring that of his creatures which he knows exceeds their utmost strength, and then they are beaten; yea, must be punished with everlasting destruction, for not doing what they would do with all their hearts; but it is no more in their power, than it is to make a world.

Now, until this difficulty can be fairly got over in the

minds of people, it seems impossible they should, in their consciences, justify God, or condemn themselves as he condemns them; or that they should understand, either the justice of the divine law, or the grace of the gospel. It is therefore certainly highly necessary, that what the scripture says upon this subject, should be set in a consistent light, so as to commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

There are *several ways* in which this has been attempted. *Some* account for God's suspending our salvation upon impossible conditions, and condemning men for not doing what it is not in their power to do, by observing that we *lost our power by the fall*. Our present weakness and blindness was brought upon us as a righteous punishment for the disobedience of Adam; and God, they say, has not lost his right to command, because man, by his own folly and sin, has lost his ability to obey. That is, we ought, it is our present real duty to exert, not only all the strength we actually *have*, but all we *should have had*, had it not been for the original apostacy.

*But to this* it will be *objected*, that we never reason and judge in this manner, in any other case. We do not think those who have lost their eyes, are still to blame for not seeing; or those who have lost their reason, for not understanding; or that it is the duty of those to labour with their hands, who have no hands to labour with. Not, though we suppose they were deprived of those faculties in a righteous manner, for their sins. Or, suppose a servant, by his own folly and bad conduct, has brought a fit of sickness upon himself, do we think it reasonable for his master still to require him to go out into the field every day, and do as much work as if he was well? And is the servant to blame, in not obeying such commands? Does he daily commit new sin, in not working, when perhaps he now wishes, with all his heart he was able to do it; but has not strength to go a step, or bear his weight?

It must, I think, be granted, that we do generally suppose a man's present duty cannot exceed his present strength, suppose it to have been impaired by what means it will. We never hear even a good man pretend to repent or blame him-

self, that he has not seen the light of the sun all day, and resolve not to be guilty of the same sin to-morrow, when he has been stone blind for twenty years. I shall not therefore undertake the defence of *this*, as any solution of the difficulty to the apprehension of reason and common sense. Nor can I think that any one was ever convinced of the sin of unbelief in this way. However well meant it might probably be, by the inventors of it, it seems rather calculated to *ease* the consciences of men, by casting all real blame back upon the first sin only.

*Others*, (and those who would not be thought, and are not suspected to lean in any measure towards *Arminianism*) have supposed it necessary to soften matters a little as to the sovereignty of grace, and the helplessness of sinners, if we would avoid the above inconsistency, or reflection on divine justice. They would have it maintained, indeed, that sinners are unable to do much, if any thing towards their salvation, merely of themselves. Nor do they suppose that any one is ever brought to true repentance and faith in Christ, without the bestowment of *special* grace. But then they apprehend, it may, and must be, admitted that sinners are able, by the help of *common* grace, to do those things which are connected with, and may be considered as a sort of preliminary conditions of salvation; conditions upon which regeneration, and an ability to come up to the actual terms of the gospel, are promised, or however, will undoubtedly be bestowed. That is, they suppose, if sinners will seek and pray, use the means of grace, and do the best that persons under their circumstances, and having such hearts as they have, *may* do; God will not be wanting on his part, or leave them to perish;—that if they exert all the strength, and make a good improvement of all the assistance they have, they shall have more and more given them; till in the end they are enabled to obtain mercy, and to lay hold on eternal life. That although there are no absolute promises to such earnest and sincere, though feeble efforts of the unregenerate, yet certainly there are many very precious encouragements; which may, indeed, securely enough be relied on. So that, on the whole, no sinner is under any *real* impossibility, of *any kind*, of obtaining salvation. For every

one, let his impotence be as great as it may, can certainly do what he can. And if upon his doing *this*, God will not fail to help, as to what he *cannot* do; then every one *may* be saved, whatever sin and weakness, or depravity he labours under, notwithstanding. Nor do they see how we can vindicate the divine justice, or fairly cast the blame of the sinner's perdition on himself, without supposing such a universal sufficiency of grace as this.

Now, if this can be made out to be really the case, that all are actually and in every view, *enabled* to do those things which are certainly connected with eternal life, there will be no difficulty, perhaps with any one, to see that the ways of the Lord are equal. For according to this there seems to be no respect of persons with God, even in the distribution of his *freest favours*, any more than in his *judicial proceedings*. The difference between him that is saved, and him that perisheth, *not* originating from any inequality in the bestowment of divine grace; *but* solely from the better improvement one sinner makes of the same grace, than another does.

But, I am afraid, it will be as hard to reconcile this way of solving matters with the Scriptures, and with the truth of fact, as it is the former, with reason. Certainly the Scriptures seem to speak a language quite different from this. In them we are taught, "That it is God that maketh one man to differ from another, for the better, and not he himself. That it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," and "that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth." And our Saviour accounts for the murmuring and opposition of the unbelieving Jews, by making this observation to his disciples upon it; "no man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him." By which he evidently meant to intimate, that the conduct of his opposers, considering what human nature was, was not to be wondered at. That they acted no otherwise than all other men would, if left to themselves as they were. That those who now followed and obeyed him, would never have come to him, or become his disciples, had it not been for a gracious divine influence upon their minds, which was not granted to those murmurers and opposers; had they not

been effectually drawn by Him in whose hand are the hearts of men, and who turneth them as rivers of water are turned. We are plainly taught in this text, taken in the connection in which it stands, as we are also in a multitude of other places, that men do not first distinguish themselves, by hearkening to the calls of the gospel; but it is God that makes one to differ from another in this respect, by his sovereign and distinguishing grace.

The point of DOCTRINE I shall insist upon in the following discourse is this: That none are *able* to comply with the gospel, but those who are the subjects of the special and *effectual* grace of God; or those who are *made willing*, and actually *do* comply with it. What I have in view, is not only to confirm this doctrine, but to endeavour to set it in such a light as to obviate the forementioned difficulty, of salvation's being offered on impossible conditions, and men's being condemned for not doing that which they are incapable of. And after what has been said, I think there is no way of attempting to clear up this mystery left, but by showing that there are *two essentially different senses*, in which men are said to be *incapable* of doing things: or, by having recourse to the distinction of *natural* and *moral inability*. Accordingly, the method I propose, is, as clearly as I can, I. To *state and illustrate this distinction*. II. To show, that men certainly labour under *one*, or the *other*, of these kinds of inability to comply with the gospel, *until* they are made the subjects of *effectual* divine grace. III. More particularly to consider and evince the *moral* impotence of sinners. And, IV. To endeavour to make it appear, that there is ordinarily *no other* incapacity in sinners, to comply with the gospel, but that which is of the *moral* kind.

### I.

It is to be observed, for the clearing up this subject, that there are *two very different kinds of inability*; so different, that the *one*, however great, does not lessen moral obligation in the least; whereas the *other*, so far as it obtains, destroys obligation, and takes away all desert of blame and punishment entirely.



These two kinds of inability, as I hinted, have commonly been distinguished, by calling one a *natural*, the other a *moral* inability. Which distinction may be briefly stated thus. MORAL INABILITY consists only in the want of a heart, or disposition, or will to do a thing. NATURAL INABILITY, on the other hand, consists in, or arises from, want of understanding, bodily strength, opportunity, or *whatever may prevent*, our doing a thing when we are willing, and strongly enough disposed and inclined to do it. Or, in fewer words, thus: Whatever a man could not do, *if he would*, he is under a *natural* inability of doing; but when all the reason why one *cannot* do a thing, is because he does not chose to do it, the inability is only of a *moral* nature.

This distinction takes place equally with regard to *evil* actions and *good* ones. Thus, for instance, the divine Being *cannot* do evil; not because he wants opportunity, or understanding, or strength, to do, with infinite ease, whatever he pleases; but only because he is not, and it is impossible he ever should be, inclined to do iniquity. He is so infinitely and immutably holy, wise, just, and good, that it is impossible he should ever *please* to act otherwise, than in the most holy, righteous, and best manner. Hence though we read that “with God *all things* are possible,” and that he can do *every* thing; yet elsewhere we are told, “he cannot *deny himself*;” and that it is impossible, “for God to lie.”

On the other hand, Satan is incapable of doing right, or of behaving virtuously, in any one instance, or in the least possible degree. But this is not because he wants natural abilities; for undoubtedly in that respect, he is far superior to many that are truly virtuous. His being incapable of any thing but infernal wickedness, is altogether owing to his being of such an infernal disposition.

And it is not uncommon to speak of incapacity in mankind, both as to doing good and doing evil, in this two-fold signification. Some persons we say are incapable of doing a *mean thing*. Not that we think it is above their *natural* capacity; but it is beneath them; they abhor, or they would scorn to do it. Others are incapable of several sorts of villany, not through any want of good will to do it: they only want a convenient opportunity, or sufficient ingenuity.—And just so

it is in regard to doing good. Some have it not in the power of their hands; others have no heart to it. One is of a truly generous spirit, and nothing but his own poverty keeps him from being what Job was, a father to the poor, the fatherless, and him that has none to help him. Another is rich, and might be a great benefactor and blessing to all around him; but he has no heart to devise liberal things. He is *deaf* to the cries of the poor, *blind* to their wants, and *dead* to all the generous feelings of humanity and compassion.

Some are so feeble and infirm that they can do scarce any bodily labour: though they are extremely free and willing to lay themselves out to the utmost that their strength will bear, and often go beyond it. Others are strong and healthy enough, and might get a good living, and be useful members of society; but such is their invincible laziness, that their hands refuse to labour, and they can hardly get them out of their bosoms. Some are effectually kept from shining, or being very useful, in any public sphere in church or state, through the weakness of their heads; others, as effectually, by the badness of their hearts. Some are incapable of being taught, by reason of natural dullness; others only because they are of an unteachable spirit, and full of self-conceit. Some are blind for want of eyes; but it is an old proverb, 'none are more blind than those who won't see.'

These examples are sufficient to illustrate the distinction I am insisting on, and to make it evident that by *incapable*, we often mean something very different from want of natural capacity. We may also perceive from these instances, that there is a real necessity for using such words as *capable*, *incapable*, *cannot*, &c., in this diversity of signification, in which we see they are used, in common speech, as well as in the scriptures. For whenever anything, whether in ourselves or without us, is really absolutely inconsistent with our doing a thing, we have no way fully and strongly enough to express that inconsistency, but by saying we are *unable*, we *cannot*, it is *impossible*, or using some word of like import. And now it is certain that want of a heart, or inclination to do a thing, may be, and is, as inconsistent with our doing it as any thing else could be. Covetousness is as inconsistent with liberality as poverty is, and may as effectually hinder a man from

doing deeds of charity. Indolence is as inconsistent with industry, as bodily weakness and infirmity. The want of an upright heart and a public spirit is as inconsistent with the character of a good ruler, as the want of wisdom and understanding. And the want of all principles of virtue must be as inconsistent with acting virtuously, as even the want of those intellectual faculties which are necessary to moral agency. And so on the other hand as to doing *evil* things. There is no possibility of doing them, that is, knowingly, designedly, and as moral agents, without an evil disposition. Our free and moral actions are, and must be, as invariably guided and dictated by our minds, as they are limited and bounded by our natural power. That is, every one must act his own nature and choice; otherwise he does not act himself; *he* is not the agent. And if, when we would express this sort of necessity, we should not use the same phrases as are made use of in cases of natural necessity; but, for fear of a misunderstanding should carefully avoid saying a man *cannot*, whenever we mean only that he has not such a heart as is necessary, and only say that he *will not*, in all such cases; our language would often sound odd, being out of common custom, which governs the propriety of words; and not only so, but it would not be sufficiently expressive. Should we be afraid to say it is *impossible* for a man to love God, or come to Christ, while his heart is altogether wicked and full of enmity against God and Christ; people would be ready to think we imagined this might sometimes happen, and that there was no real impossibility in it of any kind. Whereas there is as real, and as absolute an impossibility in this case, as in any supposable case whatever. To be more guarded therefore, than the scripture is, in this matter, would be to be unguarded. The apostle demands, "*can* the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs?" And the prophet, "*can* the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard, his spots? Then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil." And our Saviour says, "a good tree *cannot* bring forth evil fruit; neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things. And an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."

There is *as certain* and never-failing a connexion in this case as any natural connexion whatever;—which ought by no means to be dissembled, but openly maintained. But then it is certainly of a *quite different*, and even a directly opposite nature, to all intents and purposes of moral agency. And it is of the last importance, in my apprehension, that this also should be maintained and manifested to every man's conscience.

Because a man *must* act according to his own heart, or as he pleases; does this destroy his freedom? It is the very thing in which all free agency consists. The pulse *can* beat; the limbs can move in some bodily disorders, or when one that is stronger than we takes hold of them; whether we will or no. But God does not consider *us* as accountable for such actions as these. And we should, and that not without reason, think it very hard, should he blame or punish us for them. For an honest and good man's pulse may beat as irregularly as the worst villain's in the world. Or his hands, in a convulsion, may strike those around him, in spite of all he can do to hold them still. Or one may be carried by force along with a gang of thieves, and be taken for one of them, though no man hates such company and actions as theirs, more heartily than he does. Such involuntary actions every one sees a man is not, and ought not to be accountable for. And the reason is, no bad inclination of ours, or want of a good one, is *necessary* in order to them. They are *so free*, as to be independent of *us*, and out of our power. If all our actions were like these; no ways necessarily connected with our disposition, and choice, and temper of mind, we could not be accountable creatures, or the subjects of moral government. If a good tree could bring forth evil fruit, and a corrupt tree good fruit; if a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, could bring forth evil things, and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, good things; the tree could never be known by its fruit. It could never be known by a man's actions, what his heart was. So that, if they were dealt with according to their works, the most upright and well-disposed would be as liable to be punished; and the most ill-natured and ill-disposed, as likely to be rewarded, as the contrary. Whence all moral government must be at an end.

Certainly, if we are justly accountable, rewardable, or punishable, for any actions; if any actions are, or can be, properly *our own*, it must be such as are dictated by ourselves, and which *cannot* take place without our own consent. An inability, therefore, to act otherwise than agreeably to our own minds, is only an inability to act otherwise than as free agents. And that necessity which arises from, or rather consists in, the temper and choice of the agent himself, and that which is against his choice and his very nature, are so far from coming to the same thing at last, that they are directly contrary one to the other, as to all the purposes of morality, freedom, accountableness, and desert of praise or blame, reward or punishment.

And this is agreeable to the sense of all mankind, in all common cases. A man's heart being fully set in him to do evil, does not render his evil actions the less criminal, in the judgment of common sense, but the more so: nor does the strength of a virtuous disposition render a good action the *less*, but the *more* amiable, and worthy of praise. Does any one look upon the Divine Being, as less excellent and glorious, for being so infinitely and unchangeably holy in his nature, that he "cannot be tempted with evil," or act otherwise than in the most holy and perfect manner? Does any one look upon the devil as less sinful and to blame, because he is of such a devilish disposition, so full of unreasonable spite and malice against God and man, as to be incapable of any thing but the most horrid wickedness?—And as to mankind: who is there that does not make a difference between him that is incapable of a base action, only by reason of the virtuousness of his temper, having all the natural talents requisite for the most consummate villany: and him that is incapable of being the worst of villains, for no other reason than only because he does not know how? Does any one think that only the want of a will to work, excuses a man from it, just as much as bodily infirmity does? Or, do we any of us ever imagine, that the covetous miser who, with all his useless hoards, has no heart to give a penny to the poor, is for that reason equally excusable from deeds of charity, as he who has nothing to give?

We certainly always make a distinction betwixt want of

natural abilities to do good, and the want of a heart; looking upon the one as a *good* excuse, the other as *no* excuse *at all*, but rather as that in which all wickedness radically consists. A natural fool no one blames for acting like a fool; "But to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not; to him it is sin," in the sense of all mankind, as well as in God's account. "If there be first a *willing mind*," we always suppose it ought to be "accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." But the want of a willing mind, or not having a mind to do well, is universally considered as a crime, and not as an excuse. Nothing is more familiar to us than to distinguish in this manner. Nor can any man of common sense help judging thus.

Now this distinction is as applicable to the case before us, as it is to any other case. Some may be unable to comply with the gospel, through the want of those powers of mind, or those bodily organs, or those means of grace, without which it is impossible to understand the character of Christ, or the way of salvation through him. In either of which cases, the inability is of the *natural* kind. Others may have all the outward means and all the *natural* faculties, which are necessary in order to a right understanding of the gospel; and yet, through the evil temper of their minds, they may be disposed to make light of all its proposals and invitations, and to treat every thing relating to religion and another world, with the utmost neglect and indifference. Or, if their fears of "the wrath to come" are by any means awakened, and they are made with much solicitude to inquire "what they shall do to be saved," still they may be utterly disinclined to submit to the righteousness, or the grace of God, as revealed in the gospel. They may be still "such children of the devil, and enemies of all righteousness," as to be irreconcilably averse to all "the right ways of the Lord." They may have "such an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God," as is absolutely inconsistent with consenting to the covenant of grace, or "believing to the saving of the soul." Now, when this is the case, the inability the sinner is under, is only of a *moral* nature.

## II.

We may now pass on to show that all who are not the subjects of the special and effectual grace of God, must certainly be unable, in one or the other of these senses, to come to Christ, or comply with the gospel.

Those, many of them at least, who dislike the distinction now explained, and some who seem in a sort to admit of it, suppose all men have, and must have, every kind of ability to do their duty, and to obtain salvation. But, I apprehend, it will be very easy to make appear, that this certainly is not the case. A variety of Scripture arguments, and a multitude of texts might be adduced here, were they needed. But that *all* have not *both* the fore-mentioned kinds of ability to comply with the gospel, either of themselves, or by the help of common grace, is as evident as any thing needs to be, merely from the fact, that many do not do it, but actually live and die in impenitence and unbelief. By common grace is meant, that grace which is given to sinners in general, those that are not saved, as well as those that are. They who believe that all are in every sense able to work out their own salvation, through the gospel, would not be thought to frustrate the grace of God. They do not suppose sinners are able to do this *of themselves*, but that some divine assistance, some working of God in them, both to will and to do, is really necessary in the case. But then they suppose, all this needed grace, whatever it be, is given to sinners without exception: and hereby they account for God's commanding all men every where to repent and believe the gospel. "I grant, indeed," says an ingenious Arminian writer,\* "that by reason of original sin, we are utterly disabled for the performance of the condition, without new grace from God. But I say then, that he gives such grace to all of us, by which the performance of the condition is truly possible, and upon this ground he doth and may most righteously require it." Here by the way, it is worthy of particular remark, what notions many are obliged to entertain of divine grace, in order not

\* Dr. Stebbing, on the operation of the Spirit.

to reflect upon the divine justice. To require *perfect holiness* of creatures so enfeebled and depraved as we are, they suppose would be evidently one of the most *unreasonable* things in the world. Therefore God has been *graciously* pleased to send his Son to obey and die in our room, that we might not be "under the law, but under grace." But then the covenant of *grace* is not gracious enough to be entirely just; because by reason of original sin, we are utterly disabled for the performance of the condition upon which salvation is still suspended. To remedy the unreasonableness of this, *new grace* from God is required. Accordingly, "he giveth *more grace*." "He giveth such grace to all of us, whereby the performance of the condition is truly possible; and upon this ground he doth and may most righteously require it." Thus, not only the obedience and death of Christ, but likewise all the grace of the Holy Spirit which is necessary to salvation, is found no more than barely sufficient to screen the ways of God to men, from the just imputation of unreasonableness and unrighteousness!\* It is certainly difficult to conceive, how any man, who really views things in this light, however much he may talk of free grace, can ever feel himself any more obliged and indebted to God, than if he had only dealt with us in a righteous manner from first to last, never requiring more of us than we were able to do, and so no occasion or room had been given for any grace in the affair. And yet this view of the matter is really as friendly to the grace of God, as any conceivable one which proceeds upon the principle that nothing more can be justly required of us, than we have a moral as well as natural power to do.

\* According to this representation of the matter, I desire it may be attentively considered, whether this, which is called *grace*, does in any thing really differ from *debt* in the strictest sense? If it would be an unrighteous thing in God, to require a compliance with the gospel, without bestowing all that grace which is necessary in order to a compliance; then since he does indeed require such a *compliance*, would it not be an unrighteous thing in him to withhold such *grace*? Hence (things being circumstanced as they are) this *grace* which all are made partakers of, is no more than what all may claim as their *just due*.—And therefore, does not the whole come to this at last, that this *common grace*, which is so much contended for, is not *common grace*, but, *common debt*?



But what I had more especially in view here, was to inquire how it comes to pass that any in fact do not embrace the gospel, if that grace is given to every one which is sufficient in all respects to enable him to do it. If we want the faculties of body or mind, or the opportunity and means, which are necessary in order to obtain the knowledge of the truth, those difficulties must be removed; and if we want a heart to take pains to know the truth, or to love and embrace it when discovered, that difficulty also must be removed, or else we are not, in every sense, *enabled*. It is not, in all respects, truly possible that a sinner should come to Christ, till every thing that is inconsistent with his coming is removed out of the way. It is truly impossible that any one should cordially embrace the gospel, so long as he has not such a heart in him; though it would be impossible in a very different sense, if he had not external light, or natural powers sufficient. And now, if God gave that grace to all of us, whereby we were enabled in both these senses to comply with the gospel, the infallible consequence would be, that we should all of us actually do it. To say that a man has both natural and moral ability to do a thing, is the same as to say that nothing in nature is wanting in order to his doing it, but only his own good-will, *nor that neither*. Or that he both could do it if he would, and is sufficiently willing to do it. And whenever this happens to be the case, I believe, it is not very likely, the thing will after all not be done. If in the instance before us it is really thus; if sinners not only could come to Christ if they would, but they have likewise all that willingness of mind, which is necessary in order to their actually coming, what in the universe can ever be assigned as the reason why in fact they do not come? This must certainly be an event, absolutely without any cause.

