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*John Adams*

W O R K S

Of the Right Honourable

*DUNCAN FORBES,*

Late Lord President of the Court of Session,

Now first Collected.

Containing,

- I. Thoughts on Religion, Natural and Revealed.
- II. A Letter to a Bishop, concerning some important Discoveries in Philosophy and Theology.
- III. Reflexions on the Sources of Incredulity with regard to Religion.

In T W O V O L U M E S.

V O L. II.

Printed for G. HAMILTON and J. BALFOUR,  
in *Edinburgh*;

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L E T T E R

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B I S H O P,

Concerning Some

IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES

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Philosophy and Theology.

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MY LORD,

**A** THEISM, Deism, and the whole train of opinions that attend what is commonly called Freethinking, flow from a settled disbelief and contempt of Revelation.

THIS disbelief is in a great measure owing to the want of a fair and unprejudiced examination of the numerous and various proofs and evidences, that support the truth and authority of the Scriptures.

VOL. II.

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BUT it is chiefly grounded on a firm persuasion, that human understanding is a sufficient guide to man, and the test and measure of all matters of belief; so that we are at liberty, nay indeed bound, to reject whatever does not answer those notions, which, by what we call reasoning, we have fixed.

THAT modern discoveries, the fruit of genius and application only; have fixed and determined to a certainty the laws and causes of the principal operations, and phænomena of Nature; which were wholly unknown to the antients, and mistaken by the authors of the books which are received as Revelation.

THAT therefore these books, so far as they give accounts of Nature, contrary to experience, and demonstration resulting from it, are false; and consequently can, in no other point, pass for infallible.

THAT the Scriptures relate a great many marvellous, improbable, nay incredible transactions, which do not seem to be directed to any purpose, suited to sovereign Wisdom and Goodness; and to contain a world of Institutions, laws, observances, and ceremonies; which to Freethinkers appear absurd, frivolous, and ridiculous; unworthy the supposed

Author,

Author, and improper to attain the proposed end.

WHEN any apparent mistake in Natural Philosophy is objected to the Scriptures, the answer commonly given is, in my opinion, stronger than the objection, according to the views of the disputants on either side; that these things, being incidental only, are spoken *ad captum humanum*, and accommodated to the understandings of those, to whom they were delivered; though, I confess, it would be a much more comfortable answer, if it could be said, and proved, that the things objected to are true.

WHEN Freethinkers ground themselves upon any improbable, or, as they will call it, incredible or absurd relation, there is no answering them without bringing together, and laying before them, the whole evidence that serves for supporting Revelation; which, when poised in the scale against all objections of this kind that ever have been made, in my opinion, may certainly outweigh them: but, the misfortune is, the objection glares, can be taken in by a very moderate capacity, and requires no learning, and but little attention to comprehend it; whereas, without

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long study, great learning, close attention, and a dispassionate and unprejudiced examination, the evidence for Revelation cannot be collected and weighed. Whoever therefore lets in the strength of the objection, and, for want of learning or attention (not to speak of natural prejudices) either cannot, or will not give himself the trouble to collect and weigh the proofs on the other side, must necessarily give it against Revelation, and fortify himself in his incredulity.

AND to this it is owing that all those, who, in this indolent and luxurious Age; pretend to politeness, and aim at knowledge; and the reputation of understanding and science, without any expence of learning or labour, and without any interruption to their pleasures or pursuits, take up with objections against Revelation, without the painful examination of the evidence that supports it, look down with contempt on believers, as a parcel of prejudiced Enthusiasts, and inlist themselves with Freethinkers, as the honestest, wisest set of men living.

AND when men, carried by pleasures, or sunk in indolence, settle once upon these notions, every institution, ordinance, or ceremony,

ceremony, appointed in Scripture, for which Christians cannot, or do not, assign an adequate use or end, becomes fresh matter of objection, and tends to rivet and confirm Infidelity.

THIS facility of receiving and taking up with objections, and the criminal indolence and neglect of those who do not give themselves the trouble to examine, with due care, the merits of the answer, has been long complained of, and lamented by all who wish well to mankind, but hitherto in vain: something more than argument must intervene to cool them in the pursuit of pleasures, to rouse their attention to their real interest, and to determine them to search with care and industry, before they will let in so much as a suspicion that their objections are ill-founded; or those objections must be overthrown by some other and shorter mean than the complicated evidence for the authority of Revelation, else the objectors will never give themselves the trouble to discover their mistakes.

SOME time ago, as my thoughts were employed in these disagreeable reflections, a set of books were sent me by my bookseller to look over; the titles were odd, and provoked my curiosity: *Moses's Principia, parts*

6      *A Letter to a Bishop, &c.*

1st and 2d; *An Essay toward a Natural History of the Bible: Moses's — sine Principio; A new Account of the Confusion of Tongues, and the Names and Attributes of the Trinity of the Gentiles*; were inscribed at the head of these several Tracts, all published successively, in different years, from the year 1724: And these are followed by another Work, that was published very lately, entitled, *A Treatise of Power, Essential and Mechanical*.

RUNNING over these books cursorily, I readily perceived the Author proposed to prove that the *Hebrew* scriptures had never been, and are not now, truly translated, or perfectly understood by those who pretend to be learned: that, rightly translated and understood, they comprise a perfect system of Natural Philosophy, as well as a complete body of Theology and Religion: that they no where assert any of those heterodoxes in philosophy, which modern observations shew to be such; but, on the contrary, teach and aver every thing that has been truly gathered from observations or experiments, recent or antient; and propose, and explain mechanical principles different from, nay in many things diametrically opposite to, those now received; by which all the various operations in nature

are performed, and which tally with, and can be supported by, every observation and experiment that hath been truly taken and made: that the seeming absurdities, with which the Scriptures are charged, either are not in the original, and are therefore owing to the ignorance or perverse design of the translators; or are, when rightly understood, no blemishes, but beauties in the Revelation: and that the many institutions, declarations, and observances, which appear frivolous to those who do not understand them, are the product of perfect Wisdom and Contrivance, necessary to explain and preserve the religion inculcated in the Old Testament, and fit to prepare for that which afterwards was delivered in the New.

BUT, though I easily gathered this to be the Author's proposal and intention; yet, upon looking into particulars, I found the proofs depended so much on the true construction of the *Hebrew* language, to which I was very much a stranger; and on an exact knowledge of the experiments and observations that have been made on the works of Nature, with which I am but very little acquainted; that his reasoning, almost every where, appeared

to me intricate and arbitrary ; and I was not without some doubts that the obscurity I complained of proceeded partly from design, for reasons that I could not penetrate.

FINDING, from my own want of knowledge, such difficulty in examining the proofs offered to support propositions of such universal import to mankind, and which I wished so earnestly to discover to be conclusive and true ; I resorted to several learned men of my acquaintance, skilled in the antient language, on which the Author grounds himself ; and conversant in the observations and experiments, on which the modern philosophy of Nature is built, not doubting but they had considered, and framed a certain judgment of his works : but, to my great surprize, though all of them had heard of, and seen some part of those tracts, yet not one of them had given himself the trouble to examine them. They complained of the intricacy and abstruseness of the Author's way of writing, and concluded him so, certainly, to be half-learned, visionary, and in the wrong, because his notions were contradictory to what they, by long study, had adopted and made their own ; that they laid aside his books without any farther enquiry,



enquiry, as what did not deserve, or would not answer the trouble of an examination.

THOUGH I could have relied on these gentlemen's judgment, if they had considered the Author's opinions and arguments with any care ; yet, finding that they had censured without examination, and not being able to meet with any person whatever, who had given himself\* the trouble of canvassing with due attention his arguments, on a matter of so general concern ; I rubbed up the little *Hebrew* I had, and addressed myself to a more careful perusal of the books ; not with any hopes of being able finally to judge of the certainty of his supposed discoveries, but with a design to collect the general drift and tendency of his reasoning, to the end I might lay it before those who are infinitely better able to judge than my self ; and who, from seeing scattered hints brought together, might be invited to consider the matter more seriously ; to condemn and refute any thing that is false, and to approve, support, and propagate every thing that is true. For I cannot help thinking it some reproach to the curiosity, as well as religious zeal of the Clergy of this nation, that sentiments so new and surprising, in matters of religion, should have been

been strolling about for so many years, without meeting with any examination, approbation, or confutation.

To give your Lordship, then, (from whose great proficiency in the Eastern learning, the only foundation of Scripture-knowledge; and your thorough knowledge of natural things, from whence all ideas of beings and things invisible are conveyed; your known readiness to forward any work in favour of religion; especially a work of this kind to establish the true meaning of the Scriptures, much wanted, I expect a solution of my doubts;) an account of these things that have made the greatest impression on me, in the order in which I have been able to comprehend them.

THE author affirms (what I think most of the learned world, at present, agree in) that pointing in the *Hebrew* writings is a modern invention, some centuries later than the days of our Saviour, contrived, after the language ceased to be commonly spoken, by the Jews, to favour their own constructions, and therefore of no authority to determine the sense of any word, but for that reason to be avoided.

THAT, as the understanding, so the proper and original sense of many of the *Hebrew* words

words used to exprefs matters of importance in philofophy and theology, was, in fome degree, altered or loft, when the children of *Israel* made defections from the true religion, before the *Babylonish* Captivity; fo, in the difperſion that attended that Captivity, the pure *Hebrew* was altogether beat out of common uſage, and the knowledge of it remained only amongſt the few that were learned, and attentive to the true religion and philofophy that was delivered by *Mofes*, and the other inſpired writers.

THAT the *Greek* tranſlation, commonly called the *Septuagint*, being made long after return the from the *Babylonish* Captivity, when the genuine ſenſe of the *Hebrew* words was, in a great meafure, loft, is extremely imperfect; partly, as the *Greek* language is deſtitute of words to convey the full and proper meaning of the *Hebrew* expreſſions; partly, as the tranſlators might have been ignorant, and might have accommodated their interpretation to their own views, in philofophy and theology, which were corrupted; and partly, as they durſt not (had their underſtanding been better) tranſlate, in ſome points, truly, for fear of provoking the *Egyptians*, in whoſe country they compoſed their tranſlation; and  
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whose Gods, had they given a faithful translation, they must to the last degree vilify and affront.

THAT, nevertheless, this and other translations so fully discover the genius of the *Hebrew* language, and so certainly translate words, when employed about matters that the interpreters were under no byas to render falsely, that a key from thence may be made for construing, with certainty, the whole *Hebrew* scriptures.

THE Author avers that the *Hebrew* language (from which, it seems pretty certain, the *Phœnician*, the *Chaldee*, the *Syriack*, the *Arabick*, the *Greek*, the *Latin*, and divers other branches were derived) was the original one; framed in Paradise, and with this particularity, that each root is taken from some particular beast, bird, plant, flower, or some other sensible object, and employed to represent some very obvious idea of action or condition raised by such sensible object, from whence it is further carried to signify spiritual or mental things, of which we can frame ideas only by the help of material or bodily things.