The truth is, when people puzzle themselves upon this subject, and insist, we are not accountable, and cannot be blamed, any further than we have a moral as well as a natural power to do otherwise than we do, what their minds run upon is only natural power after all. They may say they know what we mean by *moral* power, viz. that disposition to do a thing which is necessary towards our doing it; and they

mean the same. But however, when they get into the dispute, they become bewildered, and lose sight of the distinction. *They* do not suppose an impenitent sinner, going on still in his trespasses, has a *present, actual* disposition, and a sufficiently strong one, to hearken to and obey the gospel. But something like this seems to be in the bottom of their minds, viz. that he must be *able* to be disposed; or he must have such a disposition as *would* be sufficient, if he was disposed to make a good use of it. Now this is only to use the word *disposition* improperly, and to conceive it is as a mere natural power; a price in our hands which may be used well or ill, and which will turn to our benefit or condemnation, accordingly as we are disposed to improve it. The disposition they think of, is not in the least degree virtuous, nor any ways necessarily connected with virtuous conduct. But it may lie still, or go wrong, and will do so, unless a man is disposed and exerts himself, to make it act and keep it right. The sinner is not helped out of his difficulty in the least, by having such a disposition as this. Yea, should we go farther and say, the impenitent sinner might have a heart to embrace the gospel, if he would take proper pains in order to do it; and he might do this if he was so disposed: and he might be so disposed if he would try; and he could try if he had a mind for it. Yet, if after all, he has not a mind to try, to be disposed, to take any proper pains, to get a heart, to embrace the gospel, or do any thing that is good; he is still in as bad a situation as any body supposes him to be in. There is no more hope of his coming to good so long as this is the case with him, no more possibility of it; nor do we say anything more in his favour, than if we had only said as the scripture does of the fool, "that there is a price in his hand to get wisdom, but he has no heart to it." Pushing the sinner's moral depravity and impotence back in this manner, may get it out of sight of those who cannot see above two or three steps. But this is all the good it can do. There is still a defect in him *somewhere*; and such a one as will prove his everlasting ruin, unless removed by such grace as he has never yet experienced.

It must for ever hold true and certain, that if sinners do not come to Christ, it is either because they could not if

they would; or else because, on the whole, they are not willing. And if, in the room of coming to Christ, we should substitute some lower and preliminary condition of grace and salvation, it would be just the same case. Suppose it were using means, praying and seeking in the most engaged manner the unregenerate sometimes do; all do not come up to this; and the reason certainly is, they are under a natural or else a moral inability of doing it. Either they could not seek in this manner, if they would, or else they are not inclined to do it, but on the contrary are disposed to employ their time and thoughts about other things. So that bringing down the conditions of the gospel lower, in consideration of the depravity of men; or supposing common grace, whereby all are enabled to come up higher than they could of themselves, removes no difficulties, at least not those designed to be removed, unless the way of life is supposed to be level to the inclinations of all men; or that all are, in fact, made willing, and are actually saved.

On the whole, I think the *principle*, that God can in justice require of his creatures, only what he gives them a *moral*, as well as *natural* power to do, must be given up. Otherwise we are reduced to a necessity of supposing all the blame, if any are lost, must lie entirely on God, and not on them. And as to those who are saved, they can have nothing to say in his praise, but only that he has been barely just to them. That having given his Son to obey and die, to deliver them from his law, which was an infinitely unreasonable one, for fallen creatures to be under; and having given his Spirit to enable them to come up to the otherwise impossible terms of the gospel, he has on the whole, dealt not unrighteously by them. If, therefore, we think, there is any way to vindicate the righteousness of God in the damnation of any; or that any thing can fairly be said to the praise of the glory of his grace, in the salvation of them that are saved, we must suppose he is not obliged in justice to give all men *both* those kinds of ability that have been spoken of. And if we believe that any, in fact, do not obtain salvation, we must conclude they *are not* in both these senses, enabled to obtain it. Which was all I undertook to prove under the second head.

## III.

The next thing proposed was, To consider the *moral* inability of sinners in this matter. There is not so much need of labouring to confirm this, that unregenerate sinners have not such a heart in them, as is necessary in order to a compliance with the gospel; because proving the preceding and subsequent proposition, will infer the truth of this. If there is certainly an incapacity of the natural or moral kind, as has now been shown: and if there is certainly no *natural* incapacity, as I am to make appear under the next head; then certainly there must be a *moral* one.

It may be proper to be observed here, that the disinclination of sinners, as to some things which are prerequisite to a compliance with the gospel, is different in different persons. Though even this difference, I suppose, is owing to divine grace, or to God's doing more for one than for another. In the *openly vicious* and *immoral* sinner, there is a prevailing inclination to persist in his dissolute and immoral practices. And there is reason to conclude, that *none* of this character would ever reform, and that *all* would be of this character, if left to their own heart's lusts, without any divine restraints.

In *secure* and *unawakened* sinners, there is no disposition to attend to the concerns of their souls, and seriously consider the state they are in, or to make any solicitous inquiry about the way of salvation. They "make light of these things, and go their way, one to his farm and another to his merchandise." And such is their attachment to the vanities of time, and their aversion to attend to the things of another world, that there is no reason to think any one of this character would ever become serious, thoughtful, and engaged about his eternal well-being, if left entirely to himself.

In the *awakened* sinner, though earnest in his inquiries, there is still an utter want of an honest openness of mind, to admit a conviction of the truth. "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." He whose "inward parts are very wickedness," will always hate to see, and, if he can

possibly help it, never will believe what he really is. Hence awakened sinners very often, never do, and if left to themselves none of them ever would, "know the plague of their own hearts." While they think they are doing all in their power to increase their convictions, they are all the while inwardly striving with all their might, against conviction, and trying to find some plausible ground to think well of themselves, and to establish a righteousness of their own. Nor will they ever be sensible how "deceitful and desperately wicked" their hearts are, and how hopeless their case is, in themselves, till a conviction of it is forced upon them by the most overbearing and irresistible evidence.

And even in the *convinced* sinner, whose mouth is most effectually stopped, who is forced to see that sin is alive and has full dominion over him, and that he is indeed dead; in him who has the fullest conviction of every necessary truth, that ever any *unrenewed* sinner had; there is still, if nothing farther is done for him, no disposition heartily to approve of the law, or comply with the gospel; no disposition to repent truly of any of his transgressions, or to receive and be dependent on Christ alone for pardon and salvation; no genuine desire to be saved from *sin*, or to be saved from wrath in that way, in which God's justice can be vindicated, or his grace exalted. But after all his convictions, there remains still in his heart, a most fixed, inveterate, and unconquerable opposition to all these things. Nor will he ever be cordially reconciled to God, by the mere force of truth in his conscience, any more than the wicked will be at the day of judgment, or the damned in hell.

That no light, or conviction of the understanding, which the *natural* man is capable of receiving, can be sufficient to draw, or drive him into a true compliance with the gospel, is very evident from what is said concerning the necessity of regeneration. When Nicodemus came to Christ, wanting information about the way of life, our Saviour soon let him know that mere instruction even by a teacher come from God, was not all that was wanted. Yea, that a man could *receive* no instruction about the kingdom of heaven, to any saving purpose, unless something else was done for him first. See John iii. 3. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily,

verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And again, to explain the matter further, ver. 5. "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The necessity of such a change as is meant by being born again, or born of the Spirit, turns upon the truth of man's being by nature under a *total* moral depravity. Accordingly, our Saviour immediately adds, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." That is, a man has nothing truly spiritual or holy in him by the first birth; but every thing of this kind comes by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Agreeably to this, the apostle Paul says, Rom. vii. 18. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh: in my nature as far as it is unrenewed, and as it was by the first birth) there dwelleth no good thing." And in Romans viii. he says, "The carnal mind," the mind we have as born of the flesh, "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." He adds, "So then, they that are *in the flesh* cannot please God."

This is the reason we *must be born again*. If there was anything spiritual in us, as born of the flesh, there would be no necessity for this second birth. If we were not by nature *dead* in trespasses and sins, there would be no occasion for our being *quicken*ed, by divine power and grace. If sinners were at all inclined to that which is good, they would not need to be *created* unto good works. If a man had not *wholly* lost the divine likeness, there would be no need of being *created* again "after God in righteousness and true holiness." If the "heart of the sons of men" was not altogether depraved, to the very bottom of it, there would be no necessity of "the old heart's being taken away, and a *new* one given." If men's alienation of affection from God, did not arise from *unlikeness* to him, but only from ignorance and misapprehension about him, no *change of nature* would be at all necessary. Mere light in the head, mere conviction of the understanding, would then produce a cordial reconciliation. Yea, if a man has any degree of righteousness and true holiness, nothing but convictions can be wanting in order to his complying with the covenant of grace, and entering

into the kingdom of God. He would no sooner be convinced of the holiness and righteousness of God, but he would feel his heart drawn forth in love to him. He would no sooner be convinced that the law was holy, just, and good, but he would be pleased with it, and loathe himself for all his transgressions of it. He would no sooner be convinced of the unparalleled zeal which Christ hath shown in the cause of righteousness, and how he has magnified the law and made it honourable, but he would be charmed with him, and see him to be "the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely." He would no sooner be convinced of the holy tendency of all his doctrines and all his laws, but he would cordially embrace and cheerfully obey them. He would no sooner understand that his design was to save his people from their sins, but he would receive him, with all joy and thankfulness, as his Saviour and Lord.

But, if the hearts of men are totally depraved, entirely destitute of righteousness and true holiness, the case will be quite otherwise. A holy God, a holy law, a holy Saviour, a holy gospel, will not surely, then appear lovely in their eyes, but the contrary. Nor will a clearer understanding and conviction of what they really are, excite complacency and satisfaction in them, but the greater aversion and dread. They cannot, in that case, be cordially united to Christ, until *his* character or *theirs* is essentially changed. They cannot be *drawn* to him, unless by force, and against their wills, till either *he* ceases to be what he is, or *they* are made new creatures. For "an unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked."

Can a man whose heart is wholly corrupt, and unholy, choose the holy Jesus for his Lord and Saviour, and cordially embrace the pure and holy doctrines and precepts of the gospel? Can one who is really and at heart, wholly in love with the service of Satan, enlist, with any sincerity, into the service of Christ, all whose work and business is, "to destroy the works of the devil?" Can one who is all the while "an enemy in his mind to God," yea, whose "mind is enmity itself against God," be delighted with the character and ways of his well-beloved Son, who is the "brightness of the Father's

glory, and the very image of his person?" Can one who "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," voluntarily submit to the Mediator, or cordially acquiesce in his conduct in being obedient even unto death, to condemn sin and do honour to the divine law? Can any one who is an enemy to all righteousness, be pleased with Christ in this view of his character, pleased with him "for his righteousness' sake," and for the zeal he has shown to "magnify the law and make it honourable?"

This is the reason the Father is well pleased in him as Mediator. And "all that come unto God by him," must be pleased with him in this view also. There can be no true reconciliation between God and man, unless both parties acquiesce in, and are suited with what the Mediator has done, and that considered in the same point of light. God is well pleased, indeed, with the love Christ has shown for lost men. For the Father was always as benevolently disposed towards this fallen world, as the Son was. But yet had he not, as mediator, shown a proper regard to truth and righteousness; had he not "condemned the sin of men," and "given unto God the glory that was due unto his name," the holy Governor of the world could not have acquiesced in his mediation. "The Lord was well pleased for his righteousness' sake." And if we are not pleased with him in *this* view, but merely for the sake of his kindness and love to men, we do not come into his plan of reconciliation and peace.\*

To conclude this head. If the moral depravity of unregenerate sinners was fully understood, it must undoubtedly appear that this alone is sufficient to account for all that is said in the scripture concerning their inability, and to make the grace of the Holy Ghost as necessary as

\* If that view of the amiableness of Christ, and that well-pleasement with his mediation, which is implied in a compliance with the gospel, had nothing more in it than only seeing it to be a beautiful thing in him to feel so much interested in *our* welfare, and willing to do and suffer so much to save us from misery and ruin; then indeed no change of nature in the most depraved creature would be necessary in order to it. We may be as wholly selfish and regardless of God's glory as any sinner ever was, and yet be greatly charmed with the mediation of Christ, viewed *ONLY* in the favourable aspect it has upon our interest. And, undoubtedly, thousands have been fatally deceived



that makes it. If they have "an evil heart of unbelief," wholly inclined "to depart from the living God," such a heart will effectually and for ever "turn them aside, so that they cannot deliver their soul." Nor would better

in this manner; taking this for a discovery of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," and the effects of it for conversion and sanctification. For such a view of Christ and of God through him, will, under certain circumstances, produce a sort of repentance, love and obedience, in one who was, and continues to be, entirely void of real holiness. Let a sinner only have an impressive sense of the dreadfulness of damnation, and of his danger of it, and in the midst of this have the love of Christ, and what he has done and suffered for sinners, come suddenly into his mind, in a manner that makes him believe, or at least strongly hope, he is one of the happy number for whom Christ laid down his life; and is it possible but that he should be filled with comfort and joy, and have his affections greatly drawn forth towards such a kind and almighty Saviour? And when he comes now to view God in Christ, as his reconciled God and Father, he will naturally feel quite otherwise affected towards him too. When he believes God has loved him with an everlasting love, and elected him from eternity to be a vessel of mercy and an heir of glory; his enmity against him will hereupon naturally subside: he will naturally be ashamed and grieved that he has had such unworthy thoughts of him, and has behaved so unsuitably towards him. And such an apprehension of his new state, and of God's great goodness, may produce a lasting alteration in his life. He may be very zealous in religion; and possibly very regular in his morals likewise. Here then is faith, repentance, love, and new obedience, without the least occasion for any conformity to God in true holiness from first to last. Such things as these are the natural growth of the human heart, under such rain and sunshine. There is no need of any alteration in the soil, or of any foreign seed sown in it.

This may be more clearly conceived by the help of a similitude. Let us then suppose a king that is strictly just in his administration, forbidding on very severe penalties all unrighteousness among his subjects, and very thorough in seeing justice executed on all offenders. A number of his subjects who are viciously inclined, are uneasy under such restraints, and grow disaffected to their sovereign, and at length form a conspiracy to dethrone him. But before they are quite ripe for executing it, their plot is happily discovered. They are taken and brought to judgment; found guilty, and condemned to die. Their hatred against their prince is hereby greatly increased. One of them, however, is exceedingly dejected in spirit, at the thoughts of his approaching execution. For some time he remains in prison with the rest, in fearful expectation that every day may be his last. But in the midst of his greatest anxiety, a messenger at last arrives, with a gracious pardon. He is delivered from prison and from death. Yea,

natural abilities than they have, be of the least service to them. If ever they come to good, it must be by strength that is under a better *direction* than theirs is. Greatness of capacity has not the least tendency to produce *goodness*, in

his offended sovereign has set his heart so peculiarly upon him, that, instead of having him executed with his fellow criminals, he is determined to make him a particular favourite at court, and raise him to honour and wealth, far exceeding his former condition before he became a rebel and a traitor. How great the surprise! How insupportable the joy, upon hearing all this! The wretch's enmity and hatred is quite overcome. Especially if he now understands that the king had always a particular kindness for *him*, and never designed any penal laws should be executed upon him, let him do what he would. He is filled with the most admiring sentiments of his injured gracious sovereign, and loves him above all men in the world. But hardly dares look up to him, he is so ashamed of his former temper towards him, and the black design he had meditated against his crown and life. All this does not suppose any alteration in the rebel's real character. All this may be, and undoubtedly will be, though his vicious disposition, which first gave rise to his disaffection to his prince, still remains in its full strength. There is no need of his becoming a new man, a friend to righteousness and an enemy to iniquity, in order to his becoming in this manner, a warm friend to his royal patron and benefactor, considered merely as such. He may be so all his days; may be one of the foremost in his commendation, at least in extolling the great things he has done for him; and he may behave excellently well when under the king's eye, or when he expects he will hear of it, with a view to please him, and yet be at heart as unrighteous a creature as ever he was, even to his dying day.

Now such a kind of reconciliation to God will naturally take place in a sinner if he is only effectually terrified with the thoughts of "dwelling with devouring fire, and inhabiting everlasting burnings;" and then gets a hope of God's love. There is no need of being born again, nor ever having any thing of the moral likeness of God, in order to it. Yea, there is no need of conviction in order to such a conversion as this. I mean a conviction of the equitableness and moral fitness of the divine administration. Light, concerning the holiness and justice, wisdom, or general goodness of God, is not what produces such a change as this; nor is it any way necessary in order to it. Accordingly persons of this kind of piety have commonly no great concern to know what God is in himself, but *ONLY* what he is to them. They have no notion of entering much into the nature and ends of his law, or of the gospel, and seeing into the divine character and glory as thereby exhibited. These are matters of empty speculation with them, things which vital piety hath nothing to do with. They know as much about God's general character; as much about the things the Psalmist prayed that his eyes might be opened to be-

one who is altogether destitute of it. Sinners of the most exalted genius and strength of mind, are certainly no more able to make themselves new creatures than the very weakest are. And the reason of this is as obvious as the fact is

hold; as much about "the things the angels desire to look into," as ever they expect or desire to know.

These may perhaps, not improperly be denominated Antinomians: though they are divided into a variety of sects, and contending parties upon particular questions, about the faith which is not founded in holiness, but which is the foundation of every thing.

Some\* strenuously insist, that no faith can administer hope and comfort enough to make men truly good, short of "a full persuasion and confidence of our *own* salvation." Or, a being well satisfied "of our reconciliation with God, and of our future enjoyment of everlasting heavenly happiness." To get this persuasion is the grand secret, or "mystery of sanctification." To *give* this persuasion without any evidence of its truth, and even while it is supposed to be in fact not true, is the great work of the Holy Ghost, begetting "an inclination and propensity of heart to the practice of holiness." Others† not so fond of mystery or not so well understanding "the way of manufacturing truth without evidence," and of making a falsehood true by the pains taken to believe it; choose rather to suppose "the simple truth," or general report of the gospel, beat effectually into a man's *head*, when "he is thoroughly pinched with the impossibility of hope on every other side, will give such a refreshment to his mind," as will do the whole work. That "many in all ages, only on hearing this, have become quite ashamed of their former rebellion, have been led to love their sovereign, and do those things which are well pleasing in his sight; and accordingly have known what it was to stand in his presence, and have their joy made full in beholding the light of his countenance." The faith that does all this, they would have to be a bare persuasion or conviction in the understanding of what is called the truth; leaving the heart to take care of itself. This we are told some call the *faith of devils*. But that, "however keen the intended reproach be, it can have weight with none but such as are swayed by sound instead of sense. For, according to the scripture, the same truth which saves Christ's people, torments the devils. So we find them saying, what have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time? They believe, they hate, and yet they tremble at that truth which Christ's people believe, love, and find salvation in." The difference then, in the affections excited by a belief of the gospel, in the minds of true believers and devils, arises entirely from the different circumstances they are under, and not from any difference in their tempers. The devils hate to be tormented, and Christ's people love to be treated kindly

\* *Cudworth, &c.*

† *Sandeman, &c.*

certain; viz. because whatever strength any one has, he always lays it out according to his own heart, and not contrary to it. Consequently all the strength of men and angels, yea even Omnipotence itself, if the sinner had the direction of it, would never make him good. Could he have divine power at his service, according to his utmost wish, it would not be to change his heart, but to enable him to act it without control. If, therefore, sinners only knew what hearts they have, this alone would bring them to despair of help from themselves, let their natural powers be ever so good, and make them see that if ever they are saved it will be no thanks to them.\*

Sinners inwardly imagine, if they were only dealt fairly

and made happy. So the same belief of the same truth, which excites the hatred and horror of the former, fills the latter with joy and love. This difference is not hard to discern; and is naturally enough accounted for. But how any one who is not swayed by sound instead of sense, should think of making more of this than only a circumstantial difference, is not so easy to be conceived. A bare change of place and external treatment would make devils of such converts; and such converts of devils in a moment. They being after all, essentially, exactly alike.

This way of effecting all the alteration wanted in wicked men, merely by notions in the head, however firmly credited, and whether true or false, whether called an appropriating faith or a simple belief, or by whatever other name, must for ever leave a change of nature quite out of the question. Indeed, it evidently proceeds on the supposition, that there is really no difference between saints and sinners, angels and devils, only they are treated differently, or some do not understand things so well as others. \*

\* Should we even suppose a self-determining power in the will, those who are dead in sin would not be able to help themselves by it. For who is there to put such a power into action the right way? *They* will not do it. And a self-determined determination, contrary to a man's heart, were such a thing possible, would be no more thanks to him than the having his heart changed by divine power. It can never be by their own power or holiness that they are first determined to that which is good, when by the supposition, they *have no* holiness, and all their power is employed in opposition to it.

\* All will admit this to be ingenious; some will doubt if it be scriptural, and many will feel that it is unsatisfactory. The heart is purified by faith—sanctification is through the truth. The gospel rightly understood cannot be really believed without transforming the character—but no man ever did, ever will believe that gospel, plain and well-accredited as it is, without a supernatural influence. The best illustration of this subject I have met with is Sect. iv. of Dr. Anderson's work "On Regeneration," one of the few valuable theological treatises our age has produced.—Ed.

with, they should do well enough. If they perish, they think it will be owing to the fatal influence of some dark decree, or to God's requiring more of them than they *can* possibly do, let them exert themselves ever so faithfully. But he that imagines thus, knows not "the plague of his own heart." "He that trusteth in his *own heart*, is a fool."

#### IV.

We come now to the last head proposed; viz. To prove that sinners labour under *no other* impossibility of complying with the gospel, but *only* what arises from their *disinclination* to it; or from the badness of their hearts.

I do not mean, however, nor would I be understood here, to assert this of every individual of the human race. There are undoubtedly great multitudes in the world, who are at present, not under external advantages to obtain that knowledge of God, and of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, which is absolutely necessary in order to the exercise of faith in him. There are some who were born in heathenism, and never enjoyed the light of divine revelation; there are others who have not the use of natural reason; and there are others who have not, nor ever had, the sense of hearing. I am not now speaking concerning those who are under these and such like circumstances. What I here undertake to evince, is only, that persons who have ordinary intellectual powers, and bodily senses, and are arrived to years of discretion, and live under the light of the gospel, labour under no *natural inability* to obtain salvation: but that if they cannot comply with the revealed way of life, it must be owing entirely to their disinclination to it, or to the badness of their hearts.

There are multitudes that evidently do not view the matter in this light. It is needful therefore that this point be laboured a little particularly. The

*First Argument* I shall make use of for the confirmation of it is, that it is not God's way to require *natural* impossibilities of any of his creatures; and to condemn them for not doing what they could not do if they would.

God commands none of us to fly above the clouds, or to

overturn the mountains by the roots; or to do any such kind of impossibilities. Yea, we are particularly told in his word, that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." If a man has but little estate, it is not expected or required that he should give away a great deal to pious or charitable uses. If a poor widow casts in two mites, when it is all she has, it is as well accepted as if it were *two millions*. If a man has never so little strength of body or of mind, a willing exertion and good improvement of that little is all that is required of him. This is exceedingly evident from those summaries of the whole law, which we have both in the Old Testament and in the New. Moses says, Deut. x. 12, "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?" And our Saviour, in answer to the question of the scribe, "which is the great commandment in the law?" says, Matt. xxii. 37—40, and Mark xii. 30, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

It is evident from these passages, that the whole law, in the highest perfection of it, is level to some kind of capacity which men still have in the present fallen state. We are not to suppose, indeed, it is their moral capacity; or that all the Lord our God requires of us, is only to love and fear and serve him, as much as we are disposed to do. This would be no *law* at all. It would be a dispensation from all law; a liberty for every one to walk in the way of his own heart, and treat the Deity just as his inclination leads him. We are not to suppose a perfect law can come down any lower, than to require a perfect heart, and a perfectly good improvement of all the talents and strength we have. And it is evident neither Moses nor our Saviour understood the divine law as requiring more than this. To love and serve God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, can-

not mean more than to the utmost extent of our natural abilities, be they greater or less. Some men are not capable of so high a degree of love to God as others, though they are equally upright and well disposed; because their mental powers are not so great; or their advantages to get the knowledge of God have not been so good. In like manner some cannot *do* so much for God, for want of opportunity, &c. Now all proper allowances are made in the divine law for things of this nature. The more any one has of intellectual or bodily strength, or outward advantages, the more is required of him; and the less any one has of these, the less is required. As to loving our neighbour as ourselves; this is undoubtedly equally in the power of the weak and of the strong, of him that is capable of higher and lower degrees of affection, provided he is equally upright, disinterested and impartial.

On the whole, I think it is exceedingly plain and evident, that God, in his holy and righteous law, requires no impossibilities of any of us, but what become so by reason of our present evil temper of mind, and unwillingness to exert the natural strength we have in the manner we ought. And now, if we have natural powers sufficient for understanding and doing our whole duty; and nothing hinders any of us from coming up to all that sinless perfection, which is required in God's perfect law, but only our own wicked hearts; I conclude few will think any thing else hinders sinners of ordinary capacity, who enjoy the outward means of grace, from repenting and complying with the gospel. A

*Second Argument,* That sinners, who enjoy the external light of the gospel, are not under a *natural* impossibility of complying with, and obeying it, may be drawn from what the scriptures plainly teach, and what is generally believed, concerning the great difference that will be made betwixt such sinners, and those who never heard of a Saviour, as to their final condemnation and punishment.

Our Saviour let those cities, where he had chiefly preached and wrought his miracles, know that their final doom would be much the heavier for it; and that it would be more tolerable for even Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for them. But this, and what is commonly said about

the great guilt of gospel sinners above others, surely supposes that there is some difference between them and the heathen, as to a possibility of their understanding the way of life, and obtaining salvation. It supposes that the former have a real price in their hands which the latter have not. But if the gospel sinner is under a *natural* inability to repent and believe in Christ, an inability arising from any thing else besides his own heart, this could not surely be the case. Why should one who is, and always has been, so weak or disordered in his intellect, as to be incapable of understanding the gospel, be thought a greater sinner for living in a Christian land? We do not think this is the case as to idiots, or quite delirious persons. We do not think they will have more to answer for than the heathen will. But if we believe a natural impossibility is required of men in this case, because their natural capacity was impaired or lost by the fall, then for the same reason we might expect, that the heathen who never heard of the gospel, and natural fools who can understand nothing about it, would be punished for not embracing it, as much as any. For they would not have been under those disadvantages had it not been for the apostacy.

*Third Argument.* It is expressly attributed in scripture, to the evil hearts of men, as the sole cause of impenitence and unbelief under the gospel.

And it ought to be particularly observed, that this is done with professed design to set aside the plea of ignorance which sinners are so exceedingly apt to harp upon; and to let them see that they are without excuse. "This is the condemnation," our Saviour says, "that light is come into the world; and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." In another place he says, "if ye were blind ye had not had sin; but now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth." And again, "if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. Now they have no cloak for their sin." That is, if they had not had those powers of mind, or those means of conviction that were necessary, it is true they would not have been to blame, it would have



been no sin in them, not to have believed in and received me as their Messiah. But now their understandings are good enough; and when means, powerful and sufficient external means, have been used with them; their unbelief and rejection of me, can be owing to nothing but the desperate wickedness of their hearts. It is *knowledge* and not *ignorance* of my character, that is the spring of their hatred. Or if any of them are ignorant, it is their own fault. There is light enough, only they hate it, and will not come to it.

*Argument Fourth.* That it is not owing to weakness of the understanding, or any *natural* defect, that sinners in general under the gospel are not saved, is evident from the *inferior* abilities of many of those who actually obtain salvation.

It is not men of the strongest and brightest genius, and they only, that understand and embrace the gospel; but they are persons of very ordinary powers of mind, as often, if not oftener than any. "Ye see your calling brethren," says the apostle to the Corinthians, "how that not many *wise* men after the flesh,—are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, and the weak things to confound the mighty," &c. And our Saviour says, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Though God bestows the special influences of his grace, just where and when he pleases, or as seemeth good in his sight, yet he has doubtless always a sufficient reason for fixing upon the particular object of his sovereign mercy, exactly as he does. We are not to conceive of it as a blind partiality, but a wise sovereignty that is exercised in this matter. The reason why not many of the noble and honourable are called, but rather the base and such as are despised, is, we are told, that no flesh should glory in his presence. And the reason why it seemeth good in the sight of God, to hide these things from the wise and prudent, and to reveal them unto babes, may be, and undoubtedly one reason of it is, that hereby it may be made evident, it is not owing to the superior strength of man's natural powers, that they discover the strait and narrow way

which leadeth unto life; nor to their weakness, in respect of natural abilities, that they do not. If babes are able to see the suitableness and glory of the gospel way of salvation, unquestionably wise men might, were it not for something besides weakness of understanding, or any deficiency in the intellect merely. It is evident from hence that natural weakness can be no insuperable bar in the way of men's obtaining salvation, unless they are weaker than babes.

*Argument Fifth.* At least this will be undeniably evident, if we consider *what is done* for a person when *these things are revealed unto him*; or when he is made to see "the things of the Spirit of God, as they are spiritually discerned."

God does not reveal any new truths, not contained in his written word; nor does he give any new faculties to persons, or enlarge their natural powers of body or of mind, when he enables them to obey and believe the gospel. But what he does for them is, to alter the temper and disposition of their hearts. If we found all that became real Christians, however weak before, were immediately afterwards persons of genius and abilities superior to all other men, we should, indeed, have reason to suspect, that the unregenerate wanted better understandings, rather than better hearts, in order to their being able truly to know Jesus Christ, and the way of life. But this is not the case. It is the *heart*, and not the *head* that is created anew, when one becomes a good man. We find the natural powers of men are the same after regeneration as before; and often far inferior to many of their neighbours, who have experienced no such change. It is true, the wisdom of good men runs in another channel; they are wise to do *good*, and apt to get *divine* knowledge; but that is only because they have a taste for these things, and are disposed to take pains about them. "The children of this world are, in their generation, *wiser* than the children of light." They prosecute their own schemes, and make proficiency in what they turn their hands to, and set their hearts upon, beyond what good men do in the things of virtue and religion. What makes good men see the glory of God, which others can perceive nothing of, is not their having more speculative knowledge about the divine character, than others have, or are capable of; but their being conformed

to God in temper and in heart; conformed to him "in righteousness and true holiness." This, indeed, makes divine things, and all things of a moral nature, appear in quite a new light; and hence they are said to be *renewed in knowledge*. He that is altogether unholy, let his head be ever so clear, and his speculative knowledge ever so great, cannot have all that perception of holiness, which the weakest saint has, who feels the operation and power of it in his own heart. There is no knowledge like that we get by experience. A man that has never felt a particular kind of pain, we say, can have no idea of it; so of parental affection, one who has never experienced it, knows not what it is. The same may be said of all kinds of sensations and affections; the experiencing them gives a knowledge of them that can no otherwise be obtained. And this holds true with respect to holy exercises and affections as much as any other. Hence, those who are made "partakers of a divine nature," or who have "put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," are capable of a kind of knowledge of God which is peculiar to themselves. Accordingly the apostle John says, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love," 1 John iv. 7, 8. He who is acquainted with the feelings of universal benevolence, in his own breast, has a different idea of him who "is good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works," than he whose heart is contracted, and who is truly good to none, has, or is capable of. Particularly he who is conformed in heart to God, sees a beauty in his character and government, which no one of an entirely opposite temper can possibly discern. The reason is, whatever any one regards and is zealous about, he is necessarily pleased to see others regard and be engaged in promoting. Thus if a man values his own particular interest or reputation, as every one does, he is thence unavoidably pleased to see others tender of it, and disposed to promote it. And if a man is benevolently concerned for the public interest, he will in like manner be peculiarly delighted to see others public-spirited and zealously aiming to secure and advance the general good. The entirely selfish soul feels as if his own private happiness

was the most valuable, yea, the *only* valuable thing in all the universe. Hence if he can only believe God has set his kindest love on *him*, from eternity; and sent his only Son from his bosom to die for *his* sake, (whether necessary or unnecessary, wise or unwise, right or wrong, it matters not;) this gives him the most exalted, the most glorious conception, of the parent and Lord of all worlds, that his narrow soul can possibly contain.—But to him that is born of God, and assimilated in temper to his Father who is in heaven, things will appear in a quite different light. To him who is made to be in any measure of a true, a godlike public spirit, an impartial, infinite disposition to maintain universal order, to promote universal good, is the grand, the infinite beauty.

To have the spirit of Christ, or the same mind that was in him, is, in like manner, the only thing which can enable a person to have that sense which all saints have, of the greatness and glory of his redeeming love. Hence it was the apostle Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, "that they being rooted and grounded in love, might be able to comprehend with *all saints*, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19.

And to have a heavenly, that is, a holy temper and spirit, is necessary in order to have a true understanding of any thing heavenly; any thing of "the inheritance of the saints in light," or what "God hath prepared for them that love him." This the apostle very particularly and largely takes notice of, in 1 Cor. ii. 11—15, "For what man," says he, "knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" The *spirit of man*; the narrowness, pride, and various corrupt affections by which mankind are actuated, would be very incomprehensible to us, did we not feel, and had we never felt, anything of the same in our own breasts. We should be perfectly amazed to see how men act, not being able to conceive what inward feelings or principles should excite them to behave in such a manner. *The things of a man*; the enjoyments which fallen creatures so fondly dote on, and so eagerly pursue, to one who never had any thing of their spirit, would be inconceivable; how there could be any thing gratifying or agreeable in them, to

any mortal, it would be impossible for him to discern. "So the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." The enjoyments of religion and of heaven can no more be perceived to have any thing amiable in them, by one who is entirely destitute of a divine and heavenly temper. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know *the things that are freely given to us of God:*" That is, the holy delights and entertainments provided for saints in a future world. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." In describing these future glories and felicities we do not make use of such language as a carnal taste would suggest, or as would be thought the true sublime by the wisdom of this world; but we speak of them in a manner to which we are led by the spirit of holiness. To give us the most elevated ideas of the joys to be expected in heaven, we compare them, not with the idolized possessions and delights of time and sense, but with those spiritual enjoyments, those holy delights, experienced, in some low degree, in this lower world. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The unrenewed sinner having nothing spiritual in him to compare spiritual things with, being a stranger to spiritual joys, or the feelings and pleasures of a truly virtuous mind, they will necessarily seem empty, out-of-the-way things to him, nor can he perceive their true excellence and worth, because their being perceived thus, depends entirely upon the spirit and temper a man is of.

It appears from these passages, that it is neither the having new truths suggested, that are not contained in the scriptures; nor the having the understanding convinced of the truths contained in them; nor the having new faculties of mind given, or the old ones enlarged, or mended, or anyhow made better, that enables a man to see God, or Christ, or heavenly things as saints see them. But that a foundation is, and can be laid for this, only by a man's becoming a saint, or having a new spirit given him; *the spirit which is of God.*

In a word, whatever is said by some about rectifying the natural faculties, it is very generally agreed, that regeneration is not a *physical* change, but a *moral* one. That it consists not in making men *great*, but in making them *good*. That the new creation is nothing else but the moral image of God, consisting in righteousness and true holiness. But if these things are so, then certainly all the inability that is removed, and consequently all that *wants* to be removed, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, is entirely of a *moral* nature,—an inability which altogether consists in the want of an honest and good heart.

*Argument Sixth.* This way of conceiving of the impotence of fallen man, does not frustrate, but tends most of all to advance and magnify the GRACE OF GOD.

Undoubtedly that view of the inability of man, which is most easily and fairly reconcilable with the justice of God, ought to be embraced, provided it does not derogate from the freeness and richness of divine grace in the sinner's salvation. Now I presume there are few, but what are sensible of some difficulty in reconciling God's requiring natural impossibilities with any notions we have of justice;—as if he should require a man to fly, or lift a million weight, or make a world,—and should suspend his salvation on the condition of his doing such things as these, which are evidently beyond the capacity of any man, let his disposition be as it will,—and should say he had no cloak for his sin, in not doing things of this nature,—and that for his not complying with such a merciful proposal of salvation, it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for him—I say, I believe there are few, but must be sensible of some difficulty in seeing into the reasonableness and justice of this. But then perhaps they may think there is no way to leave room for such a display of divine grace, as we are taught there is in the salvation of men, without supposing something like this to be in fact the case. They may think there can be no necessity of the grace of the Holy Ghost, on supposition sinners can comply with the gospel, whenever they are disposed to do it. But any apprehension of this kind must arise from a very favourable opinion of the goodness of the sinner's disposition. As if he was so willing to

use his talents, and improve the price put into his hands aright, that God has no way sufficiently to display his grace towards him but by requiring things of him which the holiest creature in the universe, under his circumstances, could not perform. If men are ill-disposed, they so far stand in need of grace to enable them to do that which, without any such divine help, they would find no difficulty in, if they were well-disposed. And is it not easy to see, that it will require as much power, and more grace, to change a sinner's heart, than to alter a man's head, or enlarge any of his natural faculties?

The sot who has lived in a course of intemperance from twenty to threescore, is still under no inability to reform, but *only* what arises from his own appetite and inclination. He might still refuse the glass, and become a sober man, without the advice or help of any one, if his own will was not wanting. But yet no one would think it a less unpromising undertaking to go about to reclaim such a person, than to cure one of a bodily infirmity in which the patient's will had no hand, and which he could not get rid of himself, let him be ever so heartily and steadily, and strongly desirous of it. Suppose such an one, that had had all motives, fetched from this world and the world to come, repeatedly urged upon him, in the tenderest and most forcible manner by all his friends; but without the least effect;—should one at last find means to persuade him into a thorough and lasting reformation; would he not be thought to do as great a thing, as he that should cure one of a natural infirmity that had long baffled the skill of all the physicians?

Moral sickness may be as hard to cure, and require as powerful means, and as able a physician, as natural sickness. And if a man is dead in the moral sense; that is, has lost all principles of true virtue entirely, he is as absolutely beyond the reach of all means, as to their bringing him to life again, as one that is dead in the natural sense. Moral means can only work upon such moral principles as they find to work upon. They cannot produce a *new nature, new principles* of action, any more than natural means can make new life for themselves to work upon in a dead carcase. Cultivation and manuring may make a bad tree grow, and bear fruit, after

its kind,—but can never make a thorn bear figs, or a bramble-bush, grapes. Let what means will be used, so long as the tree is evil, the fruit will be so likewise. If mankind have lost the moral image of God entirely, it is easy to see that nothing short of a new creation can restore it to them. If they are *dead* in trespasses and sins, the quickening them must be an instance of the working of God's mighty power, in a supernatural manner, like that of raising Christ from the dead. And without a work of this kind, whatever means are used with them, they will never have the least spiritual life, or real holiness.\*

\* *Objection.* Regeneration is frequently represented in scripture as being effected *by means*. Men are said to be born again by the word of God, 1 Pet. i. 23. To be begotten by the word of truth, James i. 18. And Paul says to the Corinthians, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." But how is this to be reconciled with making the quickening of sinners properly a supernatural work?

*Answer.* Almost all the supernatural works recorded in the scriptures, are represented as wrought by means, as much as regeneration is. The Red Sea was divided by Moses's rod, and the river Jordan by Elijah's mantle. It was by smiting the flinty rock in the wilderness, that the waters were made to flow out of it like a river. Moses brought forth this water, as much as Paul regenerated the Corinthians. It was by throwing a stick into the river, that the young prophet's ax was made to swim; and by washing seven times in Jordan, that Naaman was healed of his leprosy. It was by prophesying over a valley of dry bones, as represented in the vision of Ezekiel, and calling to the four winds to breathe upon them, that they were converted into a living army. It was with clay made of dirt and spittle, that our Saviour opened the eyes of one that was born blind. And by calling with a loud voice, that Lazarus was made to hear, and come out of his grave, after he had been dead four days.

Now to suppose that regeneration is effected by means as much as these things were, is not inconsistent with its being properly a supernatural work. But that it is effected by the power of means, is what the scriptures are far from leading us to conceive. It would be thought very remarkable, if any one should undertake to explain the connexion betwixt the means used and the effects wrought, in those instances now mentioned, in as natural and intelligible a manner as some have attempted to do, betwixt light in the understanding, and the production of grace in the heart of a totally depraved sinner. But yet I apprehend, any of those things may be as rationally accounted for, from the known laws of nature, as regeneration can; and that the plain account of scripture as much obliges us to think the former were effected by the power, or natural tendency, or proper causality of means, as that the latter is.



And now does not the admitting such a total moral depravity suppose room and necessity enough for the grace of the Holy Ghost in the salvation of men, without supposing any deficiency in their natural faculties?

But let us compare the two hypotheses, that of a natural inability, and the contrary one which I have now been endeavouring to prove, and we may easily see which gives the highest conception of the grace of God. Those who conceive sinners labour under a *natural* incapacity to come to Christ, place the defect in the understanding. They suppose that ignorance and misapprehension is the primary cause of all our enmity and opposition to God. And consequently, that as soon as the understanding comes to be rectified and rightly informed, we of course become reconciled in heart to the ways of God, and pleased with the character and mediation of Christ. This seems to suppose we always had been conformed to God's real character, in the temper of our minds; and that all we had been quarrelling with, and enemies to, was only a false idea of God; or such a character as no one *ought* to love. As if a very righteous man should be prejudiced against, and greatly engaged in opposing *another*, that was really as righteous and good a man as himself. But he had been misinformed about him, and conceived him to be quite a different man from what he really was. Now, as soon as his understanding comes to be truly enlightened, or his mistakes are removed, and he gets a thorough acquaintance, the good man loves the good man of course, without any change of character in either. But shall we view the enmity of the carnal mind against God in this light, in order to have the most exalted idea of the divine grace, in the salvation of such a carnal person? Shall we suppose that the reason, and the only reason why he is not, neither indeed can be subject to the law of God, is because he does not, neither indeed can understand it? Or because, through the weakness of his natural powers he understands it so, as it would be wicked to obey it, and no truly virtuous and upright mind could be subject to it, or suited with it *in his sense* of it? In that case all that is necessary to be done by the divine Spirit is, to inform us rightly concerning the holy nature and ways of God; and let us know that all our

hatred of him is owing to a *mere misunderstanding*; and that he is really just such a being as we all naturally love; even altogether such an one as ourselves. Can there be a necessity of any thing supernatural, in bringing a sinner "out of darkness into God's marvellous light," if this is all that is implied in it? Yes, it will be said, a supernatural work upon the *understanding* is still necessary. Though light alone will produce all the change of heart that is wanted; yet not *objective* light merely, but what may perhaps be called *subjective* light. That is, the understanding itself must be strengthened, or enlarged, or brightened, or somehow made better; otherwise the external light, however clear, will shine in darkness, and cannot be comprehended.

Now if this is the supernatural work of the Spirit, which persons are the subjects of when they are born again, it is of the same nature as if a natural fool should, by a miracle, have reason given him.\* But is this the way to advance the grace of God most in our salvation? Is it the most wonderful instance of rich grace, to give an intelligent mind to one whose heart was so good, that he only wanted to have reason enough to understand the gospel, and he would embrace it most cordially as soon as ever it was proposed to him? Does the grace appear so great in this, as in changing the heart of one who was an enemy to the *true God*? One that might have had light enough, only he hated the light and would not *come* to it? Or one that had had the light of conviction forced upon him, and had both seen and hated, both the Father and the Son, both the law and the gospel?

\* It is apprehended this representation of the matter will be thought unfair, if not quite ridiculous. Men do not mean to be made natural fools of neither. The weakness, and blindness, and want of abilities so much complained of is nothing of this kind. They would be thought to have as much wit, as much reason and good sense, as the best, notwithstanding all their darkness of understanding. Nay, they may exceed even a Locke, or a Sir Isaac Newton, in clearness and strength of mind, and yet have such weak intellects as to be incapable of understanding truly the plainest principles of the oracles of God. Thus the reputation of the head and the heart are equally taken care of; while the poor *defect*, which must bear the blame of all the sin in the world, is crowded into a corner of the soul, which no soul has, and therefore, which no one cares how much is said against.

Let any one think how he would address himself to God, with a view to magnify the riches of his grace in saving him. Would he think, that lessening his former *natural* abilities as much as possible, was the way to do this most effectually? Would he acknowledge that man by the fall had lost his rational powers, and was become no wiser than the beasts of the field, and of no more understanding than the fowls of heaven; and therefore that he had been utterly incapable of knowing what a kind of being God was, or what his law required, or getting any just notions concerning Christ and the way of salvation? That no one, whose mental powers were so weak, or so much disordered as his had been, could ever possibly get a true understanding of any of these things; and if God had not been graciously pleased to give him a better *head*, he must inevitably have been lost for ever? Is this, I say, the acknowledgment one would make with a view to glorify sovereign grace, in bringing him out of darkness into marvellous light?—Or would he not rather acknowledge the goodness of God, in giving him rational powers in his first formation, and so rendering him capable of acting a higher and happier part than the mere sensitive creation; capable of serving and enjoying God as a rational creature? Would he not acknowledge that, though God might justly have deprived him of all the peculiar dignities and advantages of the rational nature, for *his own*, and not merely for *Adam's* abuse of them, yet he had not done it? That he had not been denied the use of reason, or the opportunity and means of knowing God as many had been? But that under all these advantages to know God, he had not glorified him as God, nor been thankful. That he had shut his eyes against the clearest light, turned a deaf ear to the most gracious calls, and hated the best of Beings; hated him, not for what he is not, but for what he is; for his righteousness, for his holiness; for those very things for which angels and saints so much admire and love him. And that the more he knew of God and Christ, the more he hated them; and should for ever have done so, had not divine grace most astonishingly interposed in favour of so vile a wretch, and changed his nature, given him quite another spirit.

It is strange if any *should* seriously think, that displaying

abroad their natural weaknesses and infirmities, and alleging these as the only causes why they have not known, or done better than they have, is the way to humble themselves most before God, and to do the most honour to his grace in their salvation.

Those who hold to *natural* inability, and suppose all that sinners want, is to have their understandings rectified, thereby virtually and really, though I suppose not designedly, deny *moral* depravity altogether. But should we suppose sinners are depraved, and even totally depraved, in the temper of their minds; but that they are so impaired in their natural powers too, as to be incapable of understanding and complying with the gospel, if their hearts were good: this natural inability *in addition* to the moral, would not lay a foundation for a larger and fuller display of divine grace in their salvation, but the contrary. Suppose mankind, when they lost the moral image of God, had lost their reason too, and become fools in the natural sense; and that when their understandings were restored, they were renewed in the temper of their minds also: then it is easy to see, they would never have had opportunity to *discover* their moral depravity, as when they had understandings good enough, and have known God, but in works have denied him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate. It would not appear to themselves, or to any but the Searcher of hearts, what an evil disposition they had been of, and what a moral change had been wrought in them. And consequently, the divine grace toward them, if it was in reality as great, would not be *manifested* so much. But, indeed, the grace of God in the salvation of men, on that supposition, would not in reality *be so great*. The better understandings any have, and abuse, the greater is their guilt; and consequently the greater the grace that saves them.