HE denies that any one root in the whole language conveys ideas of a different meaning;

ing; and affirms that one, and but one, leading sense runs through all the formation of the same root; contrary to the established doctrine of the *Jews*, who, by variety of arbitrary pointings, ascribe different and contradictory senses very often to a word composed of the very same letters; with design, as our Author suggests, to darken the sense of the Scriptures, chiefly, if not altogether, in those points, which contain the knowledge of the Christian system, and the religion of the Heathens.

AFTER observing that there is not one line of authentick *Hebrew* left in the whole world, but what is comprised in the books of the Old Testament, our Author insists that there is one, and but one, certain way of decyphering it, that is, by comparing every word in all the various combinations and sentences in which it appears, and gathering from thence the leading or original idea it was intended to raise; which is ever, from such comparison, with certainty to be collected.

HE says, that, though all the modern *Hebreicians* had the use of very accurate concordances, that might have helped them forward in this investigation, yet their progress  
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was marr'd by the blind respect they paid to the false or fraudulent pointings of their adversaries the *Jews*; and that he, shaking himself loose from those fetters, has been able to settle the genuine meaning of every important word in the whole Old Testament.

AND, from the fix'd and perpetual meaning of the words so explained, he says he is able to shew that the Scriptures, however disguised and disfigured by the translation, are written with the utmost accuracy, propriety, and truth; that they contain a perfect system of Natural Philosophy, and, upon that grafted, a complete system of Theology, so far as mankind is capable of receiving that sublime knowledge, and unerring rules for all religious service and belief.

THROUGH the whole of his works, he attempts to define, and determine the true sense of a great many words used by *Moses* and the Prophets, in the description of the formation of the world, and the preservation and support of all the operations that are carried on in it; he avers that the descriptions, by them given in these words, contain a mechanical account of all the powers, and of the operations carried on in, and by this material system; and he insists that all  
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the phænomena in Nature can be accounted for by the principles laid down by them.

BUT, to give you as clear a view, as I am able, of the further design of our Author; He supposes it will not be denied to him, that Man, a compound of soul and body, cannot frame to himself, or compare ideas, but such as are taken from sensible objects: what powers or faculties the soul might have, if detached from the body, we cannot know; but, as we are now made, we upon moderate reflection discover, that the soul of man, in this state, has not power to frame to itself, or to receive any idea that does not come from the senses, at least from some feeling or sensation communicated to it by, or through the body.

THE sun, the light, the air, the earth, the body of man, we can frame ideas of, as we can of the manner of their acting, and being acted upon; but the soul, which perceives and compares those ideas, we can frame no manner of idea of, nor of its manner of acting, or being acted upon.

AND we, who know that we have no capacity to conceive any idea of any thing that does not affect our senses, must conclude that our not perceiving is no proof  
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that there may not be millions of different beings and substances round us, besides those that affect our senses, of which, and of their powers or actions, we can know nothing.

As man has not the least idea of the matter or substance of his own soul, or of its manner of acting, or being acted upon; so he has no capacity of reasoning about it, by comparing it with things perceived: he cannot, for example, compare it with space or figure; he cannot say it is, or is not, comprehended within limits of any kind; he cannot say it moves, or does not move, or at all imagine how it is supported, or acts.

WE perceive how a solid body is moved by the impulse of another solid body, or of a fluid, and is continued in motion so long as the impulse lasts; and we can conceive how a plant, or animal, may be supported, may grow, or decay, mechanically, by the operation of different material agents: but we can have no conception how the soul acts on itself, or on matter, how it is acted upon, or how it is supported.

AND, being so much in the dark concerning the principal part of ourselves, the only  
know.



knowing thing in us, it is no wonder we should be incapable of framing any just idea of that invifible fpiritual Being, by which we, and every other created thing, were made.

O U R Author thinks that, by the light of nature only, men could not poffibly have difcovered whether this material fyftem, which, he fays, is fo framed, as to be a felf-moving machine, exifted from eternity, and was the caufe and fupport of itfelf, and of every thing in it; or whether it was contrived, and the parts of it put together, by an higher hand. But, be that as it will, and were it even to be fupposed that man, by thorough obfervation, and by a juft induction, could difcover *à pofteriori* the exiftence of fome eternal felf-exiftent caufe, whole work this creation is; our Author feems to be well warranted, when he affirms that it is prefumptuous in man, becaufe it is impoffible, to frame fuch an idea of this invifible agent, from his own fcanty notions and apprehenfions, as fhall be the ftandard and teft, by which to try every thing that is, or may be, in queftion concerning the Firft Caufe.

MAN may, for example, be in the right to attribute all possible perfections to this Being; but, 'till he can determine what is absolute perfection (taking in the circle of all possible beings, their actions and attributes) it is impossible for him with justice to conclude, that, because this or that seems to him to be perfection, it therefore, according to the measure which he conceives of it, belongs to the Author of Nature.

AND though it should be admitted that man, by the light of nature, could discover the dependence of this created system on a self-existent Creator, yet it is certain he cannot frame to himself any idea of that Being, his nature, substance, powers, or manner of existing or acting; and that, if there is any knowledge of such things amongst men, it must come from some other source than that of nature and observation.

FROM this state of man's nature the Author infers one indispensable necessity for Revelation; if God intended that man should know him, his goodness, power, wisdom, and mercy; should make returns of gratitude, love, adoration, and obedience; and should conform himself to that order, which by the divine will was established: and that  
that

that the knowledge of every thing that was to be known, and believed, was revealed, our Author insists, will demonstrably be proved, when what is revealed, is understood and considered.

A REVELATION therefore, our Author insists, was made by God to man, at two different periods; the first just after the Creation, and upon the Fall; the second in the wilderness to the *Israelites*, and on various occasions afterwards, by different methods of communication, not to mention the appearances to the Patriarchs: to restore the knowledge of the first revelation, which had been pretty much lost, or misunderstood, and to fix and ascertain it by writing (a method, as the Author will have it, then first revealed) so as it should never after be obliterated or left dubious.

To begin with the last. The first thing that is met with in the books of *Moses* is an assertion that God created the heavens and the earth, which is followed by a particular account of the order and manner of the formation of all that was created, 'till the work was perfected. After which, God is said to have rested; and our Author asserts, that it is also said, the perfect machine, then

left to itself, carried on all the operations in this system, by certain known laws of mechanism, explained by *Moses*, and throughout the Scriptures by the other inspired penmen.

THE sum of what our Author avers to be the doctrine of the Scriptures, on this head, is, that, besides the differently formed particles, of which this earth, and the several metals, minerals, and other solid substances in it, and in the other solid orbs, are composed, God at first created all that subtile fluid which now is, and from the Creation has been, in the condition of fire, light, or air, and goes under the name of the Heavens.

THE particles of this fluid, (which our Author calls atoms) when they are single and uncompounded, are inconceivably minute, and so subtile as to pervade the pores of all substances whatever, whether solid, or fluid, without any great difficulty or resistance: when they are pushed forward in straight lines, by the action of fire, or are reflected or refracted in straight lines, they produce light, and are so called; but, when the interposition of any opaque body hinders their progress in straight Lines, they pass, but cease to produce light.

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THESE particles or atoms, which, when moving in straight lines, produce light, and, if collected and put into another sort of motion, would produce heat and fire, are, as our Author insists, when the force impelling them ceases to act with vigour, and when their motion is retarded, so made, that they are apt to adhere in small masses or grains, which the Author calls spirit or air; and is of the same kind and texture with that air, which we daily breathe, and which we feel in wind when it blows.

THE sun, which our Author places at the centre of this system, is an orb included in a vast collection of this subtile matter in the action of fire, which continually melts down all the air that is brought into it by the powerful action of the firmament or expansion, hereafter to be explained, into the subtile matter just mentioned; and with an immense force sends forth, in perpetual streams of light, this same subtile matter, so melted down, to the circumference of this system, which the Author says is bounded, as he avers the space comprehended within it is absolutely full.

THE matter thus melted down at the orb of the sun into light must, as every thing is

full, either stand still, or make its way outwards to the circumference, being forced by the particles, which are concreted into air at the utmost extremities; and return towards the sun, where the fluid being most subtile gives least resistance, and take up the place that the light left.

AND therefore this endless uninterrupted flux of matter from the sun in light, in place of being an expence that should destroy that orb (which our Author takes to be an insupportable objection to Sir *Isaac Newton's* scheme) is the very means of preserving it, and every thing else in this system, in its action and vigour, by pressing back perpetual supplies of air to be melted down into light, and thereby produces a continual circulation. These perpetual fluxes or tides of matter outwards and inwards, in every point, from the centre to the circumference, mechanically, and necessarily, as our Author insists, produce that constant gyration in the earth and the planets round their own centres, and round the sun; and he avers, though he has not yet thought fit to explain it, that the same principle, with some circumstances, arising from the situation and fluxes of light coming

coming from the other orbs, will account also for the motions of the moon.

BESIDES the rotation of the orbs, the Author affirms that the adverse motions of the light pushing towards the circumference, and the air pushing towards the centre with immense force, form a general expansion (as he translates the word rendered firmament) which brings that stress or compression on all bodies it meets with, that binds together solids, keeps fluids as they were, causes the variation of times and seasons, the raising of water, the production of vegetables and animals, and in short produces all the effects falsely ascribed to gravity or attraction; continues motion without the assistance of the unmechanical principle of projection; produces, supplies, and supports vegetables, fruits, and animals; in short, produces almost all the effects and phænomena in nature.

THESE are some of the out-lines of our Author's philosophy, very repugnant, indeed, to the notions commonly received; but the authorities, by which he avers he can support them, are two, and they are pretty considerable.

FIRST, He says that *Moses* and the Prophets, who, by divine authority, were to reveal and explain to mankind how the operations in this system were carried on, have in plain terms said so. And,

SECONDLY, He affirms that he can, by comparing every true observation and experiment that have at any time been made by the Royal Society, or its members, or by any foreign societies of learned men, and by a great many observations and experiments made by himself, to which the curious have hitherto very little attended, with the system of philosophy revealed in the Scriptures, shew that all the various phænomena of nature are to be accounted for mechanically thereby; and that the modern systems, as well as all others not taken from the Scriptures, are false, absurd, and unmechanical.

IT is because this looks highly improbable, if not impossible, to most men, that an examination of our Author's notions is neglected; but, as, in proportion as it is improbable, it would confirm the Scriptures, should it be found true; I confess my desire is the greater that the men qualified to judge would examine it.



As it is extremely new, so, at first sight, it seems odd that our Author should suppose it necessary for the Creator to give to mankind a course of philosophy, so to speak; but, to remove this difficulty, he reasons to this effect.

THE end to which a rational discerning soul was given to man, was, that by the organs of the body he might perceive the beauty, the order, the harmony of nature; and thence receive ideas of the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of its Author, which should lead to admiration, love, duty, dependence, adoration, acknowledgment, and a desire of further knowledge, and vision of what in this world man can take in by borrowed ideas only.

IF the mechanism of nature had not been revealed to man, he possibly never would have discovered it to any certainty; at least, would not have discovered it, for ages: and so long those incentives to admiration, love, service, and adoration, would have been wanting.