1. From what has been said I think it follows, that there is no foundation for conceiving of sinners as being to blame and inexcusable for *part* of their neglect of the great salvation, and not for the *whole* of it; or that they may reasonably be exhorted to do *part* of what is implied in coming to Christ, but not the *whole*. Some seem to suppose that un-

regenerate sinners are not to blame for not doing things, which imply real holiness, and which cannot be done without it, as repenting truly of their sins, believing in Christ, loving God, &c. But that for not doing other things which may be done without any holiness of heart, as reforming externally, praying, &c. they are altogether inexcusable. But is not this evidently a distinction without any just foundation? Either the *natural* abilities of men must be the measure of their duty, and whatever is short of this, is sin; or else their duty is to be measured by their moral ability, and they are to blame no farther than that they fall short of doing what they have a heart to do. Now if we are under obligation to do well to the utmost of our *natural* power, and no abatement of duty ought to be made, on account of an evil heart, or the want of a good one; then sinners are to blame and altogether inexcusable, in not forsaking sin heartily, as well as externally; in not believing in Christ, loving God, and being cordially obedient to his will. For none of these things are impossible to such as are well disposed. But if *moral* power is the measure of duty, if want of a disposition to do other ways than a man does, renders him excusable and not to blame; then *all* are excusable, *none* are to blame. The thoughtless and secure, the prayerless and profane, the most profligate and abandoned, are as excusable, as little to blame as any others. For the inclinations of the worst of men, it may, without any great stretch of charity, be supposed, are as bad as their actions are. They are none of them any more wicked than they are disposed to be; nor have any of them a moral power to be any better. The dissolute and immoral might reform, it is true, if they were so inclined. The careless sinner might become serious and thoughtful about his salvation, might read and hear, meditate and pray, if he were so disposed. But it is as true, that sinners might come to the saving knowledge of the way of life, might repent and believe the gospel, were they so disposed; nothing but a heart is wanting in both cases. "The vile person *will speak* villany, and his heart *will work* iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, to utter error," &c. We are told that, "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil." And what they will do, if left to themselves, we are also

told, see Rom. i. 27, 31, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind;" that is, left them to act their own minds without restraint; and what was the consequence? "They were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder," &c. The scandalous sinner will not become externally reformed without restraining grace; nor will the secure sinner seek and pray, and use the means of grace, unless he is awakened; any more than a man will come to Christ, without the drawing of the Father. The drunkard has not a moral power, that is, a sufficient inclination, to forsake his cups, while he does not forsake them; nor the lewd person to forsake his lewd practices; nor the murderer to hold back his hand from shedding of blood, any more than the natural man has to embrace the gospel.

There is therefore no propriety in exhorting the unregenerate, to do *only* such things as are consistent with an entirely depraved and wicked heart, as if nothing further could be expected of them at present, any more than there would be in exhorting the most abandoned of mankind, to do only what is consistent with their disposition and course of life, because nothing better can be expected of them, till they are better disposed, or are under greater restraints.

Accordingly, there is no such compounding with the natural man, for what he can do, without a heart to do any thing that is good, to be met with any where in the sacred Scriptures. God's *present* demand upon every one of us is, "Give me thy heart." He does not say, give me thy external obedience only, make a decent show of seeking and serving me, and it shall suffice for the present; for as for thy heart, I know, "there is no hope, it hath loved strangers, and after them it will go." The law requires truth *in the inward parts*; yea it demands a perfect heart. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." Not merely thou shalt seek and pray for this temper, towards God and man, but thou shalt *have it*.—The New Testament preachers of salvation through Christ, say, "Repent and believe the gospel; repent and be converted that yours sins may be blotted

out." The sum of their preaching, "both to Jews and also to the Greeks," was, "Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Not testifying, "as the manner of some is," that if sinners will do what they can, (meaning what their wicked hearts will let them do, what the carnal mind which is enmity against God, may consent to,) they will not be left to perish; but God will undoubtedly have pity on them, and afford them farther help.

Certainly, if the divine law is just, no man can justly excuse himself, or be excused, short of a perfect heart, and a perfect life. And if the gospel is true, there is no safety for any sinner, no ground of dependence that God will have mercy on him, or ever show him any favour, short of Christ, and an actual interest in him by faith. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. He that believeth not shall be damned."

It is extremely obvious, that the Scriptures every where treat the impenitent and the unbeliever, with as little ceremony as any sinners whatsoever. And it is exceedingly evident, I think, from what has now been said, that reason affords no plea in their favour, but what will equally excuse any sinner in the world, in being as he is, and in doing as he does. If the want of a good heart is a good plea, every sinner, and every imperfect saint, may avail himself of it to his complete justification. Those who are sanctified but in part, cannot be blamed for being but imperfectly holy. Those who have no true holiness at all, cannot be required to have any, or be blamed if they act as well as they can without it. And, by the same rule, not so much as an external reformation can be required of those who have no mind to reform. Nothing can be said to the purpose of excusing sinners on account of the badness of their hearts, unless we would undertake to maintain this general principle, that the duty of every one must be only according to every one's disposition. But if this principle is true, every one must easily see, there

can never be any such thing as neglect of duty, or desert of punishment, or need of grace, in the universe.\*

\* It has been objected that the phrase *moral inability*, is used in these discourses, and by many of late, in a different sense from that in which it has formerly most commonly been used by divines and philosophers; and in so large and loose a sense as has a tendency rather to darken counsel by words without knowledge. That under this general name we include, and confound together, things of a very different nature, and which ought to be carefully distinguished. That there is a wide difference between a mere *unwillingness*, or the prevalence of a contrary inclination in particular instances, and the want of a *principle* from which it is possible a certain kind of actions should be done, let what motives will be exhibited, and what pains will be taken. For instance, between the inability of the drunkard to forsake his cups, while he does not forsake them, and the inability of the natural man to embrace the gospel.

To this it is replied. In these discourses, under moral inability to that which is good, is meant to be included all that impotency which consists in *moral depravity*; whether in principle or exercise; whether in privation, that is, the want of moral rectitude only, or in any positive lusts and corruptions; and whether native or contracted; whether removable by moral suasion, or not without a new creation. Now under this general notion of moral impotency, it is granted there are several things included which in some views are of distinct consideration, and upon some subjects may be of importance to have carefully distinguished. But these differences, it was, and is still conceived, do not affect the present inquiry. In every supposable instance, sin, as far as it prevails, is inconsistent with the prevalence of its opposite, viz. duty, or holiness; and involves a real impossibility of its opposite's taking place, so far as *it* takes place. Whether depravity is total or partial, native or contracted, transient or permanent, still as long as it continues, and as far as it goes, it implies a kind of impotency and a real impossibility, in regard to having or doing certain opposite things. And if it is of the nature of *moral depravity*—if it is in itself, *anomia*, a *moral evil*, the impotency—the impossibility implied in it, does not in any measure exculpate or excuse, in one case any more than in the other. The divine grace or the manner of divine operation requisite to reform the profligate, and to renew the unregenerate, is different, essentially different. But as to the question about excusing, (the only thing under present consideration) there is no difference; since all the difficulty to be overcome, in either case, is of the nature of moral depravity.—The terms *natural* and *moral* it is true have been used in a number of different senses on different occasions, and there are few words but what have been so. The sense in which they are here used is not however new. Nor is the meaning of natural and moral inability in these discourses, any more large or loose or indeterminate, than the meaning of natural and moral good, or natural and moral evil; natural and moral perfections, or natural and moral infirmities.



2. From what has been said it may appear, that there is no force in that common plea in the mouth of sinners, namely, "That they did not bring their depravity upon themselves but were born with it. If their hearts are altogether sinful, they did not make them so, nor is it any of their fault; they have only such hearts as were given them, without their choice or consent."—Now in arguing thus, they evidently view a wicked heart, in no other light than as a mere weakness, which a man would not choose, but cannot help. They consider it as a thing not at all faulty in its *own nature*; so that if they are to blame on account of it, it must be for something previous to it, and quite of another kind. Concerning innocent natural infirmities, we justly judge in the above manner. Thus if a man is sick we do not blame him for it; we know bodily sickness is no moral evil. But if we are told the man brought his sickness upon himself, by intemperance, or some bad conduct, then we blame and condemn him for that bad conduct; that was a moral evil, though his sickness is not so.—Now those who make the above plea, reason just in this manner about *sin itself*; as if it were no sin, merely to *be a sinner*; or to commit sin when one has an inclination to do it. But that the *bringing a sinful disposition upon ourselves*, had we done this, would indeed have been a very wicked thing.

Hence it seems to many, as if the poor sinful children of men were only as it were under a fit of sickness, which Adam brought on himself and them, by doing an evil deed which he might easily enough have avoided, inasmuch as he was perfectly holy; but that we his miserable offspring, being by nature sinners, are under a necessity of sinning, and therefore cannot be to blame for it. It seems as if *Adam* was in reality the only sinner, and his *first* sin the only sin of the human kind; because that sin was committed while man had not an imaginary, but a real, a *moral* as well as *natural* power to abstain from all sin. That is, the first sin did not arise from, or consist in, any defect of the will; and herein consists the sinfulness of it. If Adam did not sin before he had any inclination to sin, and while he was strongly enough inclined to the contrary, it is easy to see, he had just the same excuse for his first sin, as we have for

any of ours. Let his first sin be placed where it will, whether in actually eating the forbidden fruit, or in hearkening to any temptations to do it, or in being off his watch, or in whatever any one pleases; still we must suppose it committed while his heart was perfectly good, else he did not sin without this boasted excuse of all other sinners,—want of a moral power to do otherwise. Thus by forgetting that sin is in *itself* sinful, we are led to look for something else that is so, not in sinners, but in perfectly innocent beings! We conceive Adam to blame, because of the uprightness of his heart; and ourselves blameless, because our hearts are so wicked! For in this way we certainly bring nothing but perfect holiness into the account, as an aggravation of Adam's sin, beyond those of his posterity.

The very first idea we can have of sin, is a depraved and wicked heart; and if this is not a blameable thing *in itself*, there is no danger of finding any thing that is so. Could we entirely confound all distinction betwixt natural and moral evil, and so betwixt natural and moral inability, as being things *essentially* different, we should be secure enough from the accusations of our own consciences. And in matters of religion, men generally do confound these things, so far as to feel very easy, and very much as if there *was no sin*. But let a neighbour be very unkind and injurious to them, and they presently see a difference. This does not look to them, just as if he was only lame, and unable to go out of their way; nor do they lay the blame upon Adam, but upon the malicious and unrighteous wretch himself; nor does their being told it is in his *very nature* to be so, make them think much the better of him.

3. If the distinction now insisted on was well understood, and clearly kept in view, it would appear in like manner, that a sinner's not being able to change his own heart, is really nothing in his favour. Here some may be ready to think lies the grand difficulty after all. What they wanted to know, was, not whether sinners *would* be able to comply with the gospel, or to obey the law, if their hearts were good; but whether it is in their power to have such an heart in them. For what does it signify what a man could do, if he had that which he has not, and can by no means

obtain? Sinners do not see how it is their own fault, that they have such bad hearts, and do nothing from gracious principles, provided it is not in their own power to alter themselves in this respect.

Now if a wicked heart was not a *moral evil*, but a thing of the same nature as a weak head, a bad memory, or an infirm constitution, this would be the case. A man is not to blame for having these, provided he cannot help it. But if a wicked heart is a thing of a criminal nature, a thing quite different from any such natural weaknesses, then there is no force in the above reasoning. If to have a heart to hate and oppose God and our neighbour, instead of loving them, as we are required, is a moral evil; as certainly it is, and the sum of *all* moral evil; then to say a man cannot alter in this respect, is only to say, he cannot help being a most vile and inexcusable wretch. To be unalterably in love with sin, does not surely render one less *sinful*, but the more so. Surely the more wicked a man's heart is, the more faulty and blameworthy he is.

But the fallacy whereby sinners delude their consciences in this matter, lies in a secret supposition that they could not change their hearts, nor would they be changed, though they should ever so *sincerely* and heartily, and *uprightly try* to do it; which would indeed be a very hard case. If a sinner honestly, and from a truly virtuous disposition, tried to the utmost of his natural power to alter his wicked disposition, but it would not alter, he was as bad as ever after all; it would seem indeed that he was in a very pitiable situation but not very faulty. Yea it would be difficult to see wherein he was *at all* to blame. And that something like this is the real view which multitudes have of the matter, is very evident.

Let us put the case (as people would have it) that sinners were in all respects able to change their own hearts; only it must take some time, a *month* suppose; and they must apply themselves very diligently, very faithfully to the work, all that while, in order to accomplish it. There is a sinner, however, that neglects his opportunity and spends the whole month in sin, without ever using any means, or making the least attempt to get a good heart. Is he not to blame now for this? Most certainly he is. But why so? Why so?—

Does not every one see that such carelessness in a case like this, such indifference about becoming good when it was entirely in one's power, must be inexcusable to the last degree? To continue thus in sin, when there was no manner of necessity for it; surely this can never be justified.—But another sinner was much better disposed. He seized the favourable opportunity, and applied himself with the greatest imaginable diligence; and at the month's end, actually became a good man. Now was *he* to blame, during this time that he was thus faithfully labouring, and doing all in his power to become good? By no means. But why not? He had a bad heart. Yes, but he did as well as ever he could, notwithstanding that. No man could have done better, under his circumstances. And he was actually of a wicked *disposition*, no longer, than till he could possibly be otherwise.

Thus people would be apt to judge in such cases. And this shows what notions men have of inability with respect to the sinner's changing his heart; as also the reason why they say the distinction of natural and moral inability signifies nothing. For by whatever *name* it is called, they will conceive of it as being of the same *nature*. If they own it lies in the wicked disposition of the sinner altogether, yet they do not conceive it lies in the disposition he *acts from*, but in a disposition he is *acting against*, but is unable to overcome. They suppose the inability he labours under is such, that he may be well disposed, and do well; yea, that he may be disposed to do the whole duty of one under his circumstances, and actually do it, and yet not be able to help being of an entirely depraved and wicked disposition. Nor could they find the least shadow of an excuse for him, did they not view his case in this absurd light;—did they not consider him as faithfully exerting himself with an honest and good intention, endeavouring to *become good*, but all in vain. Or at least, did they not suppose him willing enough to exert himself in this manner, only he knows it will signify nothing. In this way it is, that a perverse and stubborn will, a wicked and unwilling mind, comes to be thought as innocent a thing, and as good an excuse, as any in the world. It is viewed as a mere weakness; a thing not inconsistent with *trying* to be holy, but inconsistent with being so, let

one try ever so heartily; which is the proper notion of *natural* inability. And to maintain this notion, they have a double meaning to every word, by which "the abominable thing" which men are to blame for, can possibly be expressed. They will affix such ideas to every word that can be made use of to express an evil disposition of mind, as to make an innocent thing of it;—a kind of dead weight, which either they make themselves as easy as they can under, knowing they must bear it; or else are striving with all their might to shake off, but cannot effect it. Thus "deceitful above all things," is the heart of a sinner! Thus artful in hiding itself and keeping for ever out of sight, and laying all blame somewhere else! The *heart*, the *disposition*, the *inclination*, the *will*, are readily allowed to be altogether wrong and sinful, while at the same time, what is properly meant by all those words, is still supposed to be good enough; and hence the sinner cannot see how he is to blame. Yea, the very thing for which alone any one *can* be to blame, is looked upon as his sufficient excuse and justification. Thus a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand.

4. We may hence learn, what alone is sufficient to convince a man that his utter impotence does not lessen his obligation in any measure, or afford him the least cloak for his sins. It is only his being made sensible what his impotence really is, and wherein it consists. The Apostle Paul says, Rom. vii. 8, 9, "Without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." The former of these situations of the Apostle, is that of every sinner who cannot see how it is possible he should be wholly helpless and yet altogether inexcusable, at the same time, and in the same respect. He has no just conviction of "the plague of his own heart." He is alive, and sin is dead. He sees neither his impotence, nor his sin, in a true light. If he saw *one*, he would necessarily see both. Let an unregenerate sinner only see his *real* heart, and he will see that he is helpless enough. And let him only see *this sort* of helplessness, and he will never have a thought of its being of the nature of an excuse. A man never finds himself utterly helpless in this view, utterly un-

able to become good, by reason of his actual wickedness, until he finds all the bottom springs and principles of action within him, are entirely wrong. That he does not so much as *intend* to do his duty, as duty, and never did. That he does not *mean well*, in any thing he does. This makes him see that his ploughing is sin, and that all his most painful religious duties must be an abomination to Him who looketh on the heart, and knows what they all spring from. He sees he has no regard for God's glory, cares nothing what becomes of it, if *he* could but be safe and happy himself. He sees *he is dead*, and all his works are *dead works*; and that he must be created anew, or he shall never do any thing as he ought. But does this view of his deadness make him lose sight of his sinfulness and guilt? Does he now feel himself excused and free from blame, because his heart is so totally depraved, so opposite to God and all that is good? No. Sin revives just as fast as he dies. His deadness is seen to be nothing but the very life and soul of sin. His *having* such a heart, his *being* of such a temper, that he can do nothing, can delight in nothing but sin, he sees is the very thing that God's law condemns him to everlasting burnings for, and that most justly. If such a disposition as he finds himself now to be of, would extenuate a creature's guilt, there is not a devil in hell that could ever be damned.—When a sinner once sees what he really is, his helplessness and his sin are seen to be quite consistent; and one just as great as the other. For, indeed, they are *one and the same thing*.

5. From what has been said, it may easily be seen, that there is no want of *directions* proper to be given to sinners, but that all the difficulty is, they are not in a disposition to regard and follow them. People are always ready to ask, "But after all, what shall sinners do? Can you give them any directions how to get out of this helpless condition? Is there *any thing for them to do*, or is there not?" Now this, however common it is, is certainly very impertinent. If it is a settled point that the case with sinners is, they have no heart to do any thing that is good, people must strangely forget themselves who ask, "Is there any thing for them to do?" As if all the difficulty lay in answering this question, or in pointing out *duty* to them! Surely there is enough to

be done, if they would but do it. It is easy to direct them to the course they *ought* to take; and it would be easy to put them in a way in which they might have great reason to hope for salvation, if they thought it a matter worth taking pains about, and were of a teachable spirit, and willing to follow good advice. It is much easier to say what they *should* do, than it is to make them willing to do it. They *should* become serious and thoughtful about eternal things. They *should* “amend their ways and their doings,” which are not good. They *should* search the scriptures, take every method, and improve every opportunity in their power, to acquaint themselves with God and Jesus Christ—the law—the gospel—and with their own character and state. They should “cry after knowledge, and lift up their voice for understanding.” They should “seek it as *silver*, and search for it as hid treasure.” They should lie open to conviction, be willing to know the truth, and to embrace it when discovered. They should not cover their sins, but be sensible of, humbly confess, and heartily forsake them. They *should* “return unto the Lord” their Maker and rightful Sovereign, submitting to his authority, owning his justice, and accepting his grace through the Mediator. Or, in other words, they SHOULD repent and believe the gospel.

But if they will not follow these, nor any good directions that can be given them, who can help it? If they will set at nought all the counsel of wisdom, what good can the best counsel do them? If they do not hearken to the calls of the gospel, will not come unto Christ that they might have life, will do nothing proper to be done by persons in their circumstances, there is, absolutely no help for them, unless God himself interpose, “and work in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”

6. According to what has been said, there can be no reasonable objection against God’s giving no encouragement of salvation on lower terms than an actual compliance with the gospel. Many are ready to say, if there are no promises to any thing short of saving faith, God is not in earnest in his proposals to sinners, and does not treat them well, but rather trifles with and mocks them in their misery; for he knows that no unregenerate sinner can come up to such terms, any

more than he can make a world. But according to what has been said, if sinners were but in *earnest themselves* about their salvation; if they were disposed to *treat God well*, and not to *mock* and *trifle with him*, there would be no difficulty in the case. There were indeed infinitely great difficulties in the way of our obtaining salvation. By sin, we had cast such dishonour upon the holy law and government of God, as it was not in the power of creatures to wipe off. And until this was done, it seems not to have been consistent with the honour of God's character and the rights of his government to show favour to the sinner. But Christ has removed every difficulty of this kind. By his all-sufficient sacrifice he has made full atonement for sin, and opened a way for the honourable exercise of grace. By his obedience unto death he has wrought out an all-perfect righteousness, for the sake of which God is well pleased, and stands ready to justify every sinner who is willing to submit to this righteousness, and consents to forsake his sins and be saved in this way. And now he can say, and has actually said, "All things are ready:" "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." Past sins are no bar in the way; for there is "a fountain set open," not only "for Judah and Jerusalem," but for all the world "to wash in, from sin and from uncleanness." The greatest unworthiness is no objection; for the invitation is, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. *Whosoever will*, let him come, and take the water of life freely." Sinners, you have really as fair an opportunity for life, according to the gospel, as probationers can possibly have; as full a price in your hands, as your hearts can possibly desire. There is nothing on earth; there is nothing in all the decrees of heaven; there is nothing in all the malice and power of hell, that can hinder your salvation, if you do not hinder it yourselves. Nor need you be discouraged by reason of any bad disposition brought upon you by Adam, which you are heartily sorry for, and would be glad to get rid of, but



cannot. For the *second* Adam is able to help you in this as well as in other respects; and will do it in a moment if you in the least degree really desire it. The very thing he came for was to save from sin, the power as well as the guilt of it; and to save whoever wants to be thus saved. Nor need you imagine, that you must lay out all your own strength first, and do all that can reasonably be required of one under your circumstances; and then may have just an *encouragement* of being saved by *grace* after a life of such perfection. This is the most reproachful idea of the God of all grace, that you can possibly entertain. No. If you do so well that it would be hard for God to refuse you salvation, he will consider himself as under *obligation* to save you, and will never desire you should *pretend* to think there is any grace in it. But he will receive you *graciously* and love you freely, if you desire it, though you have not done so very well. He means to exercise as much grace, as he would have the honour of, and not to be eternally praised for what is not his real due. He is willing to save you in as gracious a manner as ever you thought of, or can wish for. Only weigh the matter, and say whether you choose to be saved. Enter into the nature of gospel-salvation; attend to the character and laws of Christ. And then say, whether you will have *him* and be *his*; whether you are willing and would really choose to exchange the servitude of Satan for that liberty wherewith Christ makes his followers free; or whether you must plainly say, you love your old master and your lusts, and choose rather to have your ear bored, and be a servant for ever. But however, "be sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you;" and if you refuse to have any part or lot in it, be assured, that when the wicked are turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God, it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for you. But I must not enlarge farther, by way of particular inference.

On the whole, I am not able to conceive how any one who enters into the matter, can question the propriety of making the distinction insisted on in this discourse; or with what appearance of reason, any can pretend it is an useless distinction. As to the importance of it; it may easily be observed, in how many instances, upon the mots

leading points, and in the most material respects, by the help of this distinction, common sense will cross the common notions of sinners exactly where the Bible crosses them. It sets reason, and scripture, divine justice, and divine grace, in a quite consistent view; whereas without it, I apprehend they must for ever appear irreconcilable.—It leads good men to see that human infirmities and imperfections, are not such comfortable extenuations of guilt, as they are sometimes ready to make them. That all their *moral* infirmity, all their want of *perfect holiness*, is entirely their own fault; and what they ought to be deeply humbled for, and go mourning under all their days.—It shows sinners, that their perdition is really altogether of themselves: that all ground of discouragement in their case, is their own wickedness. And not their unworthiness neither, but merely their *unwillingness* to be made clean. That this indeed makes their case desperate from every other quarter but the uncovenanted grace of God. In *themselves*, or from any thing that man can say or do, “there is no hope. No, for they have loved strangers, and after them they will go.” And as to changing the hearts of such, God has reserved it as the sovereign prerogative of the throne of his grace, to “have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion.”—It administers not so much comfort, indeed, to sinners in their impenitence and unbelief, as they would be glad to have. But in this awful condition they have generally comfort enough, such as it is, and too much in all reason. To kill their self-righteous hopes, and let them see their guilt and danger, their utter helplessness, and yet entire inexcusableness, is the kindest thing that can be done for them.\*

\* This, however, is the grand objection; the grand reason why it is said, it does no good, it comes to the same thing when all is done and said. The sinner is as helpless, and as absolutely dependent on sovereign grace, if his inability lies in his disposition, as if any thing else was the matter with him. For a wicked heart will as infallibly shut a man out of heaven, if he is left to it, as any thing in the world could.—Hence very ingenious writers, even though they make the distinction now insisted on, and by their first expressions one would think saw the difference, will yet suppose, after all, that the terms of salvation must be level to the *hearts* of men; or that *something* must

As to the foundation there is for the distinction ;

1. We have seen the *bible* is as express and full in making the difference supposed, as it is in any one thing whatever. We have seen that all the heart, soul, mind and strength ; that is, a perfectly willing and faithful exertion of all our faculties, however enfeebled they are, is all that God requires of us in his perfect law. Nor is there a single instance of natural impossibilities being required of any man, in all the sacred records. Nor is it once intimated that *natural* impossibilities *might* justly be required of us, because our natural powers were impaired by the fall. But, on the other hand, we have seen that the most absolute *moral* impossibilities are required of all men, without the least scruple, as if there was no kind of difficulty in them. That a perfect heart and a perfect life, are as much required of men now, as if they were not fallen creatures ; and required of the greatest sinner as much as of the best saint. No peculiar provisos are made, in favour of even the most abandoned. Nor is it once intimated, any where in scripture, that the reason why men may be required to do that which is lawful and right, though it is contrary to their inclination, is because Adam did that which was unlawful and wrong, contrary to *his* inclination. Or that all the reason why a

be done, whereby sinners *may* be saved, notwithstanding their *moral* impotence. That things must not be left so, that even "his own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be *holden* in the cords of his sins."—To say, that "if salvation is offered to all who heartily desire and choose it, and so truly ask for it, it is offered on the lowest terms," is therefore treated with contempt ; and it is replied, 'then we may well say, woe to the sinner whose confidence in his own sincerity fails him. If a man has not this hearty desire, and cannot create it in himself, he is in a deplorable condition.' Accordingly the scriptures are ransacked for encouragement, if not promises, to something lower than asking for salvation or being willing to have it. And the totally depraved heart, is carefully sounded, to find ground for doings that are not *unlawful*, though altogether *unholy*. That upon these better sort of unholy doings, on one side, and those encouragements on the other, a bridge may be built over all impossibilities of every kind, so that no sinner shall be in a deplorable condition, by reason of his moral depravity. But every one *may* get to heaven, in *spite of his heart*. This is making distinctions that are something to the purpose !

wicked heart is not entirely innocent, and a good excuse, is because man brought it upon himself, by his own folly and wickedness, before he had any thing of it.—We have seen, that the way our Saviour took to convince men, that their rejection of him and his gospel was their sin, was by showing them, that it could proceed from nothing but the badness of their hearts; and not by leading them to believe it was primarily owing to a mere weakness or disorder in their *understandings* occasioned by the original fall. He readily admitted that if men were blind, or if they had not sufficient means of information and conviction, their unbelief would be no sin. Nor does it appear that any unbelievers in those times, had refined so far as to reply in their own vindication, that they could not help hating the light, because their hearts were evil. This seems to be a cloak for unbelief, of a more modern invention.

2. We have seen that *common sense* most readily and fully gives into such a difference as this, in all common cases; in every supposable case in which the vindication of our own character is not concerned. Yea in cases where men are most interested, and most straitened for a plea in their own justification, they rarely think of pleading a bad intention and a very wicked heart. If a man, when questioned for a supposed faulty action, can show that it was an oversight, and not owing to any ill design; or if he can make appear, that he had not opportunity or capacity to do better than he did; these are always allowed to be things to his purpose. But it is rare that any one undertakes to excuse himself, as to any injurious conduct, or omission of duty with respect to his fellow-men, by showing that he is, and always was, of an exceeding wicked and unrighteous disposition, and that his *heart* was quite as bad as his *conduct*. No one, unless he was out of his wits, would ever think of making such a plea as this before a human court. It is only in matters of religion, and before the divine tribunal on their last decisive trial, that criminals themselves think of making this plea, or that it would avail any thing unless to their greater condemnation.

And we have seen that the reason why sinners are ready to look upon a wicked heart as a good excuse in matters of

religion, is because they *mean* no such thing by it, nor do they think they *have* any such thing as a heart at all wicked. When they talk of moral depravity, deadness in sin, want of a disposition to that which is good, &c., they really mean by such expressions—they know not what. Something that is consistent with their *sincerely* wishing, desiring, and *endeavouring* to the utmost of their natural power, to do their whole duty. And this is all the reason they think a bad heart is an excuse with respect to these things, any more than in other cases. This is the reason why, in their view, “sin is dead,” and looks like such a kind of thing as must necessarily always be dead: it not being possible in the nature of things that it should be alive, longer than just to bring itself into existence.

It may therefore, notwithstanding this seeming exception, well be considered as a quite universal dictate of common sense, that the want of a heart, and the want of natural capacity, in regard to excusing men are entirely different things.

3. We have seen that *reason* discovers a just foundation for this decision of the moral sense, and of the scriptures, as clearly as it discovers any thing of a moral nature. We have seen that an ability to act otherwise than agreeably to our own hearts, would only be an ability to act unfreely and by constraint: that actions which are done contrary to, or without our wills, are actions for which *we* cannot in reason be accountable: that only taking away moral necessity, the necessity of men’s acting or not acting according to their own disposition and choice, unavoidably subjects them to a fatal necessity, a necessity of acting otherwise than they would choose, or whether they will or no. Reason plainly teaches, that things done under that necessity which arises from our own hearts, and that which is against them, are just as different, as things in which we are the agents, and things in which we are not:—just as different as Peter’s girding himself when he was young, and going whither he would, and his being girded afterwards, and being carried whither he would not:—just as different as a man’s wilfully murdering himself, and being murdered by another, in spite of all he could do in his own defence. We have seen, that

if want of holiness excuses a person in being unholy, and if a disposition to sin excuses a person in sinning, then every unholy creature, every sinner in the universe, is perfectly excusable.

Thus if *scripture*, *reason*, and *common sense*, all concurring in the fullest manner, can confirm any thing, an essential difference betwixt natural and moral inability, the inability which arises from our own hearts, and that arising from any other quarter, is most fully confirmed. Nor can any one say, that these two kinds of *cannot*, come to the same thing as to excusing men, without contradicting the *highest degree* of *every kind* of evidence we can have, of any moral truth.—“He that hath an ear, let him hear.”

THE  
NECESSITY OF ATONEMENT,  
AND  
THE CONSISTENCY BETWEEN THAT AND  
FREE GRACE, IN FORGIVENESS.

BY JONATHAN EDWARDS, D.D.

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## PREFATORY NOTICE.

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DR. JONATHAN EDWARDS, the author of the following tract, was the second son of the more celebrated President Jonathan Edwards. He was born at Northampton, Massachusetts, May 20th, 1745, and when but six years old removed with his father to Stockbridge, which at that time was inhabited, almost solely, by Indians. When he was ten years of age his father sent him among the Six Nations that he might learn their language and be fitted for being a missionary to them. In 1758, on his father's removal to Princeton to assume the presidency of the college there, he accompanied him. He soon lost both his father and mother, so that he was an orphan by the time he was fourteen years old. He prosecuted his studies at Princeton with great success, and became early the subject of the saving influences of divine grace. He studied divinity under his father's friend Dr. Joseph Bellamy, and in October 1766 was licensed by the Congregational association of Litchfield county to preach the gospel. In 1767 he was appointed tutor in the College of Princeton. In January 1769 he was ordained minister of the congregation of Whitehaven in Newhaven.—In 1795, in circumstances very similar to those in which his father left Northampton, his connection with this Society was dissolved. In the beginning of next year he settled in Colebrook, Connecticut. In May 1799 he was elected President of Union College, Schenectady, New York, and in July entered on his duties. His presidency, however, was short, as he died of intermitting fever August 1st, 1801. Among his last words were, "The blood of Christ is the only ground of my hope." "It becomes us cheerfully to submit to the will of God—He orders everything for the best."—It has been justly said that "if Dr. Edwards was not in all respects equal to his honoured father, there was nevertheless a striking similarity in their minds. The first President Edwards was a greater man than

the second: but if the father had higher powers of invention, the son was perhaps the most acute and dexterous as a logician. If the former could dive deeper and bring up more pearls from the bottom, he could not arrange them when procured with greater skill and advantage than the latter. If his eye was more excursive, it was not keener. If he could lift the telescope easier, we doubt whether he could manage the microscope quite so well.\* Dr. Emmons was accustomed to say, "the Senior President had more *reason* than his son; but the son was a better *reasoner* than his father." The works of Dr. Edwards published in his lifetime were—"The salvation of all men strictly examined." "A dissertation concerning liberty and necessity." "Observations on the language of the Muhhekaneew Indians." "Brief remarks on the doctrine of universal salvation." "A number of occasional sermons," and many articles in the New York Theological Magazine. He edited his father's "History of Redemption," two volumes of his "Sermons,"—and two volumes also of "Miscellaneous observations."—A collected edition of his works in two volumes 8vo was published at Andover in 1842. The tract that follows appeared as three sermons on Eph. i. 7, but it required nothing more than the leaving out a very few words to give it the more appropriate form of a dissertation.

\* Christian Spectator, Jan. 1823.

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## NECESSITY OF ATONEMENT, ETC.

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THE doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is a capital doctrine of the Gospel, and is much insisted on by the writers of the New Testament: above all, by the Apostle Paul. In Eph. i. 7. he asserts that we are forgiven “according to the riches of his grace:” not merely in the exercise of *grace*, as the very term *forgiveness* implies; but in the exercise of “the riches of grace:” importing that forgiveness is an act of the most free and abundant grace. Yet he also asserts that this gratuitous forgiveness is in consequence of a “redemption by the blood of Christ.” But how are these two parts of the proposition consistent?—if we be in the literal sense forgiven in consequence of a redemption, we are forgiven on account of the price of redemption previously paid. How then can we be truly said to be *forgiven*: a word which implies the exercise of *grace*? and especially how can we be said to be forgiven according to the *riches of grace*? This is at least a seeming inconsistency. If our forgiveness be purchased, and the price of it be already paid, it seems to be a matter of debt, and not of grace. This difficulty hath occasioned some to reject the doctrine of Christ’s redemption, satisfaction, or atonement. Others, who have not been driven to that extremity by this difficulty, yet have been exceedingly perplexed and embarrassed. Of these last, I freely confess myself to have been one. Having from my youth devoted myself to the study of theoretic and practical theology, this has to me been one of the GORDIAN KNOTS in that

science. How far what shall now be offered towards a solution, ought to afford satisfaction, is submitted to the judgment of my candid readers.

The following three inquiries shall in succession engage our attention: Are sinners forgiven through the redemption or atonement of Jesus Christ only?—What is the reason or ground of this mode of forgiveness?—Is this mode of forgiveness consistent with *grace*, or *according to the riches of grace*?

## I.

## THE REALITY AND NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT.

ARE WE FORGIVEN THROUGH THE REDEMPTION OR ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST ONLY? I say *redemption* or *atonement*, because, in my view, they mutually imply each other. That we *are* forgiven through the atonement of Christ—and can be forgiven in no other way, the scriptures very clearly teach. For evidence as to the first of these particulars, I appeal to the following passages of scripture, which are indeed but a few of the many which exhibit the same truth. First, Eph. i. 7, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Romans iii. 24, “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.” Acts xx. 28, “To feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Heb. ix. 12, “By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” 1 Peter i. 18, “Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Ibid. ii. 24, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” Isa. liii. 4—6, “He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.—The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Ver. 10, 11, 12, “Yet it pleased

the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief;—when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed—He shall bear their iniquities.—And he bare the sins of many.”

The scriptures also teach the absolute necessity of the atonement of Christ; and that we can obtain forgiveness and salvation through that only. The sacrifices appointed to be made by the ancient Israelites, seem evidently to point to Christ; and to show the necessity of the vicarious sacrifice of him, who is therefore said to be “our *passover sacrificed* for us;” and to have “given himself for us, an *offering* and a *sacrifice* to God, for a sweet smelling savour:” and “now once in the end of the world, to have appeared, to put away sin by the *sacrifice* of himself.” 1 Cor. v. 7; Eph. v. 2; Heb. ix. 26. As the ancient Israelites could obtain pardon in no other way than by those sacrifices; this teaches us that we can obtain it only by the sacrifice of Christ.

The positive declarations of the New Testament teach the same truth still more directly,—as Luke xxiv. 25, 26, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! *Ought* not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” Ver. 46, “Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.” Rom. iii. 25, 26, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness—*that he might be just*, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” It seems that God could not have been just in justifying the believer, had not Christ been made a propitiation. John iii. 14, 15, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so *must* the Son of man be lifted up.” Heb. ix. 22, “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” 1 Cor. iii. 11, “Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Acts iv. 12, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

The necessity of the death and atonement of Christ sufficiently appears by the bare events of his death.—If his death were not necessary, he died in vain. But we cannot suppose that either he or his Father would have consented to his death, had it not been absolutely necessary. Even a *man*

of common wisdom and goodness, would not consent either to his own death or that of his son, but in a case of necessity, and in order to some important and valuable end. Much less can we suppose, that either Christ Jesus the Son would have consented to his own death, or that the infinitely wise and good Father would have consented to the death of his only begotten and dearly beloved Son, in whom his soul was well pleased, and who was full of grace and truth, the brightness of his own glory and the express image of his person, the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely, if there had not been the most urgent necessity;—especially as this most excellent Son so earnestly prayed to the Father, to exempt him from death; Matt. xx. 39, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” The Son himself hath told us, John xi. 42, “That the Father heareth him always;” and therefore we may be sure that if the condition of his pathetic petition had taken place,—if it had been possible that the designs of God in the salvation of sinners should be accomplished without the death of Christ,—Christ’s prayer, in this instance, would have been answered, and he would have been exempted from death. And since he was not exempted, we have clear evidence that his death was a matter of absolute necessity.

The necessity of the atonement of Christ is clearly taught also by the apostle, Gal. ii. 21, “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” It is to no purpose to pretend that the law, in this passage, means the ceremonial law; because he tells us, chap. iii. 21, “That if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” But the moral law was a law which had been given, and since no law which had been given could give life, it follows, that forgiveness and life could not be by the moral law, any more than by the ceremonial; and that if they could, Christ is dead in vain.

## II.

## THE GROUND OF THE ATONEMENT.

Our next inquiry is, WHAT IS THE REASON OR GROUND OF THIS MODE OF FORGIVENESS? or *why* is an atonement necessary in order to the pardon of the sinner?—I answer, it is necessary on the same ground and for the same reasons, as punishment would have been necessary, if there had been no atonement made. The ground of both is the same. The question then comes to this: why would it have been necessary, if no atonement had been made, that punishment should be inflicted on the transgressors of the divine law? This, I suppose, would have been necessary, to maintain the authority of the divine law. If that be not maintained, but the law fall into contempt, the contempt will fall equally on the legislator himself; his authority will be despised, and his government weakened. And as the contempt shall increase, which may be expected to increase in proportion to the neglect of executing the law, the divine government will approach nearer and nearer to a dissolution, till at length it will be totally annihilated.

But when moral creatures are brought into existence, there must be a moral government. It cannot be reconciled with the wisdom and goodness of God to make intelligent creatures and leave them at random, without moral law and government. This is the dictate of reason from the nature of things. Besides the nature of things, we have in the present instance *fact*, to assist our reasoning. God hath *in fact* given a moral law, and established a moral government over his intelligent creatures. So that we have clear proof, that infinite wisdom and goodness judged it to be necessary, to put intelligent creatures under moral law and government. But in order to a moral law, there must be a penalty; otherwise it would be mere advice, but no law. In order to support the authority and vigour of this law, the penalty must be inflicted on transgressors. If a penalty be denounced indeed, but never inflicted; the law becomes no law, as really as if no penalty had been annexed to it. As well might no law have been made or published, as that a law be

published, with all the most awful penalties, and these never be inflicted. Nay, in some respects it would be much better and more reconcilable with the divine perfections. It would be more consistent, and show that the legislator was not ignorant, either of his own want of power to carry a law into effect, or of the rights of his subjects, or of the boundaries between right and wrong. But to enact a law and not execute it, implies a weakness of some kind or other: either an error of judgment, or a consciousness of a depraved design in making the law, or a want of power to carry it into effect, or some other defect. Therefore such a proceeding as this is dishonourable and contemptible; and by it, both the law and legislator not only appear in a contemptible light, but really are contemptible.

Hence, to execute the threatening of the divine law, is necessary to preserve the dignity and authority of the law, and of the author of it, and to the very existence of the divine moral government. It is no impeachment of the divine power and wisdom, to say, that it is impossible for God himself to uphold his moral government over intelligent creatures, when once his law hath fallen into contempt. He may indeed govern them by irresistible force, as he governs the material world: but he cannot govern them by law, by rewards and punishments.

If God maintain the authority of his law, by the infliction of the penalty, it will appear, that he acts consistently in the legislative and executive parts of his government. But if he were not to inflict the penalty, he would act and appear to act, an inconsistent part; or to be inconsistent with himself.—If the authority of the divine law be supported by the punishment of transgressors, it will most powerfully tend to restrain all intelligent creatures from sin. But if the authority of the law be not supported, it will rather encourage and invite to sin, than restrain from it.

For these reasons, which are indeed all implied in supporting the dignity and authority of the divine law, it would have been necessary, had no atonement for sin been made, that the penalty of the law be inflicted on transgressors.

If in this view of the matter, it should be said, though for the reasons before mentioned, it is necessary that the penalty



of the law, in many instances, or in most instances, be inflicted; yet why is it necessary that it should be inflicted in every instance? Why could not the Deity, in a sovereign way, without any atonement, have forgiven at least some sinners? Why could not the authority of the law have been sufficiently supported, without the punishment of every individual transgressor? We find that such strictness is not necessary or even subservient to the public good, in human governments: and why is it necessary in the divine?—To these inquiries I answer, by other inquiries. Why, on the supposition of no atonement, would it be necessary that the penalty of the law should be inflicted in any instance? Why could not the Deity, in a sovereign way, without any atonement, have pardoned all mankind?—I presume it will be granted, for the reasons before assigned, that such a proceeding as this, would be inconsistent with the dignity and authority of the divine law and government. And the same consequence in a degree, follows from every instance of pardon in this mode. It is true the ends of human governments are tolerably answered, though in some instances the guilty are suffered to pass with impunity. But as imperfection attends all human affairs; so it attends human governments in this very particular, that there are reasons of state which require, or the public good requires, that gross criminals, in some instances, be dismissed with impunity, and without atonement. Thus, because the government of David was weak, “and the sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him,” Joab, a most atrocious murderer, could not, during the life of David, be brought to justice. In other instances, atrocious criminals are pardoned, in order to obtain information against others still more atrocious, and dangerous to the community. In many instances, the principals only in certain high crimes are punished: the rest, being led away by artifice and misrepresentation, are not supposed to deserve punishment. And it is presumed, that in every instance, wherein it is really for the good of the community, to pardon a criminal, without proper satisfaction for his crime; it is because of either some weakness in the particular state of the government, under which the pardon is granted; or some imperfection in the laws of that state, not being adapted to the particular case;

or some imperfection attending all human affairs. But as not any of these is supposable in the divine government, there is no arguing conclusively, from pardons in human governments, to pardons in the divine.

It may be added, that in every instance in human governments, in which just laws are not strictly executed, the government is so far weakened, and the character of the rulers, either legislative or executive, suffers, either in point of ability or in point of integrity. If it be granted that the law is just, and condemns sin to no greater punishment than it deserves, and if God were to pardon it without atonement, it would seem, that he did not hate sin in every instance, nor treat it as being what it really is, infinitely vile.

For these reasons it appears that it would have been necessary, provided no atonement had been made, that the penalty of the law should have been inflicted, even in every instance of disobedience: and for the same reasons doubtless was it necessary, that if any sinners were to be pardoned, they should be pardoned only in consequence of an *adequate* atonement. The atonement is the substitute for the punishment threatened in the law; and was designed to answer the same ends of supporting the authority of the law, the dignity of the divine moral government, and the consistency of the divine conduct in legislation and execution. By the atonement it appears that God is determined that his law shall be supported; that it shall not be despised or transgressed with impunity; and that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God.

The very idea of an atonement or satisfaction for sin, is something which, to the purposes of supporting the authority of the divine law, and the dignity and consistency of the divine government, is equivalent to the punishment of the sinner, according to the literal threatening of the law. That which answers these purposes being done, whatever it be, atonement is made, and the way is prepared for the dispensation of pardon. In any such case, "God can be just and yet the justifier of the sinner." And that that which is sufficient to answer these purposes, has been done for us according to the gospel plan, I presume none can deny, who believe, that the eternal Word was made flesh, and dwelt

among us, and that he, the only begotten and well beloved Son of God, John i. 14, bare our sins in his own body on the tree, 1 Peter ii. 24, and gave himself a sacrifice to God for us, Eph. v. 2.

But perhaps some who may readily grant that what Christ hath done and suffered, is undoubtedly sufficient to atone for the sins of his people; may also suppose that if God had seen fit so to order it, we might have made a sufficient atonement for our own sins. Or whether they believe in the reality and sufficiency of the atonement of Christ or not, they may suppose that we might have atoned, or even now may atone, for our own sins. This hypothesis therefore demands our attention.