IF the mechanism could have been understood, without the further discovery that this self-moving machine is no more than an inanimate piece of clock-work, created, as well as put together, by the supreme, intelligent,

ligent, beneficent Being, it might have led man to place his admiration and worship on the machine, in place of him that made it, as the mistaken part of mankind always did.

AND therefore, if, before man could know the obligations he had to the supreme intelligent Being as his Redeemer, that is, before the Fall, the sole light he could view him in, to produce admiration, love, duty, service, and desire of further union, was that of the infinitely wise, powerful, and beneficent Creator, and Supporter; it seems necessary to conclude that those discoveries, which he could not make of himself, certainly were made to him.

AND this the rather, that, as man was the last piece formed of the creation, and as even his body was framed, before the soul, without which it could not perceive, was breathed into it, he could not have any mean to know how, where, or by whom or what, this world and all its tenants were produced; and, by the nature of the thing, could not in many ages, if at all, arrive at any knowledge of what was certainly intended to be the object of his meditation, and the cause of his love, duty, and service.

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WHEREFORE, as it was necessary he should speedily be instructed, our Author thinks, *Moses* has intimated to us that he was, in telling us that God was pleased to plant a garden for him, which he was to cultivate and keep. Our Author observing that gardens, amongst the antient nations, and planted groves were sacred, and places of worship; reflecting that it was but a poor employment for the chief of the creation to cultivate a garden, whilst the earth, not being yet cursed, nor man doom'd to hard labour, might produce spontaneously fruits fit for him, especially the trees, being of God's own planting; and observing that the words translated *to till* and *to keep*, also properly signify *to worship* and *observe*; and taking in a great many other circumstances, too numerous to be here recited, concludes that this garden was planted and dressed in the form of a plan or scheme, to shew the situations, motions, and actions of the heavenly bodies, and the powers in this system, picture-ways or hieroglyphically, for man's comprehending and remembering more certainly the positions, motions, and influences of the heavenly bodies, and the actions of fire, light, and air, or, as our Author calls it, spirit, in circulation; several of those

those bodies, or of the effects flowing from their motions or situations, and from the circulation of light and air, might be represented by trees of different forms, or growths; and the circulation might itself be represented by some of those trees, or perhaps by the waters in *Eden*, which, by the four rivers, were plentifully furnished.

AND as the Author understands this garden to have been for instruction, and the intent of *Moses's* recording that circumstance to be, to let us know that man was so instructed; so he lays a pretty deal of weight upon another matter, related in the same history, of God's bringing the several animals before *Adam*, to the end he might give them proper names.

As the names *Adam* gave to animals were expressive of the chief talents or instincts of those animals, and afterwards in the *Hebrew* language came generally to be roots for words to signify the passions, actions, or inclinations, which those instincts or talents raised the ideas of; our Author concludes that God caused these animals to exhibit to *Adam*, for his information and instruction, their several qualities, particularities, and instincts, to help  
him

him forward in the knowledge that was to be communicated to him.

OUR Author then perceiving clearly, that a system of Natural Philosophy, or a description of this machine, was published by *Moses*, when Revelation was, as he terms it, republished in writing; observing that there was full as much occasion, or rather more, for a discovery of this system to *Adam*, before he had opportunities to make observations, than afterwards; and discovering the true sense and meaning of those intimations, that *Moses* gives, concerning the transactions in the garden of *Eden*; concludes that *Adam* was by God instructed in the knowledge of the powers and operations of this system, and of the duty and regard owing to the Author of it, as well as of so much of the nature, powers, and attributes of the Author and Creator of it, as the children of *Israel* were acquainted with, by the republication of Revelation by *Moses*, in writing.

As to the manner of this first Revelation, our Author, proceeding upon the principles already mentioned, that man is incapable of any ideas but what are taken in by the senses, concludes that God could not give to man, whilst clogged with a body, the true idea of himself,

himself, or any otherways represent himself than by referring for a similitude to that thing in this material system, that bore the nearest resemblance in perfection, power, nature, and operation; and therefore he supposes (what he afterwards affirms he has proved) that, to give man some image or likeness of himself, he pointed to the machine by which this system is supported; the heavens consisting of matter in three different conditions, fire, light, and air, or spirit, as the Author calls it, which mutually support each other, and necessarily concur in the joint action of that powerful machine, by which every material thing is moved, supported, and preserved; exhibiting thereby some similitude, from whence an idea might be taken of his essence, personality, power, and manner of action.

As *Adam* gave names to all living creatures, and the use and intent of a name is to raise, in the hearer, an idea of the thing named; our Author supposes that every other creature that came within the cognizance of the first man had also a name given to it; and insists that the heavens, or the machine, described as above, was by *Adam* called *The Names*, by way of eminence, to signify that they were the representatives of the Deity,  
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that from which the idea of him was to be taken: שֵׁם *Shem* in the *Hebrew* language signifies Name; and he avers that שְׁמִים *Shemim* is the masculine plural of that noun, and signifies properly Names; and by this he understands that the heavens, or *Shemim*, were always thought of, and spoken of, by those who were rightly informed by Revelation, as the representation, or material object expressive of the Deity.

IF mankind was thus instructed in the powers and operations of Nature, the lesson would not soon, or easily, wear out; because every observation, every symptom in nature would, day after day, justify it; but the fact, that this knowledge was revealed, might soon be forgotten by the succeeding generations of men, or be disbelieved, and with it the knowledge of the invisible Author of all. Men who saw this machine perfect and self-moving might doubt whether it had not self-existence in it; and whether, as it was the immediate cause and producer of all their comforts, it was not the only powerful Being to which they had any obligations, and owed duty and service; whence, by degrees, worship might be misplaced, being transferred from the true invisible God to the visible presen-

presentation of him, in which all power and perfection might be lodged, by the opinions of vain imaginary men, who forgot or disregarded Revelation.

THAT this in fact was the case, that the early deserters of the true God placed their worship and service on the heavens, the Author proves at great length, and with great strength of evidence, as a good deal of his reasoning depends on it.

IF the Scriptures are to be decisive in this point, it is put beyond doubt, by the many formal declarations that the crime of the nations, and of the apostate *Israelites*, was their serving the heavens, the Host of heavens, the Queen of Heaven, as it is translated; the Sun, Moon, and Stars; and false Gods, *Baal, Moloch, &c.* which our Author shews were representations of some of the powers or attributes of the heavens; and by the many miracles wrought to convince mankind, that they misplaced their worship, and that the invisible God had those powers under his command.

AND, were their credit in any degree questionable, such remains as we have of the ancient heathen worship would shew with abundant evidence, that, till they lost the knowledge of their philosophy, (which happened  
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by accidents largely described by our author) they continually retained the powers or attributes of the heavens for the objects of their religious service.

OUR Author admits that the more modern Heathens (by these he means the *Greeks* and *Romans*, and their successors in point of time) who had lost the knowledge of nature, lost also the knowledge of the object of their worship, and the sense of the very names, by which their gods were called or distinguished; so that, though they adored the air, they knew not for what: but then he avers, that the antients (that is, all the nations that preceded the change of language, by which knowledge was retained) adored the heavens, or some powers in them, or attributes of them.

To this end he has collected the names of all the gods of the nations mentioned in Scripture, together with the names or titles of their temples, in his treatise of *the names and attributes of the Trinity of the Gentiles*, and has offered an examination and analysis of those names, together with some account of the services paid to those supposed deities, and the many reproaches made by the Prophets to their votaries and worshippers; which, with great evidence, seems to shew that these gods

were indeed none other than the heavens, or some supposed powers in them.

THE very general adoration paid by the antients to the heavenly bodies, the worship of the sun, of fire, of light, &c. that prevailed in the earliest times; the conjectural philosophy of the late Heathens, the *Greeks*, and *Romans*, which centred in opinions, that by their *Jupiter*, *Apollo*, &c. was meant either the *æther*, or the sun, or the active force of nature in general, justifies, to those who value such authorities, our Author's sentiments.

OUR Author is out of humour with those who fancy the antients such idiots as to have worshipped brutes, reptiles, insects, or any inanimate things.

LET the worship in *Egypt* be an instance; the respect they had to *Apis*, to a bull or cow, was not at all paid to that animal. All mankind knows in relation to *Egypt*, because their monuments were better preserved than those of other nations, that they wrote by hieroglyphicks; that is, that they expressed their ideas by representing the figures of animals, or of inanimate things, of circles, triangles, &c. in such series and order, as to convey their meaning; in so doing, they must fix upon some things easily distinguished, to represent

present what could not so easily be painted, or by figure expressed. And, if their fancy led them to express the fire at the sun by the front or head of a bull or heifer, the respect shewed to that animal was evidently meant to the fire at the sun, and the *Egyptians* did not worship the bull or heifer, but the sun; no more than in their hieroglyphical writing a bull or serpent was meant, when the figures of those animals were represented.

OUR Author goes through a great many mistakes of the moderns in this particular, which are dishonourable to the understandings of the antients, and amongst these takes notice particularly of one, *viz.* the reproach to the *Egyptians*, that they worshipped an onion; and indeed the Scripture upbraids the *Israelites* with their strong lusting after the onions of *Egypt*.

BUT our Author says the moderns will cease to abuse the antients on this score, when they take the trouble to cut up the common onion, and to satisfy their own eyes that it consists of seven different spheres, or *involucra*, one within another, in the way that the antients understood the seven spheres in this system; and was therefore more proper than any other thing, that can be thought of, to

represent the solar system in their hieroglyphical writings, and religious representation.

HE takes notice, that from the hieroglyphical representation of the heavens, or, perhaps, of fire, amongst the *Egyptians*, by *Apis*, the *Israelites* calf of gold in the wilderness, and the brace of calves of *Jeroboam*, who had his education in *Egypt*, sprang: not that the *Israelites* at first, or *Jeroboam* afterwards, dreamed of any powers or virtues in those calves; but that they imagined, they put themselves thereby under the protection of the heavens, of which they took that idol to be the approved emblem.

To all their hieroglyphical representations of their Deity, he observes, they added a crown, by way of ornament or distinction, (as for much the same reason, though in another respect, which he elsewhere explains, they did to their priests;) this crown was a circle of gold, the most precious metal; from which arose, quite round the circumference, plates of gold, formed like pyramids, imitating rays of light; and in the intervals, between those shining rays, spaces of the same pyramidal form, but pointed inwards, to represent, as our Author says, the irradiation or flux of the light outwards from the sun, and the

the pressure or return of the air or spirit inwards, by which he insists this machine is supported.

AND in a great many more of their ornaments and emblems he finds evident traces of what their service and religion pointed at, to wit, a recognition of the powers in the heavens, as that from whence all their blessings flowed, and on which all their dependence was settled.

As this mistaking, which, in effect, is denying the true God, was evidently the crime of those heathens, who were contemporary with the *Israelitish* state; so, our Author thinks, it was the offence of the antediluvian world, for which men merited to be cut off, all but one family. His reasons for so thinking are numerous, but what to me appears the strongest, is drawn from the punishment, which was, as our Author insists, the controuling the settled operations of the powers that were supposed to be independent and omnipotent; the destroying the earth, and with it rebellious man, the reforming the earth after that dissolution, and preserving those persons, by whom it was to be repopled, from the general ruin, to be witnesses for God of the power by him ex-

erted, and to instruct their posterity in the service of that Being, by whom they were preserved.