If we could have atoned, by any means, for our own sins, it must have been either by our repentance and reformation, or by enduring a punishment, less in degree or duration, than that which is threatened in the law as the wages of sin. No other way for us to atone for our own sins appears to be conceivable. But if we attend to the subject, we shall find that we can make no proper atonement in either of these ways.

1. We could not make atonement for our sins by repentance and reformation. Repentance and reformation are a mere return to our duty, which we ought never to have forsaken or intermitted. Suppose a soldier deserts the service into which he is enlisted, and at the most critical period not only forsakes his general and the cause of his country, but joins the enemy and exerts himself to his utmost in his cause, and in direct opposition to that of his country; yet after twelve months spent in this manner, he repents and returns to his duty and his former service; will this repentance and reformation atone for his desertion and rebellion? will his repentance and return, without punishment, support the authority of the law against desertion and rebellion, and deter others from the like conduct equally as the punishment of the delinquent according to law? It cannot be pretended. Such a treatment of the soldier would express no indignation or displeasure of the general at the conduct of the soldier: it would by no means convince the army or the world, that it was a most heinous crime to desert and join the standard

of the enemy. Just so in the case under consideration:—The language of forgiving sinners barely on their repentance is, that he who sins shall repent; that the curse of the law is repentance; that he who repents shall suffer, and that he deserves, no further punishment. But this would be so far from an effectual tendency to discourage and restrain from sin, that it would greatly encourage to the commission and indulgence of it; as all that sinners would have to fear, on this supposition, would be not the wrath of God, not any thing terrible, but the greatest blessing to which any man in this life can attain, repentance. If this were the condition of forgiving sinners, not only no measures would be taken to support the divine law, but none to vindicate the character of God himself, or to show that he acts a consistent part, and agreeably to his own law; or that he is a friend to virtue and an enemy to vice. On the other hand, he would rather appear as a friend to sin and vice, or indifferent concerning them. What would you think of a prince who should make a law against murder, and should threaten it with a punishment properly severe; yet should declare that none who should be guilty of that crime and should repent, should be punished? or if he did not positively declare this, yet should in fact suffer all murderers who repented of their murders, to pass with impunity? Undoubtedly you would conclude that he was either a very *weak* or a very *wicked* prince; either that he was unable to protect his subjects, or that he had no real regard to their lives or safety, whether in their individual or collective capacity.

2. Neither could we make atonement by any sufferings short of the full punishment of sin. Because the very idea of atonement is something done, which to the purpose of supporting the authority of the law, the dignity and consistency of divine government and conduct, is fully equivalent to the curse of the law, and on the ground of which, the sinner may be saved from that curse. But no sufferings endured by the sinner himself, short of the curse of the law, can be to these purposes equivalent to that curse; any more than a less number or quantity can be equal to a greater. Indeed a less degree or duration of suffering endured by Christ the Son of God, may, on account of the infinite

dignity and glory of his person, be an equivalent to the curse of the law endured by the sinner: as it would be a far more striking demonstration of a king's displeasure, to inflict, in an ignominious manner, on the body of his own son, forty stripes save one; than to punish some obscure subject with death. But when the person is the same, it is absurd to suppose that a less degree of duration of pain can be equal to a greater, or can equally strike terror into the minds of spectators, and make them fear and no more do any such wickedness; Deut. xiii. 11.

Besides; if a less degree or duration of punishment, inflicted on the sinner, would answer all the purposes of supporting the authority of the divine law, &c., equally as that punishment which is threatened in the law; it follows that the punishment which is threatened in the law is too great, is unjust, is cruel and oppressive: which cannot be as long as God is a just being.

Thus it clearly appears, that we could never have atoned for our own sins. If therefore atonement be made at all, it must be made by some other person: and since, as we before argued, Christ the Son of God hath been appointed to this work, we may be sure that it could be done by no other person of inferior dignity.

It may be inquired of those who deny the necessity of the atonement of Christ, whether the mission, work and death of Christ were at all necessary in order to the salvation of sinners. If they grant that they were necessary, as they exhibit the strongest motives to repentance; I ask further, could not God by any revelation or motives otherwise, whether externally or internally exhibited, lead sinners to repentance? We find he did in fact, without the mission, work and death of Christ, lead the saints of the Old Testament to repentance. And doubtless in the same way, he might have produced the same effect on men of modern times. Why then doth the scripture say, "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ:" and, "neither is there salvation in any other?"—If it be said that these texts are true, as God hath seen fit to adopt and establish this mode of salvation: it occurs at once, that then it may with equal truth be said, concerning

those who were converted by the preaching of Paul; other foundation could no man lay, for their salvation, than the apostle Paul. In this sense too every event which ever takes place, is equally necessary as the mission and death of Christ: and it was in no other sense necessary, that Christ should be sent and die, than that a sparrow should fall, or not fall, to the ground. In short, to say that the mission and death of Christ were necessary, because God had made this constitution, is to resolve all into the sovereignty of God, and to confess that no reason of Christ's mission and death is assignable.

Besides, if the mission, death and resurrection of Christ, and the knowledge of them, be, by divine constitution, made necessary to the salvation of sinners; this will seem to be wholly inconsistent with the fundamental principle of the system of those who deny the atonement of Christ; I mean the principle, that it is not reconcilable with the perfections of God, to refuse a pardon to any who repent. If bare repentance and reformation be the ground of pardon, doubtless all who repent, though ever so ignorant of Christ, his death and resurrection, and of the motives to repentance therein exhibited, are entitled to pardon; and if so, in what sense will the Socinians say, the mission and death of Christ are necessary to pardon? Not surely as purchasing salvation, for even those who are ignorant of them;—This is abhorrent to their whole system. Not as exhibiting the strongest motives to repentance; because in the case now supposed, these motives are perfectly unknown. And they will not say, it is impossible for any to repent, who are ignorant of Christ.\*

Again, how is it more consistent with the divine perfections, to confine pardon and salvation to the narrow limits of those who know and are influenced by the motives to repentance, implied in the death and resurrection of Christ; than to the limits of those who repent and depend on the atonement of Christ?

\* "It is certainly the doctrine of reason, as well as of the Old Testament, that God is merciful to the penitent, and nothing is requisite to make men, in all situations, the objects of his favour, but such moral conduct as he has made them capable of." [Priestly, Corruptions of Christianity, page 279.]

It may be further inquired of those gentlemen mentioned above, whether the pardon of the penitent be according to the divine law, or according to the gospel.—If it be a constitution of the law, that every penitent be pardoned, what then is the gospel? And wherein does the grace of the latter exceed that of the former?—Besides, is it not strange to suppose that bare law knows anything of repentance and of the promise of pardon on repentance? Surely such a law must be a very gracious law: and a very gracious law and a very gracious gospel seem to be very nearly one and the same thing.—It has been commonly understood that the divine law is the rule of justice. If so, and it be a provision of the law, that every penitent be acquitted from punishment; then surely there is no grace at all in the acquittal of the penitent, as the gentlemen to whom I now refer, pretend there is none on the supposition of the satisfaction of Christ.—Again; if the law secure impunity to all penitents, then all the terror or punishment which the law threatens, is either repentance itself, or that wise and wholesome discipline which is necessary to lead to repentance; these are the true and utmost curse of the law. But neither of these is any curse at all; they are at least among the greatest blessings which can be bestowed on those who need them.—But if it be granted that the bare law of God does not secure pardon to the penitent, but admits of his punishment, it will follow that the punishment of the penitent would be nothing opposed to justice. Surely God hath not made an unjust law.—It also follows, that to punish the penitent would be not at all inconsistent with the divine perfections; unless God hath made a law, which cannot in any instance be executed consistently with his own perfections. And if the punishment of the penitent, provided no atonement had been made, would not be inconsistent with justice, or with the perfections of God, who will say that the pardon of the penitent, on the sole footing of an atonement, is inconsistent with either?

If neither strict justice, nor the divine law founded on justice, nor the divine perfections, without an atonement, secure pardon to all who repent, what will become of the boasted argument of the Socinians, against the atone-

ment, that God will certainly pardon and save, and that it is absurd and impious to suppose that he will not pardon and save, all who repent? Are the Socinians themselves certain, that God will not do that which eternal justice, his own law, and his own perfections, allow him to do? The dilemma is this:—eternal justice either requires that every penitent be pardoned in consequence of his repentance merely, or it does not. If it do require this, it follows, that pardon is an act of justice and not of grace: therefore let the Socinians be for ever silent on this head. It also follows, that repentance answers, satisfies, fulfils, the divine law, so that, in consequence of it, the law has no further demand on the sinner. It is therefore either the complete righteousness of the law, or the complete curse of the law: For “cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” It also follows, that sin is no moral evil. Doubtless that which deserves no punishment, or token of the divine displeasure, is no moral evil. But the utmost that justice, on this hypothesis, requires of the sinner, is repentance, which is no token of the divine displeasure, but an inestimable blessing. It also follows, that as eternal justice is no other than the eternal law of God, grace and truth, life and immortality came and were brought to light by Moses, since the law came by him; that the law contains exceeding great and precious promises, which promises however, exceeding great and precious as they are, are no more than assurances, that we shall not be injured.—It follows in the last place that justice and grace, law and gospel are perfectly synonymous terms.

Or if the other part of the dilemma be taken, that *eternal justice* does not require, that every penitent be pardoned; who knows but that God may see fit to suffer justice, in some instances, to take place? who will say that the other divine perfections are utterly inconsistent with justice? or that wisdom, goodness, and justice cannot coexist in the same character? or that the law of God is such that it cannot be executed in any instance, consistently with the divine character? \* These would be bold assertions indeed: let him who

\* That law in which Paul delighted after the inward man; which



avows them, at the same time prove them. Indeed he must either prove these assertions, or own that justice requires the pardon of every penitent, and abide the consequences; or renounce the doctrine that the divine perfections require that every penitent be pardoned, without an atonement.\*

## III.

## GRACE CONSISTENT WITH ATONEMENT.

I proceed to the third inquiry, which is, ARE WE, NOTWITHSTANDING THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST, FORGIVEN FREELY BY GRACE?—That we should be forgiven wholly through the redemption of Christ, and yet by free grace, hath, as I observed, appeared to many a grand inconsistency, or a perplexing difficulty. In discussing this question, I shall,

I. Mention several modes in which attempts have been made to solve this difficulty: and then, II. Suggest some considerations which may possibly lead to the true solution.

*First.* I am to mention several modes, in which attempts have been made to solve this difficulty.

1. Some allow that there is no exercise of grace in the bare pardon† or justification of the sinner: that all the grace of the gospel consists in the gift of Christ; in providing an atonement; in the undertaking of Christ to make atonement, and in the actual making it. And as the pardon of the sinner is founded on those gracious actions; so *that* in a

he declares to be holy, and just, and good; to be glorious too, nay, in the abstract. *glory*; (Rom. vii. and 2 Cor. iii.) and which David pronounces to be *perfect*, and more desirable than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey comb. Psalm. xix.

\* “ Arguments drawn from such considerations as those of the moral government of God, the nature of things, and the general plan of revelation, will not be put off to a future time. The whole compass and force of them is within our reach, and if the mind be unbiassed, they must, I think, determine our assent.”—*Corruptions of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 278.

† The impropriety of expression, in speaking of *pardon* without *grace*, would need an apology were it not common in treatises on this subject. No more is intended, than that the sinner is acquitted or released, without grace.

more lax sense is also said to be an act of *grace*.—As to this account of the matter, I have to observe—That it is rather yielding to the objection, than answering it. It is allowed, in this state of the matter, that the *pardon* of the sinner is properly no act of grace. But this seems not to be reconcilable with the plain declarations of scripture; as in Eph. i. 7, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to *the riches of his grace*.” “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ,” Rom. iii. 24. These and such like passages seem plainly to import, that pardon itself is an act of grace, and not merely that it is founded on other acts, which *are* acts of grace.—Besides the very idea of pardon or forgiveness implies grace. So far only is any crime pardoned, as it is pardoned graciously. To pardon a crime on the footing of justice, in the proper sense of the word justice, is a direct contradiction.

Again: It is not proper to say, that the pardon of the sinner is an act of grace, merely because it is founded on the gracious gift of Christ, and his gracious act in making atonement. It is not proper to say, that any act is an act of grace, merely because it is founded on another act, which is really an act of grace. As well we may say, that if a creditor by a third person furnish his debtor with money sufficient to discharge his debt, when the debtor has paid, in this way, the full debt, it is an act of grace in the creditor to give up the obligation. Whereas, who does not see that the furnishing of the money, and the giving up of the obligation, are two distinct acts; and however the former is indeed an act of grace, yet the latter is no more an act of grace, than if the money had been paid to some other creditor, and he had given up an obligation for the same sum. If it be an act of grace in the creditor to deliver up an obligation, for which he hath received the full sum, because the money paid was originally furnished by himself, then it would be consistent with justice in the creditor to retain the obligation, after he has received the full sum for which it was given: or to reject the money, and cast the debtor into prison, though he tenders payment. But neither of these, I presume, will be pretended to be just.

Some have attempted to relieve the difficulty now under consideration, in this manner: They say, The pardon of the sinner is no act of grace to *Christ*, because *he* has paid the debt for the sinner: but that it is an act of grace to the *sinner*, because the debt was paid, not by the sinner himself, but by Christ. Nor was Christ so much as *delegated* by the sinner to pay his debt.—Concerning this I observe, in the first place: That if the atonement of Christ be considered as the payment of a debt, the release of the sinner seems not to be an act of grace, although the payment be made by Christ, and not by the sinner personally. Suppose any one owes a certain sum: he goes and pays the full sum himself personally. Doubtless all will agree, that the creditor, in this case, when he gives up the obligation, performs a mere act of justice, in which there is no grace at all. But in what respect would there have been more grace in giving up the obligation, if the money had been sent by a servant, by a friend, or by any third person? Here I am sensible an objection will arise to this effect; But we did not send the payment of our debt to God, by the hand of Christ as our friend; we did not delegate him to make atonement for us; he was graciously appointed and given by God.—To this I answer, That this objection places the whole grace of the gospel in *providing* the Saviour, not in the *pardon* of sin. Besides, if by *delegating* Christ, be meant such a sincere consent and earnest desire, that Christ should make atonement for us, as a man may have, that his friend should discharge a debt in his behalf; without doubt every true Christian, in this sense, delegates Christ to make atonement for his sins. Did not Abraham and all the saints who lived before the incarnation of Christ, and who were informed that atonement was to be made for them by Christ, sincerely consent to it, and earnestly desire it? and though now Christ has actually made atonement, yet every one who walks in the steps of the faith of Abraham, is the subject of the like sincere consent to the office and work of Christ, and the like earnest desire, that by his atonement, a reconciliation may be effected between God and himself.—So that if Christ have, in the proper sense of the words, *paid the debt* for his people, his people do as truly send him to make this pay-

ment, as a man ever sends his friend to make payment to his creditor.

Nor is anything wanting to make any man, or all men, in this sense, delegate Christ to make atonement for them, but the gift of repentance or a new heart. And if God had not prevented them by previously appointing Christ to the work of redemption, all mankind being brought to repentance, and being informed that Christ, on their consent and delegation, would make atonement for their sins, would freely have given their consent, and delegated him to the work.

But what if the people of Christ did not, in any sense, delegate him to this work? would this cause the payment of their debt by Christ, to be at all more consistent with free grace in their discharge? Suppose a man without any delegation, consent, or knowledge of his friend, pays the full demand of his creditor, it is manifest, that the creditor is obliged in justice to discharge the debtor, equally as if the agent had acted by delegation from the debtor. Or if we had in every sense delegated and commissioned Christ, still our pardon would be an act of grace, as still we should be treated more favourably than our personal characters deserve.

Now to apply the whole of this to the subject before us: If Christ have, in the proper sense of the words, paid the debt which we owed to God, whether by a delegation from us or not; there can be no more grace in our discharge, than if we had paid it ourselves. But the fact is, that Christ has not, in the literal and proper sense, paid the debt for us.—It is indeed true, that our deliverance is called a redemption, which refers to the deliverance of a prisoner out of captivity, commonly effected by paying a certain sum as the price of his liberty. In the same strain, Christ is said to give himself a ransom for many, and Christians are said to be bought with a price, &c. &c. All which scripture expressions bring into view the payment of money, or the discharge of a debt.—But it is to be remembered, that these are metaphorical expressions, therefore not literally and exactly true. We had not deprived God of his property: we had not robbed the treasury of heaven. God was possessed of as much property after the fall as before: the universe and the fulness thereof still remained to be his. Therefore when Christ

made satisfaction for us, he refunded no property. As none had been taken away, none needed to be refunded. But we had rebelled against God, we had practically despised his law and authority, and it was necessary that his authority should be supported, and that it should be made to appear, that sin shall not go without proper tokens of divine displeasure and abhorrence; that God will maintain his law; that his authority and government shall not be suffered to fall into contempt; and that God is a friend to virtue and holiness, and an irreconcilable enemy to transgression, sin and vice. These things were necessary to be made manifest, and the clear manifestation of these things, if we will use the term, was *the debt* which was due to God. This manifestation was made in the sufferings and death of Christ. But Christ did not, in the literal sense, pay the debt we owed to God; if he had paid it, all grace would have been excluded from the pardon of the sinner. Therefore,

3. Others seeing clearly that these solutions of the difficulty are not satisfactory, have said, that the atonement of Christ consisted, not in the payment of a debt, but in the vindication of the divine law and character: that Christ made this vindication, by practically declaring the justice of the law, in his active obedience, and by submitting to the penalty of it, in his death; that as what Christ did and suffered in the flesh, was a declaration of the rectitude of the divine law and character, so it was a declaration of the evil of sin; and the greater the evil of sin appears to be, the greater the grace of pardon appears to be. Therefore the atonement of Christ is so far from diminishing the grace of pardon, that it magnifies it.—The sum of this is, that since the atonement consists, not in the payment of a debt, but in the vindication of the divine law and character; therefore it is not at all opposed to free grace in pardon.

Concerning this stating of the matter, I beg leave to observe; that if by a vindication of the divine law and character, be meant, proof given that the law of God is just, and that the divine character is good and irreproachable; I can by no means suppose that the atonement consisted in a vindication of the law and character of God. The law is no more proved to be just, and the character of God is no more proved

to be good, by the perfect obedience and death of Christ, than the same things are proved by the perfect obedience of the angels, and by the torments of the damned. But I shall have occasion to enlarge on this point by and by.

Again; if by vindication of the divine law and character, be meant, proof given that God is determined to support the authority of his law, and that he will not suffer it to fall into contempt; that he will also support his own dignity, will act a consistent part in legislation and in the execution of his law, and will not be disobeyed with impunity, or without proper satisfaction: I grant, that by Christ the divine law and character are vindicated; so that God can now consistently with his own honour, and the authority of his law, forgive the sinner. But how does this make it appear that there is any grace in the pardon of the sinner, when Christ as his substitute, hath made full atonement for him, by vindicating the law and character of God? what if the sinner himself, instead of Christ, had by obedience and suffering vindicated the law and character of God; and in consequence had been released from farther punishment? Would his release in this case have been by grace, or by justice? Doubtless by the latter, and not by the former: for "to him that worketh, is the reward reckoned, not of grace, but of debt," Rom. iv. 4.—Therefore why is it not equally an act of justice, to release the sinner, in consequence of the same vindication made by Christ? Payment of debt equally precludes grace, when made by a third person, as when made by the debtor himself. And since the vindication of the divine law and character, made by the sinner himself, precludes grace from the release of the sinner; why does not the same vindication as effectually preclude it, when made by a third person?

Those authors who give us this solution of the difficulty under consideration, seem to suppose that it is a sufficient solution to say that the atonement consists, not in the payment of debt, but in the vindication of the divine law and character; and what they say, seems to imply, that however or by whomsoever, that vindication be made, whether by the sinner himself, or any other person, it is not at all opposed to the exercise of grace in the release of the sinner. Where-

as it appears by the text just now quoted and by many others, that if that vindication were made by the sinner himself, it would shut out all grace from his release. And I presume this will be granted by those authors themselves, on a little reflection. To say otherwise, is to say, that though a sinner should endure the curse of the law, yet there would be grace in his subsequent release.—It seems then that the grace of pardon depends, not barely on this, that the atonement consists in a vindication of the law and character of God; but upon this particular circumstance attending the vindication, that it be made by a third person. And if this circumstance will leave room for grace in the release of the sinner, why is there not as much grace in the release of the sinner, though the atonement of Christ be a payment of the sinner's debt: since the payment is attended with the same important and decisive circumstance, that it is made by a third person?

**OBJECTION.** But we could not vindicate the law and character of God; therefore it is absurd to make the supposition, and to draw consequences from the supposition, that we had made such a vindication.—**ANSWER:** It is no more absurd to make this supposition, than it is to make the supposition that we had paid the debt to divine justice; for we could no more do this than we could make the vindication in question. And if it follows from this circumstance, that we neither have vindicated nor could vindicate the divine character, that our release from condemnation is an act of grace; why does it not also follow from the circumstance, that we neither have paid nor could pay the debt to divine justice, that our release is an act of grace, even on the supposition that Christ has in the literal sense paid the debt for us?

Thus, not any of these modes of solving this grand difficulty appears to be satisfactory. Even this last, which seemed to bid the fairest to afford satisfaction, fails. Therefore,

*Secondly.* I shall suggest some considerations, which may possibly lead to the true solution.—The question before us, is, whether pardon through the atonement of Christ be an act of justice or of grace. In order to a proper answer to this question, it is of primary importance that we have clear and determinate ideas affixed to the words justice and grace.

I find the word *justice* to be used in three distinct senses: sometimes it means commutative justice, sometimes distributive justice, and sometimes what may be called general or public justice.

*Commutative* justice respects property and matters of commerce solely, and secures to every man his own property. To treat a man justly in this sense, is not to deprive him of his property, and whenever it falls into our hands, to restore it duly, or to make due payment of debts. In one word, commutative justice is to violate no man's property.

*Distributive* justice consists in properly rewarding virtue or good conduct, and punishing crimes or vicious conduct; and it has respect to a man's personal moral character or conduct. To treat a man justly in this sense, is to treat him according to his personal character or conduct.—Commutative justice in the recovery of debts, has no respect at all to the character or conduct of the debtor, but merely to the property of the creditor. Distributive justice in the punishment of crimes, has no respect at all to the property of the criminal, but merely to his personal conduct: unless his property may, in some instances, enhance his crimes.

*General* or *public* justice comprehends all moral goodness; and though the word is often used in this sense, it is really an improper use of it. In this sense, whatever is right, is said to be just, or an act of justice; and whatever is wrong or improper to be done, is said to be unjust, or an act of injustice. To practise justice in this sense, is to practise agreeably to the dictates of general benevolence, or to seek the glory of God and the good of the universe. And whenever the glory of God is neglected, it may be said, that God is injured or deprived of his right. Whenever the general good is neglected or impeded, the universe may be said to suffer an injury.—For instance; if Paul were now to be cast down from heaven, to suffer the pains of hell, it would be wrong, as it would be inconsistent with God's covenant faithfulness, with the designed exhibition of his glorious grace, and with the good of the universe. In this sense, it would not be just. Yet in the sense of distributive justice, such a treatment of Paul would be perfectly just, as it would be no more than correspondent to his personal demerits.



The term *grace* comes now to be explained.—Grace is ever so opposed to justice, that they mutually limit each other. Wherever grace begins, justice ends; and wherever justice begins, grace ends. Grace as opposed to commutative justice is gratuitously to relinquish your property or to forgive a man his debt. And commutative injustice is to demand more of a man than your own property.—Grace as opposed to justice in the distributive sense, is to treat a man more favourably and mildly than is correspondent to his personal character or conduct. To treat him unjustly is to use him with greater severity than is correspondent to his personal character.—It is to be remembered, that in personal character I include punishment endured, as well as actions performed. When a man has broken any law, and has afterwards suffered the penalty of that law; as he has, by the transgression, treated the law with contempt, so by suffering the penalty, he has supported the authority of it: and the latter makes a part of his personal character, as he stands related to that law, as really as the former.

With regard to the third kind of justice, as this is improperly called justice, and as it comprehends all moral goodness, it is not at all opposed to grace; but comprehends that, as well as every other virtue, as truth, faithfulness, meekness, forgiveness, patience, prudence, temperance, fortitude, &c. All these are right and fit, and the contrary tempers or practices are wrong, and injurious to God and the system: and therefore in this sense of justice are unjust. And even grace itself, which is favour to the ill-deserving, so far as it is wise and proper to be exercised, makes but a part of this kind of justice.

We proceed now to apply these explanations to the solution of the difficulty under consideration.—The question is this, Is the pardon of the sinner, through the atonement of Christ, an act of justice or of grace?—To which I answer, that with respect to *commutative* justice, it is neither an act of justice nor of grace. Because commutative justice is not concerned in the affair. We neither owed money to the deity, nor did Christ pay any on our behalf. His atonement is not a payment of our debt. If it had been, our discharge would have been an act of mere justice, and not

of grace. To make the sinner also pay the debt, which had been already paid by Christ, would be manifestly injurious, oppressive, and beyond the bounds of commutative justice, the rule of which is, that every man retain and recover his own property, and that only. But a debt being paid, by whomsoever it be paid, the creditor has recovered his property, and therefore has a right to nothing further. If he extort, or attempt to extort, any thing further, he proceeds beyond his right and is guilty of injustice.—So that if Christ had paid the debt for the believer, he would be discharged, not on the footing of grace, but of strict justice.

With respect to *distributive* justice, the discharge of the sinner is wholly an act of grace. This kind of justice has respect solely to the personal character and conduct of its object. And then is a man treated justly, when he is treated according to his personal moral character. If he be treated more favourably than is correspondent to his personal character, he is the object of grace. I say personal character; for distributive justice has no respect to the character of a third person, or to any thing which may be done or suffered by another person, than by him, who is the object of this justice, or who is on trial, to be rewarded or punished. And with regard to the case now before us, what if Christ has made atonement for sin? This atonement constitutes no part of the personal character of the sinner; but his personal character is essentially the same, as it would have been, if Christ had made no atonement. And as the sinner, in pardon, is treated, not only more favourably, but infinitely more favourably, than is correspondent to his personal character, his pardon is wholly an act of infinite grace. If it were, in the sense of *distributive justice*, an act of justice, he would be injured if a pardon were refused him. But as the case is, he would not be injured though a pardon were refused him, because he would not be treated more unfavourably than is correspondent to his personal character.

Therefore though it be true, that if a third person pay a debt, there would be no grace exercised by the creditor, in discharging the debtor, yet when a third person atones for a crime, by suffering in the stead of a criminal, there is entire grace in the discharge of the criminal, and distributive

justice still allows him to be punished in his own person. The reason is, what I have mentioned already, that justice in punishing crimes, respects the personal character only of the criminal: but in the payment of debts, it respects the recovery of property only. In the former case, it admits of any treatment which is according to his personal character; in the latter, it admits of nothing beyond the recovery of property.

So that though Christ has made complete atonement for the sins of all his disciples, and they are justified wholly through his redemption; yet they are justified wholly by grace. Because they personally have not made atonement for their sins, or suffered the curse of the law. Therefore they have no claim to a discharge on account of their own personal conduct and suffering.—And if it is objected, that neither is a debtor discharged on account of any thing which he hath done personally, when he is discharged on the payment of his debt by a third person; yet justice does not admit, that the creditor recover the debt again from the debtor himself; why then does it admit, that a magistrate inflict the punishment of a crime on the criminal himself, when atonement has been made by a substitute? The answer is, that justice in these two cases is very different, and respects very different objects. In criminal causes, it respects the personal conduct or character of the criminal, and admits of any treatment which is correspondent to that conduct. In civil causes, or matters of debt, it respects the restitution of property only, and this being made, it admits of no further demand.

In the third sense of justice before explained, according to which any thing is just, which is right and best to be done, the pardon of the sinner is entirely an act of justice. It is undoubtedly most conducive to the divine glory, and general good of the created system, that every believer should be pardoned; and therefore, in the present sense of the word, it is an act of justice. The pardon of the sinner is equally an act of justice, if, as some suppose, he be pardoned not on account of the death of Christ, considered as an equivalent to the curse of the law denounced against the sinner; but merely on account of the positive obedience of

Christ. If this be the mode and the condition of pardon established by God, doubtless pardon granted in this mode and on this condition, is most conducive to the divine glory and the general good. Therefore it is, in the sense of justice now under consideration, an act of justice; insomuch that if pardon were not granted in this mode, the divine glory would be tarnished, and the general good diminished, or the universe would suffer an injury. The same would be true, if God had in fact granted pardon, without any atonement, whether by suffering or obedience. We might have argued from that fact, that infinite wisdom saw it to be most conducive to the divine glory and the general good, to pardon without an atonement, and of course that if pardon had not been granted in this way, both the divine glory and general good would have been diminished, and injustice would have been done to the universe.—In the same sense the gift of Christ, to be our Saviour, his undertaking to save us, and every other gift of God to his creatures, are acts of justice. But it must be remembered, that this is an improper sense of the word justice, and is not at all opposed to grace, but implies it. For all those divine acts and gifts just mentioned, though in this sense they are acts of justice, yet are at the same time acts of pure grace.

In this sense of justice, the word seems to be used by the apostle Paul, Rom. iii. 26, “To declare his *righteousness* (or *justice*), that he might be *just*, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” That God might be *just to himself* and to the *universe*. Again in Psalm lxxxv. 10, “Mercy and truth are met together, *righteousness* and peace have kissed each other.” Righteousness, in the distributive sense, hath not kissed peace with respect to the sinner; but so far as it speaks any thing, calls for his punishment. But the public good and the divine glory admit of peace with the sinner.—In the same sense the word occurs in the version of the Psalms in common use among us, where it is said “justice is pleased and peace is given.”—Again in the catechism of the Assembly of Divines, where they say, “Christ offered up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine *justice*.”

Thus it appears, that the pardon of the sinner, in reference to distributive justice, which is the only proper sense of the

word, with respect to this matter, is entirely an act of grace, and that although he is pardoned wholly through the redemption of Jesus Christ.

It is in the same sense an act of grace, as the gift of Christ, or any other most gracious act of God. Though the sinner is pardoned wholly through the redemption of Christ, yet his pardon is an act of pure grace, because in it he is treated inconceivably more favourably than is correspondent to his personal character.

The pardon of the sinner, on this plan of the redemption or the atonement of Christ, is as entirely an act of grace, as if it had been granted on an atonement made, not by the sufferings of Christ, but merely by his active obedience. For if we suppose that the atonement of Christ consists wholly in the obedience of Christ, not in his sufferings, in what sense would the pardon of the sinner be an act of grace, in which it is not an act of grace on the hypothesis concerning the atonement which hath been now stated? Pardon is no more procured by the payment of the sinner's debt, in the one case, than in the other. If it be said that Christ's suffering the curse of the law is the payment of the debt; I answer, this is no more a payment of the debt than the obedience of Christ. If it be said that Christ's *obedience* only honours and magnifies the law; I answer, No more is done by the *sufferings* of Christ.—It is true, that if the sinner be pardoned on account of Christ's obedience, he is treated more favourably than is correspondent to his personal character. The same is true, if he be pardoned on account of Christ's sufferings. If it be said, that in the one case, Christ suffers as the substitute of the sinner; I answer, in the other case he *obeys* as the substitute of the sinner. In the one case, Christ has by his sufferings made it consistent with the general good to pardon the sinner; in the other case, he hath made the same thing consistent with the general good, by his obedience. And if this circumstance, that the pardon of the sinner is consistent with the general good, abolishes grace from his pardon in the one case, the same circumstance is productive of the same effect in the other.—The truth is, that in both cases, the whole grace of pardon consists in this, and this only, that the sinner is

treated infinitely more favourably than is correspondent to his personal character.

Again; according to this scheme of the atonement, the pardon of the sinner is as wholly an act of grace, as if he had been pardoned without any atonement at all. If the sinner had been pardoned without any atonement, he would have been treated more favourably than is correspondent to his own character: so he is, when pardoned through the atonement of Christ. In the former case, he would be pardoned without a payment of his debt: so he is in the latter. If the measures taken by God to secure the public good, those measures consisting neither in any personal doing or suffering of the sinner, nor in the payment of debt, be inconsistent with grace in the pardon of the sinner, in the one case; doubtless whatever measures are taken by God, to secure the public good in the other case, are equally inconsistent with grace in pardon. And no man will pretend, that if God do pardon the sinner without an atonement, he will pardon him in a way which is inconsistent with the public good.—In this view of the objection, either the bare circumstance that the pardon of the sinner is consistent with the public good, is that which abolishes the grace of pardon; or it is the particular mode in which the consistence of pardon and the public good is brought about. If the bare circumstance of the consistence of pardon and the public good be that which abolishes the grace of pardon; then it seems, that in order that any pardon may be gracious, it must be *inconsistent* with the public good: and therefore the pardon of the sinner without any atonement, being by the concession of the objector, a gracious act, is inconsistent with the general good of the universe, and with the glory and perfections of God, and therefore can never be granted by God, as long as he is possessed of infinite perfection and goodness, whereby he is necessarily disposed to seek the good of the universal system, or of his own kingdom.

Or if it be said, that it is the *particular mode*, in which the consistence between pardon and the public good is brought about, which abolishes the grace of pardon; in this case it is incumbent on the objector to point out what there is in the mode which is opposed to grace in pardon. He

cannot pretend that in this mode the debt of the sinner is paid, or that in repentance the sinner's personal character is so altered that he now deserves no punishment. If this were the case, there would certainly be no grace in his pardon. It is no grace, and no pardon, not to punish a man who deserves no punishment. If the objector were to hold, that the personal character of the sinner is so altered by repentance, that he no longer deserves punishment, he would at once confute his own scheme of gracious pardon.

Neither can it be pretended, by the advocates for pardon without atonement, that there is any grace in pardon, in any other view than this, that the sinner is treated more favourably than is correspondent to his personal character. And pardon on such an atonement as Christ hath made, is, in the same view, an act of grace. So that if the true idea of grace, with respect to this subject, be a treatment of a sinner more favourably than is correspondent to his personal character; the pardon of the sinner through the atonement of Christ is an act of pure grace. If this be not the true idea of grace, let a better be given, and I am willing to examine it; and presume that on the most thorough examination of the matter, it will be found, that there is as much grace in the pardon of the sinner, through the atonement of Christ, as without any atonement at all.—Surely it will not be pleaded, that it is no act of grace to treat a sinner more favourably than is correspondent to his own personal character; if such treatment be not more favourable than is correspondent to the personal character of some other man, or some other being; and that it is no act of grace in a prince to pardon a criminal, from respect to the merits of the criminal's father; or that if Capt. Asgill had been the murderer of Capt. Huddy, there would have been no grace exercised in the pardon of Asgill, from respect to the intercession of the court of France.

On every hypothesis concerning the mode or condition of pardon, it must be allowed, that God dispenses pardon, from regard to some circumstance, or juncture of circumstances, which renders the pardon both consistent with the general good, and subservient to it; and whatever this be, whether the death of Christ, or anything else, provided it be not the

payment of money, and provided the personal character of the sinner be the same, it is equally consistent or inconsistent with grace in pardon.

In short, the whole strength of this objection, in which the Socinians have so much triumphed, that complete atonement is inconsistent with grace in the pardon of the sinner, depends on the supposition, that the atonement of Christ consists in the literal payment of a debt which we owed to God; and this groundless supposition being set aside, the objection itself appears equally groundless, and vanishes like dew before the sun.

Whatever hypothesis we adopt concerning the pardon of the sinner, whether we suppose it to be granted on account of the death of Christ, or on account of the obedience of Christ, or absolutely without any atonement; all will agree in this, that it is granted in such a way, or on such conditions only, as are consistent with the general good of the moral system, and from a regard to some event or circumstance, or juncture of circumstances, which causes pardon to be consistent with the general good. And that circumstance or juncture of circumstances, may as well be called the price of pardon, the ransom of the sinner, &c., as the death of Christ. And whereas it is objected, that if God grant a pardon from respect to the atonement of Christ, we are under no obligation to God for the grace of pardon; I answer, that whenever God grants a pardon, from respect to the circumstance or juncture of circumstances before mentioned, it may as well be pleaded, that the sinner so pardoned, is under no obligations of gratitude to God on account of his pardon; for that it was granted from regard to the general good, or to that circumstance which rendered it consistent with the general good, and not from any gracious regard to him; or that if he be under any obligation to God, it is to him as the author of that circumstance or juncture of circumstances, which renders his pardon consistent with the general good, and not to him, as the dispenser of his pardon: as it is objected, that if, on the scheme of pardon through the atonement of Christ, we be under any obligation to God at all, it is merely on account of the provision of the atonement, and not on account of pardon itself.



Perhaps some loath to relinquish this objection, may say, though it be true that the pardon of the sinner, on account of the atonement of Christ, be a real act of grace; would it not have been an act of greater grace, to pardon absolutely, without an atonement?—This question is capable of a two-fold construction. If the meaning be, whether there would not have been more grace manifested towards the sinner, if his pardon had been granted, without any atonement: I answer, by no means; because to put the question in this sense, is the same as to ask, whether the favour of pardon granted without an atonement, would not be greater in comparison with the sinner's personal character, than it is when granted on account of the atonement of Christ. Or whether there would not have been a greater distance between the good of pardon, and the demerit of the sinner's personal character, if his pardon had been granted without an atonement, than if it be granted on account of the atonement of Christ. But the good, the safety, the indemnity of pardon, or of deliverance from condemnation, is the very same, in whatever way it be granted, whether through an atonement or not, whether in a way of grace or in a way of debt, whether from a regard to the merits of Christ, or the merits of the sinner himself. Again, the personal character of the sinner is also the same, whether he be pardoned through an atonement or not. If his pardon be granted without an atonement, it makes not the demerit of his personal character and conduct the greater: or if it be granted on account of the atonement of Christ, it makes not the demerit of his personal character the less. Therefore as the good of pardon is the same, in whatever way it be granted,—and the personal character of the sinner pardoned is the same,—the distance between the good of pardon, and the demerit of the sinner's character is also the same, whether he be pardoned on account of the atonement of Christ, or absolutely, without any atonement. Of course the pardon of the sinner is not an act of greater grace to him personally, if granted without regard to any atonement, than if granted from regard to the atonement of Christ.

But perhaps the meaning of the question stated above is, Whether, if the sinner had been pardoned without an atone-

ment, it would not have exhibited greater grace *in the divine mind*, or greater goodness *in God*; and whether in this mode of pardon, greater good would not have accrued to the universe. The answer to this question wholly depends on the necessity of an atonement, which I have previously endeavoured briefly to show. If an atonement be necessary to support the authority of the law and of the moral government of God, it is doubtless necessary to the public good of the moral system, or to the general good of the universe and to the divine glory. This being granted or established, the question just now stated, comes to this simply, whether it exhibits greater grace and goodness in the divine mind, and secures greater good to the universe, to pardon sin in such a mode, as is consistent with the general good of the universe; or in such a mode as is inconsistent with that important object:—a question which no man, from regard to his own reputation, would choose to propose.

The way is now prepared for the following inferences and reflections.

If the atonement of Christ be a substitute for the punishment of the sinner according to the divine law, and were designed to support the authority of that law, equally as the punishment of hell; then we may infer, that the atonement of Christ does not consist in showing that the divine law is just.—With regard to this I venture to assert two things—That the obedience and death of Christ do not prove that the divine law is just—That if they did prove this, that still merely by that circumstance they would make no atonement.

1. The obedience and death of Christ do not prove that the divine law is a just law. The sufferings of Christ no more prove this, than the punishment of the damned proves it. The former are the substitute of the latter, and were designed for substance to prove and exhibit the same truths, and to answer the same ends. But who will say that the torments of the damned prove the justice of the divine law? No more is this proved by the sufferings of Christ. If the justice of the divine law be called in question, the justice and moral perfection of God is of course equally called in

question. This being the case, whatever he can say, whether by obedience or suffering, to testify the justice of the law, must be considered as the testimony of a party in his own cause; and also as the testimony of a being whose integrity is as much disputed as the justice of the law. It cannot therefore be received as proof in the case. The testimony of God, whether given in obedience or suffering, so long as his character is disputed, as it will be so long as the justice of his law is disputed, proves neither that the law is just in reality, nor that it is so in his own estimation. A being of a disputed character may be supposed to testify, both contrary to reality, and contrary to his own knowledge. And as the character of the Deity is disputed by those who dispute the justice of the divine law, so there is the same foundation to dispute the character and testimony of the Son of God. Therefore the obedience and death of Christ do not prove that the divine law is just.

2. If the obedience and death of Christ did prove that the law is just; still by this circumstance they would make no atonement for sin.—If it were a truth that the obedience and death of Christ did prove the divine law to be just, and merely on that account made atonement, the ground of this truth would be, that whatever makes it manifest that the law is just, makes atonement. The essence of the atonement, on this hypothesis, is placed in the manifestation of the justice of the divine law. Therefore this manifestation, however, or by whomsoever it may be made, is an atonement. But as the law is really just, it was doubtless in the power of infinite wisdom to manifest the justice of it to rational creatures, without either the obedience or the death of Christ, or of any other person. If it were not in the power of infinite wisdom to manifest the justice of the divine law without the death of Christ, then if Christ had not died, but all men had perished according to the law, it never would have appeared that the law is just.—But bare attention to the law itself, to the reason, ground, and necessity of it, especially when this attention is excited, and the powers of the mind are aided, even by such a divine influence as God does in fact sometimes give to men of the most depraved characters, is sufficient to convince of the justice of the law.

But there can be no dispute, whether the sanctifying and savingly illuminating influences of the Spirit of God, without the obedience and death of Christ, would convince any man of the justice of the law. We have no more reason to dispute this, than to dispute whether the angels who kept their first estate, did believe the justice of the law, before they were informed of the incarnation and death of Christ. According to this hypothesis therefore, all that was necessary to make atonement for mankind was to communicate to them sanctifying grace, or to lead them to repentance: and as to Christ, he is dead in vain.

Besides: if the obedience and death of Christ did ever so credibly manifest the justice of the law, what atonement, what satisfaction for sin, would this make? how would this support the authority of the law? how would this make it to appear that the transgressor may expect the most awful consequences from his transgression? or that transgression is infinitely abominable in the sight of God? And how would the manifestation of the justice of the law tend to restrain men from transgressing that law?—Whatever the effect of such manifestation may be on the minds of those innocent creatures, who have regard to justice or moral rectitude; yet on the minds of those who are disposed to transgress, and have lost the proper sense of moral rectitude, the manifestation would have no effectual tendency to restrain *them* from transgression: therefore would in no degree answer the ends of the punishment threatened in the law, nor be any atonement for sin.

Perhaps some may suppose, that what hath now been asserted, that the death or atonement of Christ does not prove the justice of God and of his law, is inconsistent with what hath been repeatedly suggested in this treatise, that it is an end of the death or atonement of Christ, to manifest how hateful sin is to God. If the death of Christ manifest God's hatred of sin, it seems that the same event must also manifest God's love of holiness and justice. In answer to this, I observe; that the death of Christ manifests God's hatred of sin and love of holiness, in the same sense as the damnation of the wicked manifests these, viz., on the supposition that the divine law is just and holy. If it be allowed the

divine law is just and holy, then every thing done to support and execute that law, is a declaration in favour of holiness and against sin ; or a declaration of God's love of holiness and of his hatred of iniquity. Both the punishment of the damned and the death of Christ declare God's hatred of all transgressions of his law. And if that law be holy, to hate the transgressions of it, is to hate sin, and at the same time to love holiness. But if the law be not holy, no such consequence will follow : it cannot, on that supposition, be inferred from the divine hatred of transgression that God either hates sin or loves holiness.

Again ; we may infer from the preceding doctrine, that the atonement of Christ does not consist essentially in his active or positive obedience. By atonement I mean that which as a substitute for the punishment which is threatened in the law, supports the authority of that law, and the dignity of the divine government. But the obedience of Christ, even in the most trying circumstances, without any tokens of the divine displeasure against the transgressors of the law, would never support the authority of the law, and the dignity of the divine government. It by no means makes it appear, that it is an evil and bitter thing to violate the law, and that the violation of it deserves, and may be expected to be followed with most awful consequences to him who dares to violate it.—A familiar example may illustrate this matter. It is the rule or law of a certain family, that a particular child shall steadily attend the school kept in the neighbourhood, and that if he absent himself for a day, without license, he shall feel the rod. However, after some time the child being weary of observing this law, does absent himself, and spend the day in play. At night the father being informed of it, arraigns the child, finds him guilty, and prepares to inflict the punishment, which he had threatened. At this instant, the brother of the offending child intercedes, acknowledges the reasonableness of the law, which his brother had transgressed, confesses that he deserves the penalty, but offers himself to make satisfaction for his brother's offence. Being interrogated by what means he expects to make satisfaction, he answers, By going himself to school the next day.—Now can any one suppose, that in this way the second child can

make satisfaction for the offence of the first? Or that if the father were to accept the proposal, he would find the authority of his law and the government of his family supported with dignity? Or that the offending child, or the other children of the family, would by this mean be effectually deterred from future offences of the like nature?—And however trying the circumstances of going to school may be, if those circumstances be no token of the father's displeasure at the disobedient child's transgression; still the going to school of the second child will not make the least satisfaction for the offence of the first.