OUR Author talks of destroying the earth, which, he says, is in formal words affirmed by *Moses*; he speaks of forcing up the waters of the abyfs through apertures, which, he says, were left for a communication with the waters above; dissolving the shell, reforming it with new apertures and fissures, and sending back those waters again through cracks and fissures in the shell of stone, that environed the abyfs, to their former residence; he speaks also of great quantities of terrestrial matter carried down through those fissures and openings along with the waters into the abyfs; that matter formed at the centre of the hollow sphere into a solid orb, like to a kernel floating in the waters, and very many effects in the motion of the waters, and of this earth, to be accounted for by that collection of waters, and this floating orb; all which, he asserts, are to be gathered from what the Scripture reveals, and will account mechanically for the many various appearances, which hitherto have been only guessed at, from  
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schemes founded on false and impossible principles.

As an instance of the perfection of the natural knowledge that is to be met with in the Scriptures, and of the absurdity of those who charge the writers of them with ignorance; he avers, that the loadstone and its effects are frequently, at least six times, directly spoken of; that the reason and cause of the mysterious phænomena of magnetism are clearly to be gathered from the revealed philosophy.

AND, however Freethinkers may make the story of the flood an objection to the veracity of the Scriptures, and may laugh at the account, which our Author gives of it from the sacred writers; he affirms, that, as he has had the curiosity to make collections of most of the different sorts of things, and each of the same sort differently formed, under ground, and numerous observations on the situation of things in the bowels of the earth; he can, by evidence to the eye, convince any rational man, that the account he gives of the destruction at the flood, and reformation of the earth, from the Scriptures, is graphically true.

*NOAH* and his family, who had remained in dutiful allegiance to the invisible God, were, doubtless, by this powerful piece of vengeance over the rebellious world, convinced of the supremacy of the Deity over his rival the heavens, whose power they had seen suspended and baffled; and their posterity continued dutiful 'till the time of building the tower of *Babel*, when nature and imagination began to work again.

ALL translations have made a very odd spot of work of this piece of history. They have supposed it says that, before this accident, all men spoke the same language; that, afraid of another deluge, they set about building a tower, whose top should reach to the heavens; that they did this to get them a name; and that God became so jealous of this attempt, that it was worth his while to work a very extraordinary miracle, to confound their language, so as one could not understand what the other said; and to disperse them over the face of the earth; and from this notable event the birth of many languages, and the first peopling of many nations, is sought.

OUR Author, who insists that a perfect knowledge of the *Hebrew* language will deliver  
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liver the Scripture from many absurdities, with which it is by the translations saddled, says ;

IN the *first* place, the text does not bear that all the earth was of one language, or that their language was confounded. It says indeed, that all the earth was of one [שפה *Shaphab*] lip; and afterwards that God said he would confound their lip.

NOW our Author observes, what, upon comparing all the texts, holds very truly, that the *Hebrews* had two words of nearly the same signification, to those that did not advert to the distinction ; לשון *Lesbun*, which signifies tongue, and *Shaphab*, which signifies lip; but which, in the propriety of their expression, they never confounded; using *Lesbun*, perpetually, to signify language, and *Shaphab* to signify religious service, or confession, and never to signify language. All therefore the text says is; that, before the building of *Babel*, the whole earth had one and the same religious service or confession; and that, upon that attempt, the new confession, which the projectors of this building intended to set up, was to be confounded, which begun in the dispersion of the undertakers.

IN the *next* place, the translators render the text, as if it said, *Let us build us a tower, whose top shall reach to the Heavens, that we may make us a name, lest we be dispersed, &c.* And surely, besides other improprieties in this supposed design, it must appear a very ridiculous project to build a tower, that should defend against destruction by a flood, in so very low a ground as the valley of *Sbinar*; or from dispersion, which want of provision would force them to. But our Author observes, that the *Hebrew* text says nothing of reaching to the Heavens: that word is a meer supplement from the translators fancy, who were ignorant that the word render'd *Tower* signifies *Temple*, and therefore did not perceive the obvious meaning of the whole, which is, that these wicked men, who lived in a country where, 'till then, there was no difference of religion, the whole earth being of one confession, apostatised to the service and worship of the Heavens; and encouraged one another to build a city and temple, the top whereof should be sacred to the Heavens; and that God, to check this early relapse into the religion of their antediluvian forefathers, thought fit to confound, not their language, but

but their confession, or liturgy, that is, to make them differ about the manner and form of the intended service and worship, which had the effect, at that time, of marring their irreligious project; of making them fall out amongst themselves, of making them desist from their enterprize.

TAKING the thing thus, and supposing these men mistook the Heavens for a deity, there was sense in their building a temple, and on it an altar to that being that could, according to their supposition, prevent their destruction and dispersion; and it was well and mercifully done, on the part of God, to make them differ about their intended service, and thereby to fall out amongst themselves, and relinquish the undertaking. But, translating the text as our expositors have done, a most absurd and impracticable attempt is supposed to call upon the interposition of the Deity, in a very unnecessary miracle, which, at the same time, our Author avers, appears not to have been wrought; because the same Scriptures shew the whole earth was of one language, though not of one lip, or religious confession, for several ages after.

As our Author has delivered the Scriptures, by his acquaintance with *Hebrew*, from this  
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notorious absurdity, with which the ignorance of the translators had stained it; he, on an infinity, almost, of other occasions, interposes to set their false interpretations to rights. According to his construction of the language, it is no where in the text said, that the earth stands still, and that the sun goes round it; but on the contrary it is, on every proper occasion, inculcated that the sun stands still, fixed, and that the earth runs round.

AFTER the flood God did not put the rainbow first in the cloud, as a sign to man; but he constituted or gave (which is the *Hebrew* word) that bow, which naturally was in the cloud, as a memorial of his promise not to destroy the earth again by water.

AND in multitudes of other cases our Author brings, as he says, from the genuine construction of the text, a very commodious sense, where the translation is, not to say worse, hardly intelligible.

As our Author's general proposition, that the mechanical powers in the Heavens was the deity set up by the Heathen, against the God of Nature and of *Israel*, is a key to the understanding a vast number of expressions, expostu-

expostulations, and claims, used throughout by the writers of the Scriptures, which passed unheeded, or were thought trivial, and accommodated to the mistaken notions of ignorant men heretofore; so the same position, as he manages it, is of very great service in shewing the propriety and perfect intention and use of very many miracles, miraculous appearances, and religious institutions, which no man hitherto has pretended to shew the adequate reason, use, or occasion for.

IF the religion of the rebellious Heathen was to ascribe all power to the machine of the Heavens, in the conditions of fire, light, and air, or spirit, but principally in that of fire, on the acting whereof all the rest seemed to depend; then it was proper for the Deity, when a new revelation and religious œconomy was to be established in the family of *Abraham*, to pass between the parts of the creatures, appointed to be divided, in the appearance of fire, light, and smoke.

IT was proper to shew his superiority over the gods of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, by punishing them, who worshipped fire, by fire sent from Heaven: It was proper, when *Moses* was to be  
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sent upon his mission, to appear to him in the bush in the form of fire.

IT was proper, when the contest was between the priests of *Baal* and the prophet *Elisha*, and when the formal trial was to be, whether *Baal* or *Jehovah* was the true God, by this test, whether the offering of the one or of the other should be first consumed by fire sent from Heaven; it was proper, I say, on that case, for *Jehovah* to give proof of his power, by sending down fire, and consuming the sacrifice, water, &c. And,

NOT to mention a great many other instances, when the captains of fifty were successively sent out by the King of *Israel*, who then fell in with the worship of the Heavens, in defiance of the true God, to bring *Elijah* to him a prisoner; it was proper, to punish their presumption, and to manifest the power of *Jehovah* over the Heavens, to consume those captains by fire sent from Heaven.

AND, though the many miracles wrought in *Egypt*, and in the wilderness, to which, for evidence of the power and supremacy of *Jehovah*, there are many references and appeals made by the later writers of the Scriptures, seem to our modern wisemen, who  
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think that God might have done the business a much shorter way, very unnecessary and superfluous, and as such are disbelieved; yet our Author apprehends they were absolutely necessary to the design of *Jehovah*, and of the utmost importance to mankind, for settling the point in dispute between the followers of the true and those of the false God.

THE intent of these various miracles, our Author says, was, in the face and seeing of the most powerful and populous, the most learned, the most superstitiously addicted nation then in the world to the service of the Heavens, to shew the power of *Jehovah* over their pretended gods in all their attributes and powers, and over their priests; and, in so doing, to convict that people, and all that should hear of those transactions, and still remain in the same error; and to convince the people, that he was about to separate to himself, so fully of his authority, that they should never (bearing these things in mind) apostatise.

FOR these ends, after the magicians or priests of the fictitious gods were foiled, *Jehovah* permitted *Pharaoh* to harden his heart, or to resist; until by repeated miracles he

he had; to the sight of all men, asserted his superiority over his rivals, in controuling all the actions and powers, for which they were fallily thought gods, and making them afflict their votaries. The sun and light were turned into a palpable darkness, for three days. The air was turned pestilential; the very dust of the earth was turned noxious; the river, which was emblematically sacred, in whose waters they purified themselves, and on whose banks they worshipped, was turned into blood; the wind brought locusts to destroy the votaries of the wind. All these plagues, and many more, which our Author explains the propriety of at length, in his *Essay towards a Natural History of the Bible*, were so directed as to leave the *Israelites* unhurt, witnesses of the superiority of their God, of the obedience of the Heavens, and of the distraction and folly of those who worshipped them.

HITHERTO miracles have been looked upon, generally, by mankind as so many prodigious, unnatural, and therefore wonderful events, surpassing the power of man to compass; brought about by divine power, to vouch the mission of the person, by whose hands they were wrought, and to gain credit to what he should reveal, or deliver. But, if  
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cur Author is to be followed, they are to be considered as tending to an higher purpose, and are so many manifestations of the power of the true God, to gain credit to himself, in contradiction to the pretended powers of the heavens, that were set up in opposition : and are so sorted and chosen, as best to prove that there is no inherent essential powers in the machine, the Heavens ; but that all inherent and essential power is in *Jehovah* alone, whose servants, at his command, could alter or suspend the course of nature.

IT was, according to our Author, to confirm the children of *Israel* in this faith, that the wind (in *Hebrew*, the spirit) separated the waters of the Red Sea, and made them, contrary to the ordinary course of nature, stand on either side in heaps : That by *Moses* *Jehovah* shewed, in miniature, the same power that was exercised in destroying the earth at the flood, by cracking the *strata* of stone, and making a spring of water gush out of a rock, upon the touch of a rod : That the God of the nations, in the appearance of fire, light, and cloud, or spirit, which the Author says (as shall be hereafter explained) was the emblem of the true God, was forced to attend, to lead, and to protect the camp of

*Israel* : That the air was made to rain down food upon the armies of *Jehovah* : And that *Jehovah* was pleased miraculously, and at an appointed time, to shew himself in the appearance of fire on *Sinai*, and from thence to deliver the law, and offer a covenant to the *Israelites*.