I venture to say further, That not only did not the atonement of Christ consist essentially in his active obedience, but that his active obedience was no part of his atonement properly so called, nor essential to it. The perfect obedience of Christ was doubtless necessary in order to the due execution of his prophetic and priestly office; in order to his intercession; and also in order that the salvation of his disciples might be a reward of his obedience. But that it was necessary to support the authority of the divine law in the pardon of sinners, does not appear.—If Christ himself could possibly have been a sinner, and had first made satisfaction for his own sin; it does not appear, but that afterward he might also satisfy for the sins of his people.—If the pretender to the crown of Great Britain should wage war against king George, in the course of the war should be taken, should be brought to trial, and be condemned to the block; will any man say that the king of France, by becoming the substitute of the pretender, and suffering in his stead, could not make atonement for the pretender, so as effectually to support the authority of the British laws and government, and discourage all future groundless pretensions to the British crown? Yet the king of France could plead no perfect obedience to the British laws.—Even the sinner himself, but upon the supposition of the infinite evil of sin, could by his own sufferings atone for his sins. Yet he could not exhibit a perfect obedience.

Besides; if the *bare obedience* of Christ have made atonement, why could not the repentance and perfect obedience of Christ's people themselves have answered, instead of the

obedience of Christ? Doubtless if they had suffered the penalty of the divine law, it would have answered to support the authority of the law, and the vigour of the divine government, as really as the death of Christ. And since the eternal sufferings of the people of Christ would have answered the same end, of supporting the authority of the law, as the sufferings of Christ; why would not the eternal perfect *repentance* and *obedience* of the people of Christ, have answered the same end, as his obedience in their behalf? If it would, both the death and obedience of Christ as our substitute are entirely in vain. If the elect had only been converted, and made perfectly and perseveringly obedient, it would have answered every purpose both of the death and obedience of Christ. Or if the obedience of Christ in the flesh were at all necessary, it was not necessary to support the authority of the law and government of God; but merely as it was most wise, that he should obey. It was necessary in the same sense only, as that the wind should, at this moment, blow from the north-east, and not from the south-west, or from any other quarter.

If the mere active obedience of Christ have made atonement for sin, it may be difficult to account for the punishment of any sinners. If obedience without any demonstration of divine displeasure at sin, will answer every purpose of the divine authority and government, in some instances, why not in all instances? And if the obedience of sinners themselves will answer as really as that of Christ, why might not all men have been led by divine grace to repentance, and perfect subsequent obedience, and in that way been saved from the curse of the law? Doubtless they might: nor was there originally, nor is there now, without any consideration of the atonement of Christ, any other necessity of the punishment of any of mankind according to the law, than that which results from mere sovereign wisdom; in which sense indeed it was necessary that Christ should be given to be the Saviour of sinners, that Paul should be saved, and that every other event should take place, just as it does take place.

From our doctrine we also learn the great gain which accrues to the universe by the death of Christ.—It hath been objected to the idea of atonement now exhibited, that if the

death of Christ be an equivalent to the curse of the law, which was to have been inflicted on all his people; then there is on the whole no gain, no advantage to the universe; that all that punishment from which Christians are saved, hath been suffered by Christ, and therefore that there is just as much misery and no more happiness, than there would have been, had Christ not died.—To this I answer,

1. That it is not true, that Christ endured an equal quantity of misery, to that which would have been endured by all his people, had they suffered the curse of the law. This was not necessary on account of the infinite dignity of his person. If a king were to condemn his son to lose an ear or a hand, it would doubtless be esteemed by all his subjects a proof of far greater displeasure in the king, than if he should order some mean criminal to the gallows: and it would tend more effectually to support the authority of the law, for the violation of which this punishment should be inflicted on the prince.

2. That if it were true, that Christ endured the very same *quantity* of misery, which was due to all his people; still by his death an infinite gain accrues to the universe. For though the misery, on this supposition, is in both cases the same, and balances itself; yet the positive happiness obtained by the death of Christ, infinitely exceeds that which was lost by Christ. As the eternal *Logos* was capable of neither enduring misery, nor losing happiness, all the happiness lost by the substitution of Christ, was barely that of the *man* Christ Jesus, during only thirty-three years; or rather during the *three* last years of his life: because it does not appear, but that during the rest of his life he was as happy as men in general, and enjoyed as much or more good than he suffered evil. But the happiness gained by the substitution of Christ, is that of a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and people and tongues; Rev. vii. 9. Now if the happiness of one man for *three years*, or at most for *thirty-three* years, be equal to that of an innumerable multitude throughout eternity, with the addition of the greater happiness which Christ himself must enjoy now that he has brought so many sons to glory, beyond what he would have enjoyed if all these had been plunged in incon-



ceivable and endless misery; then it may be justly said, on the present hypothesis, that by the substitution of Christ no advantage is gained to the universe. But if the latter infinitely exceed the former, the gain to the universe, even on the supposition that the sufferings of Christ were equal to those to which all his people were exposed, is infinite.

I may also hence take occasion to oppose an opinion which appears to me erroneous; which is, That the perfect obedience of Christ was in a great measure designed to show us that the divine law may be obeyed by men. It shows indeed, that it may be obeyed by a man in personal union with the divine nature. But how does this show, that it may be obeyed by a mere man? If we should also allow, that it shows, that a man born into the world in perfect innocence, and who is not a fallen creature, may obey the law; yet how does this prove, that it may be obeyed by a fallen creature, dead in trespasses and sins?—It is an undoubted truth, that there is no inability in men to obey the law, except that which is of a moral nature, consisting in the disinclination or disaffection of their own hearts; which does not in the least excuse them in their disobedience. But this is manifest by other considerations, than the perfect obedience of Christ; if it were not, it would not be manifest at all.

Another remark which naturally offers itself in discoursing on this subject is, that Christ's obedience of the precepts of the law, without submitting to the curse, would by no means prove the justice of that curse. This is the idea of some; That God sent his Son into the world, to obey the precepts of the law, and that his mere obedience of these, proves the justice both of the precepts and of the penalty of the law. I have already given the reasons by which I am made to believe, that the obedience of Christ does not prove the precepts of the law to be just. But if it did prove the precepts to be just, it would not therefore prove the penalty too to be just. As the precept of any law may be just and reasonable, yet may be enforced by a penalty which is unjust and cruel; so the proof that the precept is just, does not at all prove but that the penalty may be unjust and cruel. Indeed as the penalty of any law is designed to support and enforce the precept of that law, so to prove the justice of the

penalty, proves the justice of the precept; because not the slightest penalty can be just, when applied to enforce an unjust precept. But this rule, when inverted, doth not hold good. To prove the justice of a precept, does by no means prove the justice of the penalty by which that precept is enforced. So that if Christ have proved the precepts of the divine law to be just, this by no means infers the justice of its penalty.—On the other hand; If Christ came to prove the justice of the law, and all that he has done to this effect have an immediate reference to the precepts only; and if he have done nothing to establish the justice of the penal part, considered by itself; the aspect of the whole will be, that the penal part is unjustifiable, and that for this reason he did not pretend to justify it.

The subject which hath been under our consideration, also shows us, in what sense the sufferings of Christ were agreeable to God. It has been said, that it is incredible that mere pain should be agreeable to a God of infinite goodness; that therefore the sufferings of Christ were agreeable to God only as a proof of the strength of the virtue of Christ, or of his disposition to obey the divine law.—If by mere pain be meant pain abstracted from the obedience of Christ, I cannot see why it may not be agreeable to God. It certainly is, in the damned; and for the same reason might have been, and doubtless was, in the case of our Lord. The Father was pleased with the pains of his Son, as they were necessary to support the authority of his law and government, in the salvation of sinners.

Another reflection naturally suggested by this subject is, that in punishing some sinners according to the curse of the law, and in requiring an adequate atonement, in order to the salvation of others; God acts, not from any contracted selfish motives, but from the most noble benevolence and regard to the public good—It hath often and long since been made a matter of objection to the doctrines of the future punishment of the wicked, and of the atonement of Christ, that they represent the Deity as having regard merely to his own honour and dignity, and not to the good of his creatures, and therefore represent him as deficient in goodness. But can it be pretended to be a proof of goodness in God, to

suffer his own law, which is the perfect rule of virtue, to fall into contempt? However it might afford relief to some individuals, if God were to suffer his moral kingdom to be dissolved; can it be for the general good of the system of his creatures? Is it not manifestly necessary to the general good of the created system, that God's moral kingdom be upholden; and that therefore the authority of the divine law, and vigour of the divine government be maintained? If so, then it is also necessary to the general good, that punishments be inflicted on the disobedient and lawless; or that they be pardoned in consequence only of a proper satisfaction or atonement.

So that those very doctrines which of all others are made matter of the most objection to the divine goodness or benevolence, are clear proofs of goodness, and are absolutely necessary to it.—If a prince should either make no laws for the government of his subjects, or should never execute them, but should suffer all crimes to pass with impunity, you would by no means esteem him a good prince, aiming at the good of his subjects; you would not hesitate to pronounce him either very weak or very wicked.

In reflecting on this subject, we may notice the reason why so many, who profess to be advocates for the doctrine of atonement, yet place the atonement in that in which it does by no means consist. The principal reason seems to be, that they have conceived, that the idea of Christ's having suffered an equivalent to the punishment to which all his people were exposed, is inconsistent with *grace* in their pardon. But if I have been so happy as properly to state the ideas of justice and grace, it appears that there is as much grace in the pardon of sinners on account of such an atonement as that just mentioned, as there would be on account of an atonement consisting in mere obedience; or as there would be in pardon without any atonement at all.

Hence also we see, that the death of Christ in our stead is not useless or in vain. The opposers of Christ's substitution and atonement assert that no good end is answered by the sufferings of an innocent, amiable and virtuous person in the stead of the guilty. But surely to support the authority of the law and of the moral government of God, is not a

vain or unimportant end. It was not in vain that Zaleucus, having made a law, that all adulterers should have both their eyes put out, and his own son being the first who transgressed, put out one of his own eyes and one of his son's. Hereby he spared his son in part, and yet as effectually supported the authority of his law, as if it had been literally executed. Nor was it in vain, that during the late war, a soldier in the American army of a robust constitution, pitying his fellow-soldier of a slender constitution, who was condemned to receive a certain number of stripes, petitioned to be put in the place of the criminal, and actually received the stripes.\* For the authority of the martial law was effectually supported, and perhaps by this mean, the life or future health and service of the criminal were preserved, and would otherwise have been lost.

Neither was the death of Christ in the stead of sinners, any injury done to an innocent person. As well may we say, that Zaleucus, or the soldier just mentioned, were injured: or that a man is injured, when another man receives the money of him, which he voluntarily tenders in payment of the debt of a third person: or that a man is injured by the surgeon, who takes off his leg to preserve his life, the man himself consenting, and desiring him so to do.

Again; we may observe in what sense justice and the divine law are satisfied by the death of Christ; and in what sense the atonement of Christ is properly called a satisfaction. It is only the third kind of justice before mentioned, that is satisfied by the Christ. No man for the reasons already given, will pretend that *commutative* justice is satisfied by Christ; for the controversy between God and the sinner is not concerning property.—Nor is *distributive* justice satisfied. If it were, there would indeed be no more grace in the discharge of the sinner, than there is in the discharge of a criminal, when he hath endured the full punishment, to which according to law he hath been condemned. If distributive justice were satisfied, it would have no further claim on the sinner. And to punish him, when this kind of justice has no claim on him, is to treat him more unfavour-

\* This I am informed was real fact.

ably or severely than his personal character deserves. If so, the penitent believer, considered in his own person, deserves even according to the strictness of the divine law, no punishment; and that merely because he repents and believes; and if so, repentance and faith satisfy the law, or are the curse of it, as I have already shown. If distributive justice be satisfied, it admits of no further punishment, and to punish him further, would be as positively unjust as to continue a man's punishment after he hath endured the full penalty of any law.—If distributive justice be satisfied by Christ, in the behalf of sinners, then the rule of distributive justice is not the personal character of a man, but the character of his friend, his advocate, or representative; any man has a right, on the footing of distributive justice, to be treated according to the character of his friend or representative. Therefore if a subject rebel against his sovereign, and procure a man of a most unexceptionable and amiable character, to represent him and plead his cause before his sovereign, he has a right on the footing of distributive justice, to be treated according to the character of his representative; and if he be not thus treated, he suffers an injury; he is abused. On this principle, no prince or magistrate will have a right to punish, for any crime, a subject who can procure a man of a virtuous life to represent him and plead his cause.

But perhaps it will be said, that distributive justice is satisfied by the death of Christ, because he placed himself in our stead, and suffered in our room; and that whenever a person thus substitutes himself for another, and suffers the punishment due to that other, that other hath a right to a discharge, as distributive justice is then satisfied.—Now according to this objection, the true idea of distributive justice is, to treat a man either according to his own sufferings, or according to the sufferings of his representative. And if according to the sufferings of his representative, why not according to the obedience of his representative? And this brings us just where we were; that every man may *in justice demand* to be treated according to the character of his representative; which is absurd.

Distributive justice therefore is not at all satisfied by the death of Christ. But general justice to the Deity and to

the universe is satisfied. That is done by the death of Christ, which supports the authority of the law, and renders it consistent with the glory of God and the good of the whole system, to pardon the sinner.

In the same sense the law of God is satisfied by the death of Christ: I mean as the divine glory and the general good, which are the great ends of the law, are secured.—In this sense only is the atonement of Christ properly called a satisfaction; God is satisfied, as by it his glory and the good of his system are secured and promoted.

OBJECTION. But is not distributive justice displayed in the death of Christ?—ANSWER. The question is ambiguous: if the meaning be, is not distributive justice satisfied? I answer, for the reasons already given, in the negative. If the meaning be, is there not an exhibition made in the death and sufferings of Christ, of the punishment to which the sinner is justly liable? I answer in the affirmative; distributive justice is, in this sense, displayed in the death of Christ. But it is no more displayed, than the punishment of the sinner is displayed, in the death of Christ.

It may be proper here to notice the sense in which justice admits of the salvation of sinners. It hath been said, that justice admits of several things which it does not demand: that it admits of the salvation of Paul, but does not demand it. And it would admit also the damnation of Paul, but does not demand that.—But in these instances the word *justice* is used in two very different senses, which ought to be carefully distinguished. When it is said, justice admits of the salvation of Paul, the third kind of justice before described, must be intended. The general good admits it: neither the glory of God nor the good of the system opposes it.

But distributive justice, which requires every man to be treated according to his personal character, does not admit that Paul should be saved: so far as this kind of justice says anything concerning this matter, it demands that Paul be punished according to law: and if this justice be made the rule of proceeding in the case, Paul will inevitably be cast off. This kind of justice no more admits of the salvation of Paul than it admits of the salvation of Judas. But

it is said, that "justice admits of the salvation of Paul, but does not demand it." Justice to the universe does demand it, as fully as admit of it, and the universe would suffer an injury if he were not to be saved: but justice to the universe neither *demand*s nor *admits* of the salvation of Judas. Whereas distributive justice to Paul personally, as much demands that he be not saved, as that Judas be not saved.

But if we will make a distinction between what justice admits and what it demands, the true and only distinction seems to be this: Justice admits of any thing which is not positively unjust; of any favour however great or manifold: but it demands nothing, but barely what is just, without the least favour, and which being refused, positive injustice would be done. Distributive justice then admits of the salvation of Judas or of any other sinner; as surely no injustice would be done Judas in his salvation: but it demands not this, as it is a mere favour, or something beyond the bounds of mere justice; or it is no injury to Judas, that he is not saved. Neither does distributive justice demand the salvation of Paul. But public justice both admits and demands both the salvation of Paul and the damnation of Judas. On the other hand, it neither admits nor demands the damnation of Paul, nor the salvation of Judas.—But distributive justice, according to the present distinction between the meaning of the words *admit*, and *demand*, though it admits both of the salvation and damnation of both Paul and Judas; yet demands neither the salvation nor damnation of the one or the other: or, to express the same thing in other words; no injustice would be done either to Paul or Judas personally, if they were both saved or both damned. Distributive justice never demands the punishment of any criminal, in any instance; because no injury would be done him, if he were graciously pardoned. It demands only that a man be not punished being innocent: or be not punished beyond his merit; and that he be rewarded according to his positive merit.

These observations may help us to understand a distinction, which to many hath appeared groundless or perplexing: I mean the distinction of the merit of condignity and merit of congruity. Merit of both these kinds refers to rewards only, and has no reference to punishments: and that is de-

served by a merit of condignity which cannot be withheld without positive injury. That is deserved by a merit of congruity which is a proper expression of the sense which the person rewarding has of the moral excellency of the person rewarded; which however may be withheld without positive injury. Of the former kind is the merit, which every good and faithful citizen has, of protection in his person, liberty and property, and the merit of a labourer who has earned his wages. These cannot be withheld without positive injury. Of the latter kind is the merit, which some eminently wise and virtuous citizens have, of distinguishing honours or marks of esteem. If these be withheld, the proper objects of them may indeed be said to be neglected, but not positively injured.

This subject teaches also, in what sense God was *under obligation* to accept, on the behalf of the sinner, the mediation and atonement of Christ. It hath been said, that when Christ offered to make atonement for sinners, God was under the same obligation to accept the offer, as a creditor is to accept the proposal of any man, who offers to pay the debt of another. This is not true, because in matters of property, all that the creditor hath a right to, is his property. This being offered him, by whomsoever the offer be made, he has the offer of his right; and if he demand more, he exceeds his right; and he has no more right to refuse to give up the obligation, on the offer of a third person to pay the debt, than to refuse the same, when the same offer is made by the debtor himself. All will own, that if a creditor were to refuse to receive payment, and give up the obligation, when the debtor offers payment, it would be abusive and unjust: and let any man assign a reason why it is not equally abusive and unjust, not to receive the payment, and to give up the obligation, when payment is offered by a third person.

But it is quite otherwise in atoning for crimes, in which *distributive* not *commutative* justice is concerned. As the rule of distributive justice is the personal character of the person to be rewarded or punished, and not property; if a magistrate refuse to accept any substitute, and insist on punishing the criminal himself, he treats him no otherwise than according to his personal character, and the criminal



suffers no injustice or abuse. Nor is the magistrate under any obligation of distributive justice, or justice to the criminal himself, to accept a substitute.

It is true, that the circumstances of the case may be such, that it may be most conducive to the public good that the offered substitute be accepted; in this case *wisdom* and goodness or public justice will require that it be accepted, and the criminal discharged.

This leads me to observe, that it hath also been said that when Christ offered to become a substitute, and to make atonement for sinners, God was under no obligation to accept the proposal.—This, I conceive, is as wide of the truth, as that he was under the same obligation to accept the proposal, as a creditor is to accept the proposal of a third person to pay the debt of his friend.—The truth is, the glory of God and the greatest good of the moral system, did require, that Christ should become a substitute for sinners; and that his offered substitution should be accepted by God. This was dictated and recommended by both wisdom and goodness. So far therefore as wisdom and goodness could infer an obligation on the Father, to accept the substitution of his Son, he was under obligation to accept it. But this obligation was only that of the third kind of justice before explained, a regard to the general good.

This subject further teaches us, that that constitution which requires an atonement, in order to the pardon of the sinner, is nothing arbitrary. That divine constitution which is wise and good, as being necessary to the good of the moral system, is not arbitrary. But if an atonement was necessary, in order to support the authority of the divine law, and the honour, vigour, and even existence of the divine moral government, while sinners are pardoned; undoubtedly that constitution which requires an atonement, in order to the pardon of the sinner, is the dictate of wisdom and goodness, and by no means of an arbitrary spirit.

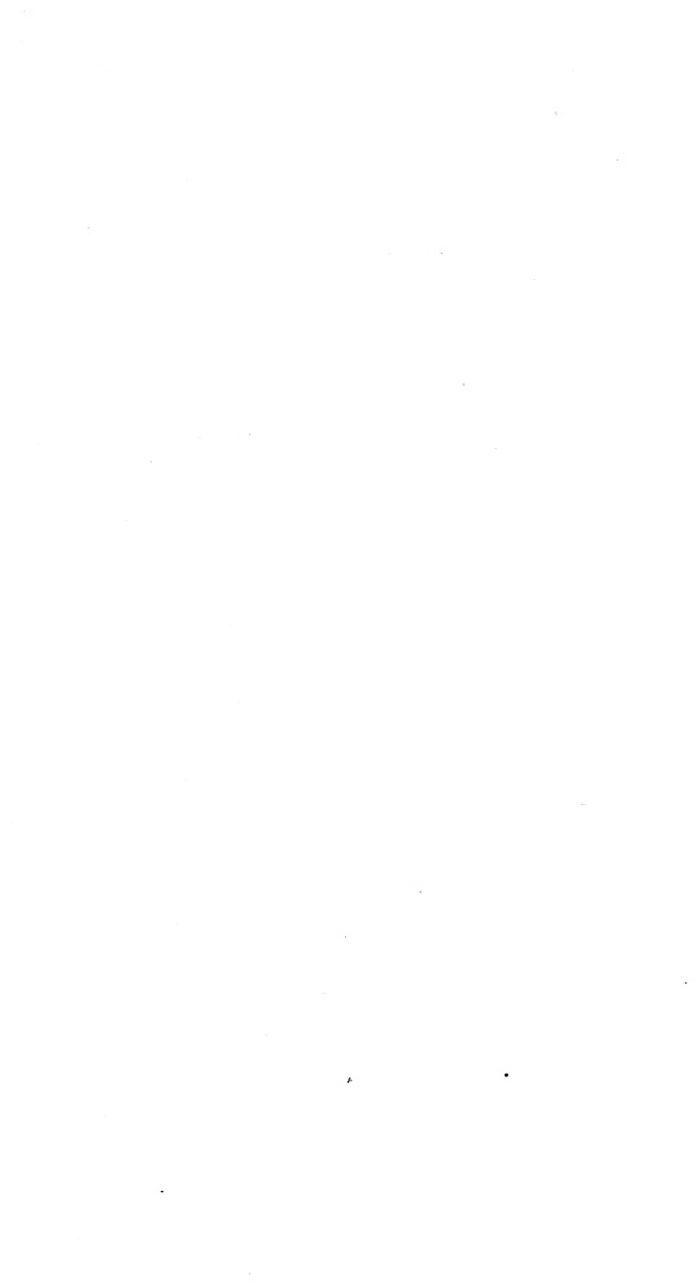
Hence we also learn in what sense the death of Christ renders God propitious to sinners. It does so only as it supports the authority of his law and government, and renders the pardon of sinners consistent with the good of the system, and the glory of God.

Finally; this subject teaches the groundlessness of that objection to the doctrine of atonement, that it represents the Deity as inexorable. If to refuse to pardon sinners unless it be in a way which is consistent with the good of the moral system, is to be inexorable, then that God will not pardon sinners without atonement, or in a way which is inconsistent with the authority of his law, and with the authority and even existence of his moral government, is indeed a proof that God is inexorable. But unless it be an instance of inexorability, that God will not pardon sinners, unless it be in a way which is consistent with the good of the moral system, there is no ground to object to the doctrine of atonement, that it represents the Deity as inexorable. On the other hand; that God requires an atonement in order to pardon, is an instance and proof of truly divine goodness; and if he were to pardon without an atonement, it would prove that he is destitute of goodness, and regardless, not only of his own glory, but of the true happiness of the system of his moral creatures.

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