IF all these things shall be understood to be done to settle the contest, and establish the authority of *Jehovah* over the Heavens, his rivals at that time, and all other pretended deities that thereafter might, by the madness or ignorance of men, be set up :

THEN the scope and intent of the law, given in the ten commandments, will be better understood ; and the meaning of the religious œconomy, ceremonies, and services, that thereafter were established, will be more fully comprehended.

THE first four commands, by the confession of every body, are intended to assert and inculcate the sovereignty of the Deity, and the seclusive title to service, that is in *Jehovah*, the Creator and Preserver of all things ; in contradiction to all other pretended gods, whose service is prohibited and guarded against in the most express manner ; prohibitions that do not seem necessary to be  
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authorised and introduced with so much pomp, and by so many miracles, if the worship of a stock or a stone, a red heifer or a calf, taken in themselves, and not considered as the representation of that being (the Heavens) in which all material power in this system was known to reside, had been the only thing to be dreaded.

THE other commands are generally called the moral law, and it is commonly thought that they were intended for a system of social law, as they seem to prohibit trespasses against society.

BUT in this our Author differs, and says, that when men are satisfied, as they may easily be from Scripture and from history, that the worshippers of the heavens called their gods their fathers and mothers, and worshipped them as such; that they held it a religious and acceptable service to immolate human sacrifices, nay to offer their first-born to fire; that they held it lawful, nay pleasing to some of their gods, to steal and rob for sacrifice; that prostitution of their wives and daughters, in honour of their gods, was a flagrant part of their religion, &c. the reasons for giving these commands, commonly called moral, will appear to be the same, as

for giving the rest, to wit, to settle and establish the worship of the true, though invisible God, and to restrain from the worship of the heavens, and the chief abominations practised in that worship.

As to the moral or social law, according to our Author, it was not the immediate view or purpose of God, in the law given from the mount, to establish or explain it. The competition for superiority with the false god, the heavens, was the point to be settled; and the abominations of the prophane worship of that fictitious god were to be prohibited, and eradicated out of the service of the children of *Israel*.

THE social law required no publication, no authority from *Jehovah* by miracles to confirm it; except in those points in which the absurd service of the heathens had encroached upon it. It was no question amongst the heathens, no more than it was amongst the children of *Abraham*, whether it was unlawful to kill, or to commit adultery, on any other occasion, except for the honour of their pretended deities in religious service; and therefore, according to our Author, there was no occasion for settling these social duties, except-

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ing so far as the mistakes in worship made it necessary.

As the principal view of the decalogue, and all the pomp and train of miracles, with which it was introduced, was to settle the superiority of *Jehovah* over his rivals, the heavens; so our Author observes, that all the memorials of these miracles, the services, feasts, sabbaths, rites of sacrifice, ceremonies, the tabernacle, the temple, their ornaments and furniture, the institution of priesthood, with the ordinances relating thereto, the priests garments, &c. were intended to commemorate, to acknowledge, and for ever to keep in view the evidence of the superiority then settled; and to explain by emblems, a sort of language then well understood, the nature, residence, and manner of acting of God, in opposition to that of his rivals; and his merciful disposition and purpose towards his creatures; all which the Author has in a great measure explained, and applied in a very new and surprising manner, and promises, on a proper occasion, fully to explain and shew the application of the rest.

THOUGH a system of philosophy, religion, and religious service was thus revealed in writing by the hand of *Moses* in the wilderness,

ness, as our Author affirms ; yet he is far from thinking that the world was left without information, or direction in these matters, 'till this time : on the contrary, he asserts, that the instruction and law, given by *Moses*, was no more than a republication in writing of that law, originally given to *Adam* before, and upon the fall.

FROM the goodness, the wisdom, and the justice of God ; from the necessities of the new-made creature man, and from the hints, above mentioned, of God's planting a garden in *Eden*, and bringing all living creatures before *Adam* ; our Author concludes, that nature, its operations, and dependence on *Jehovah*, was fully explained to the first man ; and thence his duty, as well as chief good, discovered to him, in admiring, adoring, and, with love and gratitude, serving the Author of his being.

WHETHER any, and what services, by way of acknowledgment, were at this time required of *Adam*, does not appear ; but it does appear that he was prohibited, under the penalty of death, from eating of the fruit of a certain tree in the middle of the garden, which is called *the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*.

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OUR Author supposes that this tree, said to stand in the middle of the garden, was in the plan of that garden intended to represent the sun in the centre of this system, which keeps it all a going; and that the prohibition to eat the fruit of it emblematically forewarned *Adam* from trusting to its support in any thing, but what, as a machine without knowledge, it was appointed to do; and he suspects that this very forbidden fruit was the *Malum Perficum*, famed amongst the heathens; in *Greece*, afterwards, taken to be the laurel, sacred to *Apollo* the god of wisdom, and which was supposed capable of giving knowledge and wisdom.

HE observes that this command was first broken by *Eve*, who had it but at second hand from *Adam*, and who did not know the natures, and several qualities and capacities of brute creatures, as *Adam* did, at the instigation of the devil, by a serpent, who as a bait proposed improvement in knowledge; a very laudable motive, had not the method of gaining it been prohibited.

HE imagines that *Adam* was not deceived as *Eve* was; but that, seeing her lost, his passion for her made him desperately resolve to share the same fortune with her, and to be

joined with her in the crime, and the punishment; and that this was the reason why, when their eyes were opened, they not only became ashamed of their crime, but at the sight of those parts, which raised in each mutual desires; the violence of which induced woman to seduce man into a participation of her guilt, and induced man to yield to ruin and death, rather than be divided from her.

THOSE, who are delighted with searching into the origin and usage of words, will not be disagreeably entertained by a reflection or two our Author makes, on this occasion. He says that *אָוֶן* *aven*, which properly signifies the act of cohabitation with woman, is in the *Hebrew* language made the root for iniquity or wickedness. And that *פֶּתַח* *Petah*, which principally signifies that part of the body that *Eve* is supposed to have hid, in the same language is made expressive of seducing, overpersuading, deceiving.

AND our Author thinks that, to keep up the memory of this crime, and of the principal motive that induced man to fall into it, as also to be a caveat against being carried too far by that motive, on future occasions, circumcision was instituted; which took place amongst the nations before *Abraham's* days,  
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and was revived only in his family ; and re-enacted in the law of *Moses*, as several other antient institutions were.

OUR Author insists, that man could not have sustained his life any considerable time after the fall, though God had not been pleased by any act to inflict death upon him. The consciousness of the displeasure of God, the remembrance of felicity lost, and the apprehensions of the just vengeance of the offended Deity, must have produced strange distractions in the mind of unhappy *Adam* : That he lived then, is a demonstration that he received some comfort, some hint of the possibility of a reconciliation ; and that he actually had promises that comforted him, the Scriptures in formal words reveal. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.*

THOUGH the account of this promise, and those hopes of peace, is very short, yet our Author thinks that, at this time, a proper and intelligible account was given to man of the manner and means of his reconciliation, and restitution to the protection of God ; and that rites, observances, and services were instituted, to keep in mind, and acknowledge the sovereignty of the Creator ;  
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the crime of man, and his forfeiture; and the promise and means of peace and salvation.

THE foundations of his opinion, besides what is already said, are in general: That from the Scripture it appears, before the publication of the law in *Sinai*, believers and unbelievers were in the practice and possession of many, or most of those rites and institutions, which must have depended on some antecedent authority, that was common to all. And by the universal consent of all profane authors it appears, that, after the æra of *Moses*, the same institutions and observances had taken place over all the known world; though no body supposes they owed their origin to the laws of a nation, that the rest of the world held in dislike and contempt.

To instance in a few: Offering sacrifice, and that by fire, was in use before the written law; *Abel* offered; *Noah* sacrificed; *Abraham* and his contemporaries did so; *Job* practised it; it was used by *Balaam*; it was practised for thanksgiving; for atonement; for binding covenants: at the same time it is obvious, that naturally it had no tendency to either of those ends; and, as it was univer-  
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sal, must needs owe its beginning to an institution, that was authoritative over all.

THAT sacrifice was held propitiatory among the heathens cannot be denied by any, that is conversant in their writings; their histories, their poems are full of it; and, if there could remain any doubt, *Balaam's* repeated attempts to placate the deity, and the over-warm zeal of those, who gave the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul, who sacrificed their first-born to *Moloch*, to atone for themselves, their family, and people, and to procure his favour and protection, are absolute proofs.

OUR Author, on this subject, takes notice, that God is said to have clothed our first parents with the skins of beasts, that part of the offering, that by the written law appears to have fallen to the priest's share; and thence concludes that the beasts, from which those skins were taken, had been sacrificed.

ANOTHER instance is in first-fruits, which appear amongst all the heathens to have been offered as an acknowledgment to their several deities. This practice is as old as the days of *Cain* and *Abel*, who cannot be supposed to have begun it without institution for their authority.

A THIRD instance is in the institution of priesthood, or giving to the first-born, or eldest of the family, a right to approach the altar, and to offer sacrifice, which in the *Jewish* dispensation was changed from the first-born to the family of *Levi*. If the priest was, in one consideration, a representation of the same person, that the sacrifice represented in another, it is reasonable to conclude, that the institution of priesthood, and of sacrifice, bore the same date.

FROM the expression, *Gen. iv. 3.* our Author collects, that there were appointed times, perhaps new moons, and settled feasts, from the beginning, for sacrifice, service, and acknowledgment.

AND from *Moses's* account of the creation, and what followed it, nothing is more clear than that the rest of the sabbath was from the beginning appointed, for preserving a perpetual memorial of the creation, completed by *Jehovah*; and for yielding to man a fit opportunity, free from labour, toil, and care, to contemplate the high and beneficent attributes of God in his works; and to dispose the mind to acknowledgment, duty, love, praise, and adoration, the only tribute that is truly suited to the nature of that perfect

fect being; and the only exercise that seems proper for qualifying man to desire, and to enjoy a nearer union with his God.

As our Author finds, in the written law, several particular sorts of wood, distinguished by their uses in the tabernacle; and several sorts of boughs and branches of trees, appointed to be carried and used in the feast of tabernacles; he concludes, that those trees were in the days of *Adam*, so to speak, consecrated as emblems or memorials of particular persons, actions, or things, that they were to represent.

A GARDEN was planted in *Eden*; and I have hinted at the use, for which our Author thinks it was dressed there. The patriarchs, particularly *Abraham*, sacrificed under oaks, nay, planted oaks for the end of sacrifice and religious service under them. The antients planted gardens, groves, &c. upon religious accounts, and very likely held particular trees in respect, as representing particular powers or actions.

THE oak, which is in *Hebrew* עֵץ־אֵלֶךְ *Elah*, our Author says, was appointed the memorial of a covenant confirmed by oath.

THE tree of knowledge of good and evil represented the powers in this system. The fruit

fruit of the last, as our Author says, with boughs of the first; branches of the palm-tree, and twigs of several other trees, were to be held in the hands of the children of *Israel* at the feast of tabernacles, their grand festivity for mirth and rejoicing; and he insists, that the carrying those several boughs and fruits had a religious, emblematical meaning, then very well understood; as it was the only way, before writing, of communicating knowledge; and as intelligible, very near, as writing was afterwards. Because these emblems were then so fully understood, the meaning of them is not by *Moses* explained; but our Author seems to think it possible still to decypher and explain them; only thus much he apprehends is plain from the reflection made, that, the use of those several sorts of trees being prescribed, without any explication of the reason or purpose, these purposes must have been universally known at the time, and the trees themselves must have been constituted emblems, as early as the planting the first garden.

As hieroglyphicks, or emblems, were the first method of conveying and continuing knowledge, which was succeeded by the more  
perfect

perfect invention of writing; and as all religious service was originally performed, in an emblematical way, which carried the mind from the emblem, type, or emblematical or typical act, to the person or thing represented; our Author thinks, that, after writing was invented, for the more certain preservation of divine knowledge, the services were still continued, and performed in the old way, and types and emblems were of the same use and effect as ever; hence sacrifice, &c. were continued: and at the same time that God described the powers of this system, as dependent upon himself, in writing, he caused the same sort of account of them to be represented, and hung up hieroglyphically in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. The lamp in the temple, the pillars, and their ornaments before the porch, our Author insists, were an hieroglyphical description of the powers of this system, of the deities the heathens adored, which *Jehovah* willed to be nailed up in the place of the residence of his presence, to bear in mind their inferiority and dependence on him; and that they were to be considered in no other view than as emblems of himself, and his servants.

As our Author, by this new and very surprizing manner of interpretation, gives light to an infinite number of institutions, prohibitions, declarations, claims, and services; so, by accurately examining the force and propriety of the original language, and comparing it with the institutions and services, when rightiy understood, he thinks he has made a world of very important discoveries.

VARIOUS are the guesSES that have been made by learned men, concerning the sense and meaning of the word יהוה *Jehovah*, the ineffable name of God, as the *Jews* call it: our Author has fixed on that construction, which makes it the essence existing; that essence or substance, which has being in itself necessarily, without dependence upon any other, and in distinction to all other essence or substance whatever. יה *Jah* signifies the essence, by eminence; and (if I reach the Author's meaning, which seems to be wholly new, and uncommon on this article) by the addition of the other word הוה *Hovah*, signifying actual being with powers and faculties, gives an idea of that sufficient all-perfect being, that has existence it itself, or by the necessity of its own nature exists.



*A Letter to a Bishop, &c.*

exists. Something like to this ingenious moderns have struck out by the light of nature, as they say, for the idea of the sovereign being; and it will be no great reproach to their notion, if it falls in with the sentiment contained in the name given by God to himself in the Scripture; nor a slight confirmation of the accuracy and perfection of the Scripture, if, when it is fairly examined, it is found to express sentiments so just, so lofty, and so difficult, if at all possible, to be come at by the light of nature only.

**7N** *EL* is another name, which the Scripture gives to the Deity; it commonly is translated *the strong, or powerful, fortis*. But our Author insists, that it signifies properly the irradiator. An idea borrowed from that irradiation or emission of light and influence from the sun to move, support, and preserve in being and action every thing in this material system; from whence it is applied to the Deity, to express something of that inconceivable power, influence, and manner of acting, by which the Deity acts uncontrollably, where it is not locally present. As the Author from Scripture avers the proper residence of God is without this system, so that, by this name, that irradiation, which,

according to our Author's philosophy, is in a great measure the supporter of nature, is attributed to *Jehovah*; and such a power of irradiation in a spiritual sense, as we see performed by the sun in a material way, is ascribed to the invisible God.

To confirm this sentiment, and indeed a very considerable branch of our Author's scheme, he observes that the word *הללו יה* *Hallelu-jah*, which is the burden of almost all the psalms of praise and thanksgiving, the first word frequently and the last, and which is translated sometimes, *praise ye the Lord*, sometimes is transcribed, without translating, *Hallelu-jah*, signifies properly and undoubtedly irradiation to *Jah*, or ascribe ye irradiation to the essence. Now, if the utmost honour the believing *Jews* could express for their God, in their most devout and thankful praises, was to ascribe irradiation to his essence; it, on the one hand, renders our Author's opinion of the sense of *El* very probable; and, on the other hand, very strongly proves, that the Scripture-ideas of the Deity, and of its powers and action, were borrowed from visible operations of the sun, the light, and air, and their actions in the heavens in all this material system.

THERE is still another name for God, the most commonly used of any in Scripture, and on the true sense of which our Author builds a great deal; it is אלהים *Elohim*, always translated *Deus*, or God.

ALL the world, *Jews* and *Christians*, agree that this word is plural; seldom, not once in five hundred times, to be met with singular; almost always (a few instances excepted) joined with nouns and verbs in the singular number.

FROM this word, which the modern *Jews*, and, after them, *Christians* have translated *Deus*, in the singular number, when the true God is meant; but *Dii*, in the plural, when it is applied to the gods of the nations; several learned men have drawn arguments for the Trinity, and have taken it to be a full proof, at least, of the plurality of persons. But, as these men did not assert, or undertake to prove, that the Scriptures were wrote with perfect accuracy, and were forced to admit a great many things to be written, that they could not strictly and philosophically justify; and as they pretended to fix no certain origin or sense for the word, from the meaning whereof their argument could be examined or justified; these opinions made

no great way to induce men to think, that the doctrine of the Trinity was founded in the Old Testament.

BUT, as our Author insists, that every word of the sacred book is written with the utmost accuracy, truth, and perfection; if that proposition is made good, what he says for the word *Elohim*, for evidence of the plurality of persons in the Deity, must have great weight.

NOTWITHSTANDING an infinity of guesses made by those, who pretended to be learned in the *Hebrew* language, none ever hit on any thing that carried a sense, in the least degree, satisfactory. Our Author has fixed on the word *אלהים* *Elah*, an oath or adjuration (so translated perpetually by the *Jews*, wherever it occurs in the Scriptures, whether as verb or noun, except where it is intended to signify the Deity, and then they take care to hide that meaning) as the root from which it is derived; and affirms, that by the genius of the language *אלהים* *Elohim* signifies, in the plural, *Adjuratores*, persons bound by oath or covenant; referring this name to that engagement, which the divine persons are supposed to have entered into, for the preservation and salvation  
of

of man, called the covenant; and averring, that it is expressive of that relation, in which that oath or covenant put God to man.

HE insists, that, as this was the original light, in which, after the fall, God was willing to be known to man, for his comfort, and for encouraging him in his duty, all the apostate Heathens, who relinquished the true *Elohim*, and resorted to their rivals, the heavens, for protection, retained nevertheless this comfortable appellation, applied it to the heavens, and, as they sacrificed with the utmost zeal and seriousness to them, looked upon them as their *Elohim*; all-powerful beings, in covenant with them, for their good here and hereafter, and expected certainly from their hands protection and performance of their supposed covenants: hence by innumerable places in Scripture it appears, that they looked upon themselves as bound never to relinquish their *Elohim*; and verily believed that their *Elohim*, in their turn, were bound never to desert them.

IT is remarkable, that, of the many names, which the Deity has in Scripture, this is the only one, which concerns the salvation of man, that the Heathens carried off with them to apply to their false gods; for

whom they coined other additional, or distinguishing names, without number, according to their different humours, and the different powers and attributes of the heavens, for which they worshipped them. But still, with all these, they mixed the character or appellation of *Elohim*, as what expressed their connexion with, and relation to them.

AND, if this term shall be allowed to mean persons bound by oath or covenant, then it will fit kings or governors, who were under such ties and engagements to the people; and to them it is sometimes applied in Scripture.

As whatever time the *Jews* thought fit first to translate this word singular, it is certain the Heathens retained it in the plural sense; and the *Jews*, when translating that word applied to the Heathen gods, render it plural.

OUR Author observes, that the word *Elohim* is generally joined with verbs and nouns in the singular number; yet sometimes the words joined with it determine the sense so flatly to be plural, that, without impropriety, such as is no where to be met with in the sacred book, the persons, or things spoken of must necessarily be plural.

IN the consultation that is represented to have been had by the *Elohim*, for the formation of man, in the first of *Genesis*, *The Elohim said, Let us make man in our image, according to our similitudes.*

AND, *Genesis* iii. 22. after man had eaten of the forbidden fruit, the *Elohim* says, *Behold man is become like one of us.* The meaning of the expression, and in what sense man was become like one of the *Elohim*, our Author, on another occasion, endeavours to explain: but from these, and such-like flat declarations of more persons than one in the *Elohim*, he insists it is beyond doubt, that the word is intentionally used plural.

ON this subject he makes great use of the representatives of the *Elohim*, the *Shemim*, the names, the powers in the machine, the heavens, being plural; and those powers being, according to his apprehension, just three, fire, light, and spirit, or air: and, if it is supposed, that these three powers support all the motions and actions, in this machine, and that the machine was given for a representation of the Deity, its nature, manner of existence, powers and actions, by itself; it is very difficult to call in doubt our Author's conclusion, that the one substance of the heavens, acting

in three conditions, or with distinct powers, is expressive of the one essence and personality of the *Elohim*.

AND, indeed, to do our Author's argument justice, supposing the received opinion of a Trinity in the Deity were to be illustrated, or represented, by the similitude of any visible, or conceivable object; it must be confessed, that the wit of man has not hitherto suggested any thing so fit, to throw light upon that high mystery, as this supposed machine; if the Author can make it good, that nature is actually supported by the agency of matter in those three conditions of fire, light, and spirit, or air. The unity of the machine, the cooperation or joint action of all the three powers; light the issue of fire, and yet coëval with it, returning spirit or air to maintain the joint action, and by it every thing, is so exquisite a picture of what hitherto has been thought to surpass all imagination, that, if the Author can maintain that his machine works by these powers, very few will doubt of the truth of what it was intended to represent.

THAT the Deity, and the several persons in it, are, in numberless expressions of Scripture, uniformly represented by the machine, and by these three powers in it, applying the  
idea



idea of fire to the first, the idea of light to the second, and of air or spirit to the third, the Author endeavours to prove by a world of quotations.

HE does not forget the frequent appearances of the Deity, in the form of fire, often attended with light, and air, or cloud : he takes notice of the many descriptions of the first person as terrible ; a jealous God ; the avenger of sin ; a flaming, a consuming, a devouring fire to the workers of iniquity : and has collected a list of the various temples, that the Heathens had, to the sun, to fire, or to the heavens, under that head or attribute.

WITH respect to light, he produces numerous passages, where light, represented or spoken of, seems properly applicable to that person, who was to be the light of the nations, who was represented by irradiation ; and, perhaps, praised or prayed for in the expression *Hallelujah* ; and who declared formally of himself, that he was the light.

AND, on this subject, our Author has one very uncommon reflexion, as almost all his are ; he says the word כהן *Cohen*, translated *Priest*, and to which no one has pretended to affix a determin'd meaning, signifies properly an intercessor ; and, in evidence of this, he  
has

has produced several texts, and particularly two, where the children of *David* are said to be his כֹּהֲנֵי *Cohenim*, meaning intercessors with him, it not being possible they could be priests, since they were not of the tribe of *Levi*.

AFTER establishing that the word rendered priest signifies intercessor, he proceeds to observe, that the high priest was only such, and employed in offering sacrifice, as the representative of him, concerning whom *Jehovah* swore, that he was a priest; or intercessor, for ever, after the order of *Melchizedek*.

AND then, to make that type or representation more entire, our Author observes that the high priest, in office, was to wear garments made by divine direction, emblematical in every particular of his office; but more especially in that they were to be of white, that is linnen, and gold, and purple, and scarlet; by that collection of colours expressing light, the badge or representation of the second person of the Deity.

THIS, as well as the crown that the priest wore, expressing irradiation, as before mentioned, our Author thinks, was certainly understood at the time of the institution, and by  
believers

believers down till the days of our Saviour; and, had it been generally then understood, the nation would not have rejected the light. But, as the *Jewish* people univerſally apoſtaſiſed, loſt their knowledge with their faith, and had the remains of it almoſt altogether extinguished in the captivity; they had leiſure to frame notions of their Meſſiah, different from what the Scriptures exhibited; and in the conſtructions of the Scriptures, which they did not underſtand, they impoſed on themſelves, and on all that truſted them.

To the light, our Author ſhews, there were ſeveral temples amongſt the Heathens.

TOUCHING the third perſon, our Author produces ſeveral texts, where he is formally ſpoken of, under the deſcription of רוח *Ruach*, *Ventus*, *Flatus*, *Spiritus*, the Spirit of *Jehovah*. And from the Heathens religion and opinions he obſerves, that they imputed all their advices, from their gods, to the ſpirit, to ſome material inſpiration or inflation; all their Sibyls, the prieſteſſes that delivered their oracles, were ſuppoſed, in effect, to be blown up, and inflated by ſome ſpirit or wind. And it may be conſidered, whether it is of any conſequence, and of what, that they delivered their answers from tripodes.

BUT

BUT not to pursue, at any greater length, the numerous and the various authorities that our Author brings together to support his argument, it merits reflexion, that, when our Saviour speaks of himself, as the light, and when he and his Apostles deliver the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, they speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, without any apology or explication, as a matter very well known and understood by such as understood the Scriptures; a thing, which it seems altogether impossible they could have fallen into, if they had not known that such, as really knew the Scriptures, understood them; as our Saviour says, on other occasions, *Matthew xi. 15. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

As our Author has push'd his argument for the Trinity very far, from the notion of fire, light, and spirit; so he lays great weight on another argument, not altogether unlike to that, drawn from the appearance of the Cherubim, set up at the expulsion of *Adam* from Paradise, and from the description of that representation or appearance, drawn from the first and tenth chapters of the prophecies of *Ezekiel*.

FROM

FROM the visions of *Ezekiel* he collects, that the form of the Cherubim was one figure, with four heads or faces; the face of an ox, the face of a lion, the face of a man, and the face of an eagle.

HAD there been no more joined but the faces of the ox, the lion, and the eagle, as the Author can prove that the ox represented fire, the lion light, and the eagle spirit, or air, there could be no doubt, he says, that this would have been a proper representation of the Trinity in the heavens; and, by consequence, of the invisible Trinity by them represented.

BUT, as the face of a man was added; joined, as the prophet takes notice, to the face of the lion, the representative of light, the second person; our Author insists, that this appearance, exhibited to man for his comfort, just when for his sin he was expell'd Paradise, and sentenc'd to hard labour, represented the Trinity, with the man Christ Jesus joined to the second person, and was the most complete emblematical representation of what our Author supposes God revealed to *Adam*, when he told him, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent.*

AGAIN,

AGAIN, this representation in the Cherubim was a thing so well known and understood by the antients, though we have description of it but in *Ezekiel's* vision, that, when the Lord commanded it to be made for the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, the workmen made it at once, without wanting a pattern : and our Author lays no small weight on it, that figures of these Cherubims (and he says he can shew why there were two of them) were, besides the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat, the only furniture of the most holy place ; into which none but the representative of the great intercessor durst ever enter ; and that but once a year, clothed with the emblems of his office, and being sanctified by blood.

As our Author is indefatigably industrious in his search after the true meaning of emblems, institutions, and services ; he is no less so, in settling the meaning of words, hitherto mistaken, or unknown. I shall give you but one instance.

THE word כְּרִית *Berith*, which we always translate *Covenant*, *Fædus*, occurs in several texts ; and is generally coupled with such words, as cannot suffer a man to believe that *Covenant*, *Fædus*, is its original signification.

*THE blood of the covenant; the messenger of the covenant; I have given thee for a covenant to the nations, &c.* are expressions that will hardly go down; and what we translate *making a covenant*, כרת ברית *Karat Berith*, most certainly signifies *to kill, or cut off Berith*; which shews to conviction that *Berith* must, at least originally, have had another sense than is now in the translation given it.

OUR Author, searching to be satisfied in this difficulty, finds two texts, where the very same letters that compose *Berith*, but differently pointed by the *Jews*, are translated *Soap* [*Borith*, as they point it] *Fullonum*; and this word, again, confessedly derived from ברר *Barar*, which signifies *to cleanse, to purify*.

IF then, says our Author, *Berith* is taken from the idea of purifying, it must, and may, from the genius of the language, carry the sense of purifier, purification throughout.

AND, if it is so understood, then all the texts, in which it occurs, will be intelligible, and determined to that important sense, in which they were written.

*I HAVE given thee for a purifier to the nations; the blood of the purifier; the messenger of the purifier;* will all directly refer to the great sacrifice, the purification to which our  
divines,

divines, without observing the rules of construction, and by very hardy figures, apply them.

AND *Karat Berith* will signify, in its proper and primary sense, to cut off a, or the purifier, and not to cut off a covenant.

OUR Author affirms, that, in the usage of the *Hebrew* tongue, nothing is more certain, or frequent, than that the type or emblem gets and bears the name of the thing typified and represented, or principally meant: wherefore, if Christ was the purifier, the *Berith* promised, every creature, whose blood was shed, as representing him, in sacrifice, might have had the name of *Berith*. And, when such a creature was killed or cut off, as an emblem; it was true that *Berith* was cut off or killed.

AND as man, entering into covenant, that is, accepting of terms offered by God for his purification, in token of his acceptance, was to kill, and shed the blood of a type of the great purifier; which blood, though but of the lamb, a type, was deemed holy, and capable of sanctifying and purifying the altar, the tabernacle, the priest, and every thing that it touched: the same symbolical act was repeated for confirming pactions, covenants, or agreements between men; a typical *Berith*

was



was cut off; and over sacrifice men confirmed covenants, and accepted of the terms proposed by each other, as they testified their engagements to God, and their faith that he was bound to them, by the same typical representation.

NOR will this construction appear strange to those, who reflect that, in the *Latin* tongue, *percutere*, *icere*, and *ferire fœdus*, are the terms used for making a covenant or alliance; in respect to which, etymologists satisfy themselves with saying, that, slaying some animal in sacrifice being a solemnity that attended all alliances, at the making whereof, the parties were willing to intimate, by the death of the victim, the punishment they thus consented to be bound to, if they violated the agreement, the words *ferire fœdus* were brought to be expressive of the end or purpose, for which such animals were slain at treaties and alliances; and they suppose that *fœdus*, may have been the antient *Tuscan* word for *hœdus*, a kid.

BUT, if they will depart from suppositions, without any proof, and mount a little higher in their antiquity; if they will admit, what our Author thinks he has proved, that all the religious services of the Heathens were taken

from the institutions and appointments in the service of the living God ; though by length of time, change of language, and imaginations, when men, having lost true knowledge, began to imagine, they were misapplied, and, in part, altered ; they will find reason to believe that, even amongst the Heathens, sacrifice, as the highest and most important act of their religious worship, was adhibited to covenants, as an appeal to their deities ; and putting all they expected, from that symbol of their religion, on the issue of their faithful performance of their engagements.

IN the *Hebrew* language, the same word **אָשֶׁם** *Ashem* signifies *sin*, and a *sin-offering*, a kid, lamb, or any thing offered for sin ; and the Heathens made it a name or attribute of one of their *Elohim*.

IT does not appear, so far as I know, that *fædus*, in the antient *Tuscan*, was written for *hædus* ; but it does appear, that the *Latin* has an adjective of the same letters, *fædus*, *a*, *um*, which signifies *vile*, *unclean*, *abominable*, and *polluted*. Now, if with them, at the first formation of their language, an offering for sin or pollution could be called sin or pollution, as in *Hebrew* a kid or lamb offered for **אָשֶׁם** *Ashem* is called *Ashem* ; I see

see no reason to doubt, that every offering for sin or pollution might be called *fœdus*, or *fœdum*, in the sense of that word adjective; and that therefore *ferire fœdus*, in its proper and primitive sense, was *to kill*, or *sacrifice a sin-offering*.

BUT, be this as it will, our Author discovers several temples, amongst the Heathens, to *Berith*, and to *Baal Berith*, by which he says is meant the Lord, the Purifier, the early Heathens having by no means lost the idea, or the expectation of a purification.

AND he says that salt, a necessary ingredient in all sacrifice, was adhibited and required in this view only, as an emblem of purification; salt being one of the most powerful purifiers known; and of approved use in purging and purifying most sorts of metals from their earth, and base dross, that closely adheres to them.

WHEN Freethinkers object to the evidence, drawn from prophecies and prophetic institutions, for supporting the Christian religion, that it is ambiguous and uncertain; the prophecies being dark and obscure, capable often of a double meaning; and the institutions being figurative and typical, applicable only, *ex post facto*, by comparison of

the figures with the events ; and therefore not fit to communicate, with any certainty, to those to whom the revelation was made, the knowledge of the event, which they were to expect, and in which they were to believe : the common answer is, that we are not, from our narrow views, and with our dim lights, to examine and to find fault with the disposition of the infinitely - wise being, purely, because we cannot assign reasons, that to us seem adequate, for the conduct he has been pleased to hold ; that it has pleased God to convey such intimations of the, then future, advent of the Messiah to the *Israelites*, in the law, and by the prophets, as were, when the event prefigured happened, full and distinct proof, that *Jesus* was the person intended, and the system of religion, delivered by him, the future law and faith to which all mankind was to be subject ; and that, these things being admitted, it is presumptuous to enquire why the Deity, in infinite wisdom, thought fit to convey this knowledge, and these intimations, in prophecies and institutions, which, at the beginning, and before the advent of our Saviour, were wrapt up designedly in mystery and figures. And  
some

some people even venture to guess at probable causes, for the delivering and keeping this knowledge in this manner, 'till after our Saviour's passion.

BUT, if our Author's scheme for interpreting the Scriptures is true, the whole objection falls at once to the ground; because these emblems and figures, as well as many expressions called figurative, though dark, obscure, and uncertain to us (who have lost the knowledge of the language, as well as of the emblems) yet were not so to them, to whom the revelation was made, and who, by those emblems, and by that language, understood as clearly what was foretold to happen, at the distance of many centuries, and therefore as distinctly believed in it, as we, at the distance of so many ages after the event, upon the relation in a language we understand, know and believe that *Jesus* actually came, and fulfilled the will of God, and the predictions concerning him.

AND, if this be so, it will be easily understood, why the faith of *Abraham* and others, who preceded the days of our Saviour, is so highly commended by *St. Paul*.

IF the *Israelites*, to whom the law was delivered, understood the language, the institutions, the emblems, as our Author does, they certainly must have known that, in due time, God intended to send a Messiah to the world, under the suffering character that *Jesus* bore; and they must have believed it would be so, because of the marks of divinity attending the revelation, which they were eye-witnesses to. The language, in which we are told of that event, after it happened, is no more precise and distinct, than that, formerly used, was to them; and, if we have not seen the miracles with our own eyes, we see those prophecies delivered to them, and have authentic records of the completion of them, which does no more than put us on a level with them, in point of evidence, or cause of belief.

THEY, indeed, at the publication of the law could not tell (so far as we see) how many ages, or years, the event was distant; as we, who have come after it, can. But, when the advent became nearer, and when the impression of the first revelation became fainter, in the days of *Daniel*, they were brought more upon a level with us, even in that respect; and were told, to a day, when  
they

they were to look for the completion of their hopes.

IT is not to be denied that this revelation, however clear in itself, became obscure, before the coming of the Messiah: the means, by which this was brought about, our Author has explained: and very noble ends may be assigned, for which it may have been permitted to be so, by the divine wisdom and goodness; without impeaching the certainty of the proof of the Christian religion from prophecies and prophetick institutions; and without suffering the divine goodness to lie under the imputation that would attend the supposition, that the revelation of God was not full, and complete to mankind, and did not instruct them sufficiently for their conduct, their faith, and their comfort.

I HAVE selected these few hints from amidst an infinity of other very various observations and discoveries, which the Author has, without seeming very solicitous about what is called method or order, brought together. And I have ranged them in such order, as seemed to me the most proper to let you easily into the Author's sentiments, so far as I understand them.

IF YOUR LORDSHIP will judge of them fairly, and after due examination, you must enquire after them in the original; where you will find many proofs and arguments, that my measure of searching does not sufficiently come up to, employed for illustrating each particular, besides what I have cursorily stated in these pages.

I HAVE lost my labour, if YOUR LORDSHIP does not think these matters highly worth looking into; and, from your learning and candor, I promise myself that, if you do, those, who are in the same low rank of learning with me, will have great obligations to you for letting them know how they are to form their judgment upon matters that seem to concern them and mankind so much.

IN the treatise, last published, *Of power essential and mechanical*, our Author, amongst other very curious and surprising things, undertakes to confute Sir I—N—'s principles of gravity, attraction, infinite vacuity, and projection, which, he says, are not only unmechanical, but contradictory to the nature and idea of material substance, and impossible and absurd. And he pretends to prove, by different editions of Sir I—'s works, and from different passages in them, that he has



at different times varied and changed his own opinions ; and, in effect, as our Author calls it, given up his own principles, which are untenible. In this last treatise our Author mixes, with his reflexions against Sir I— and the late Dr. G—, a degree of bitterness and severity that must be disagreeable to many, and which nothing can excuse, but a zeal for the honour of religion, which in him seems to be very strong and sincere.

*I am, MY LORD,*

YOUR LORDSHIP'S

*Most Obedient,*

*Humble Servant.*

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# REFLEXIONS

On the SOURCES of

# INCREDULITY

With regard to

R E L I G I O N.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE 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 publick.



# REFLEXIONS

O N

## IN C R E D U L I T Y .

**I**T is rash to affirm, that the universe, or even the solar system, was made principally for the sake of the earth, or of man; because, for ought we know, there may be many more, and more considerable uses for it. It is at the same time not certain, at least to me it does not appear to be so, that there was any other use for creating these immense heavenly bodies, but to regulate the motion of the earth; to produce the other effects which some of them evidently have, and all of them in a greater or smaller proportion may have, on the earth; and to raise in  
man

man that idea of the magnificence, power, and skill of the Creator, which the contemplation of the immensity, motion, order, beauty, and utility of these bodies must produce.

IT is because we know not whether those bodies are inhabited, that we cannot pronounce, that the utility they bring us is, or is not, the only end of creating them. If they are inhabited, the inhabitants must be of a texture very different from those of the earth. But we cannot deem it impossible, that beings may have been made, fit to reside, to act, and to think, in the very centre, as well as on the surface of the sun.

BUT, without determining that question, which the scantiness of our lights will not permit us to decide; it is obvious, that, besides the physical influence which these bodies 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 animalcule discovered by the microscope has not its proper use in nature.

IT seems unreasonable to say, that God framed all the ornaments of this earth, to satisfy himself that he could do it; since he perfectly knew, that he could do every thing 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 œconomy 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 shew God to man.

MOST of the productions of the earth are, one way or another, for the use of  
animals.

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



yield its honey from some, neglecting others. It is rash to affirm, that the various tribes of spiders consider, and, from reflexion 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 architectural notions. It is neither reflexion 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 reflexion 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 legumens 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 reflexion, 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

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 legumens, 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 corn, &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  
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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 reflexion 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 vitious 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 acknowledgment, 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,

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 expence, 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 in-

consistent 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 vitious, 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 reflexions.

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 lust 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,



dom, and the goodness of that self-existent Being: Reason was given, to shew 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 controul 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 connexion between right and wrong and rewards and punishments, it has been fatally made use of to hide the Deity from  
from

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 phænomenon is, nothing is more certainly true; nor has any effect in nature a more shameful, a more pitiful cause.

APPETITES were given to man, to prompt him to preserve himself, and to continue the species. The natural calls to eat, to drink, to propagate the species, were necessary; else man, employed in contemplation, would soon have ceased to be. The acts of eating, drinking, copulating, without the natural stimulus, have nothing inviting in them. And it is an instance of the benignity of the Creator, that the gratification of those necessary appetites is attended with a very sensible pleasure, which rewards the obeying of nature's call; as it is an instance of his wisdom, 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

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 musick; and by numberless arts, to please  
and

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 basons, 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 controul 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

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

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 antient 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 fabrick of this system that fell

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 good-will 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 stedfastly 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 villainies and abuses were daily committed by profligate men, which the degenerate condition of mankind produced. But still these wickednesses were disguised, disowned, or some how 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 surprisngly, 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

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 mens 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 antients, 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

ties 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 publick 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 reflexions for which they were principally intended, on the excellencies and mani-

fest 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 reflexions would have been fit to humble their vanity, and to have checked them in the course of pursuits, which, though not openly vitious, 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 reflexions, 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

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 *cosmogonia's*, so many systems for shewing how the various *phænomena* 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 every thing 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 publick 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 Providence; 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



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 dropt 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  
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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, intitled 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 had 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  
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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 antient 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 fantastick proud philosophers.

THUS

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,

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 antient learning was exposed to view;  
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in theology, the progress just ascribed 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 antient 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, knowledge has been carried to a higher pitch, since the revival of learning, than it appears to have been by the antients, 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  
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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 *Ptolomean* system; and to the second, the confirmation of Dr. *Hervey'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 chymy, and many parts of natural philosophy, to the great improvement of physick, 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 antients were utter strangers.

POSSESSED of the learning of the antients, with the vast addition of later discoveries, it is not to be wondered at, if the moderns exceeded the antients 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 *Cosmogonia* beat *Aristotle's*, and all the other antient 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 all 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 *phænomenon*, how surprising soever,  
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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-convinced *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 *phænomena* of nature.

To this way of thinking their master's first principle led them. *Quicquid clarè &*  
VOL. II. K *distinètè*

*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 mathematicks, 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 any thing but what he gathers from conjecture,

jecture, 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 any thing relating to himself or to his ways, it is but of little consequence, whether that falls in with the philosophers 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 reflexions, Monf. *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 new-discovered *phænomena*; 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 mathematicks, that have  
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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 dropt 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 ma-

terial 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 *phænomena* 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 mathematicks and astronomy have shewed the size and distance of those worlds. The inconceivable minuteness of the microscopick 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  
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magnificence of the new discoveries in the skies does 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 shew 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

riments in Electricity have presented to the senses appearances which shew 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 self-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 can 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 bodes gravitate in proportion to their mass, and that projected bodies continue in motion until obstructed, are appearances so common, that no one is surpris'd with the observation; and the crowd do not trouble their head in inquiring after the causes. But it is not so  
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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 on 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  
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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 experiments 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 antients 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

ries 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 reflexions 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

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.

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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 those reflexions 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  
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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

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,

ction, 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, chuses 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,



verence, 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

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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 right 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

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 shews 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 praise-worthy 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.

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 groveling 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 approbation, born with them, they have transferred from God to their fellow-creatures. The applause of men, deserved or undeserved, blows up their pride. On  
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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 the God that framed it, would be no easy spot of 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 falshood, or, what is just the same, any  
thing



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 diffipated, 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 shew 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  
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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 characterises the FATHER, the avenger of wrong, and rewarder of right, is GOD; that what it characterises 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

ner 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 antients, 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,  
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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 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

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 reflexion 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 Free-thinkers, 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  
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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 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  
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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 thousand-fold 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

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 of 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 every thing 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 is triumphant, when  
con-



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 abso-

lutely 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

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 shew, 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 vitious 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 Free-thinker 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, centers 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 free-

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, dissolve the charm that bound him; pleasures of all sorts lose their relish; and the terrors, which death unavoidably 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 wife 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 avaritious, 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 those reflexions 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 shew, 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  
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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 accompanies the pursuit of those pleasures any farther 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 motion 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.

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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 expence 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, un-  
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certain what is to happen hereafter. This man enjoys, in common with the wife 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 hereafter for joys of a different nature from those which in this life he slight, 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

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 halts, 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 Framers of the hearts of men has no communication with  
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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 the 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

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

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 shew 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 recal the straying mind from vanity, and to fix it on its proper object.

How then dares presumptuous short-sighted man deny the interposition of Providence,

dence, 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 Free-thinkers is much less accountable or excusable than that of the antients. The antients 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 reflexions, 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  
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their thoughts such gloomy uncomfortable speculations. But our modern madmen hear every day of mercy and pardon offered by 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 wrote, 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 into 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 *Pharfalia*, 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 that in the others, as the belief of it is more interesting to mankind.

BUT

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 antient 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 wrote 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 antient 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

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

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, groveling



groveling 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

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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, 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

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 its 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 bountiful 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  
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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 any thing 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.

W H E R E F O R E, 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

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 chuse 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 intitled 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

self 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 shew those attributes, as well as the effects of free-will left to chuse 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, good-

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  
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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 was 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 recal men to their duty ; the soveraign 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 least 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

void 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 angelick 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 œconomy 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

BUT this reflexion 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. Thus 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

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 ever 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,

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 impulsions 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? \* \* \* \* \*











